

Jenkins Law Library Case Story

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What Jenkins Law Library is saying about the Book ScanCenter:

“I would recommend (the Scannx Book ScanCenter) to libraries similar to ours. However, I would highly recommend that they get the document feeder.”

Ida Weingram

Assistant Director for Business Services

Jenkins Law Library, Philadelphia, PA

About Jenkins Law Library

The first and oldest law library in the United States, the Jenkins Law Library began in a small room in Philadelphia’s famous Independence Hall in 1802. Founded by a group of lawyers to provide legal information for the city’s growing law community, it has grown and matured into a non-profit institution that serves as home to a wealth of legal information, databases, research services and continuing education classes. Now located at 9th and Chestnut Street in Philadelphia’s Center City, Jenkins boasts a staff of 14 librarians and 19 support staff dedicated to the information needs of its more than 7,000 members.

In 2005 the library completed a \$1.2 million renovation, aimed at keeping up with changing times and better meeting the needs of 21st century legal research. Wireless zones were added throughout the library and a new conference center can accommodate up to 50 people.

Scannx Book ScanCenter: New Technology for New Court Rules

When a postcard promoting the Book ScanCenter crossed the desk of one of Jenkins Library’s executive directors, it immediately caught her eye, said Ida Weingram, Assistant Director for Business Services. “We have an office center where people can make copies and buy supplies,” she said, “but no scanner to help patrons prepare documents for electronic filing”.

E-filing is on the rise at every level of the court system. Federal courts – including the 3rd Circuit, with jurisdiction over Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware – have required e-filing for over 10 years. By 2011, according to the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), at least 25 states and the District of Columbia had adopted some form of electronic filing – and many of those have made, or will soon make it mandatory to submit almost all briefs, forms and other documents in an electronic form. The new rules are expected to make it quicker and easier for attorneys to file, without needing to physically go to the courthouse. Electronic court records are also meant to make files more accessible for all involved. And with OCR technologies, lawyers and judges can easily find relevant passages, precedents and citations. Finally, electronic documents are a huge space saver for courthouses and law firms alike.

The problem? “We work with the public and not everybody has the capability for e-mail and scanning,” said Weingram.

Interested in how the Book ScanCenters could help meet their patrons’ growing need to digitize documents, “we did a site visit at the University of Pennsylvania, where they had a number of them,” she said. There, Weingram and her colleagues got a hands-on demonstration of Scannx’s intuitive 15” touchscreen paired with an oversized book-edge scanner that makes it easy to scan documents to a variety of electronic file types, including PDF, searchable PDF, and Word file formats. Once scanned, the digital documents can be e-mailed, sent to Google Docs or saved to a USB drive. In addition, Scannx Book ScanCenter is the first self-service scanner that can send scans directly to an iPhone, iPad or other tablet or smart phone. The demonstration was convincing and Jenkins Law Library ordered a Book ScanCenter, which was installed in May 2012.

Mission Accomplished but One Regret

In its first two months of service, the Scannx Book ScanCenter has seen steady use, but Weingram only remembers one book being scanned. Instead, it is mainly being used to scan lengthy briefs and legal forms to flash drive or e-mail. Overall, the response has been positive. “It’s pretty simple to use, and once I show them, they like it,” she said.

She does have one regret, though. “We only got the flatbed scanner, but in hindsight we should have gotten the document feeder too,” said Weingram. “People are scanning in briefs to submit to court, but they are doing the pages one by one.” Still people are turning to it instead of making paper copies, even though the copy machine has a document feeder. Weingram isn’t sure if that’s due to the need to submit documents electronically, or if it’s because the scanner is free, while paper copies cost 25 cents per page.

Eventually, Weingram sees this new scanning technology as something that could replace copy machines, especially in libraries like Jenkins that serve an ever more digital legal community. Already, she said, “copying is very minimal for us. But if someone needs a paper copy, that’s what we’re here for.”