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magical gadgets from the 'zoo bag,' and we weren't
even grateful—we wanted more and better. The amaz-
ing thing is, we often get it.

So Lexis and Westlaw spent many dollars betting
that they would create generations of lawyers who
would live and die by computer-based research—but
that the penalties they spent then would yield dollars later.
Smart folks—they rolled a 7.

Now we have a population of wired law students
who visit more and more databases and options. At the
same time, consultations in the legal information limi-
ters have created a megamergers built around each
of the on-line systems. No one can predict what new
technological breakthroughs will come next, but it's a
good guess that they will be in the orbit of Westlaw or
Lexis Nexis. I do not for an instant disparage the poten-
tial of Web-based updates like LEXIS and Versatext, but
if they flourish, they likely will be absorbed.

Two things are for certain. One is that the drugged
Santas have sold the companies to accountants. Legal
information is a business now, and that means the
days of giveaways and love-ins for new users are past.
(Forget not for a Lexis golf umbrella in your future.)

The second thing is that legal information will never
be the same. Hypertext links and headwords will
define research protocols in the future. As my Uncle
Vigil used to say, "I'm not sure where we're headed,
but it's away from wherever we were."

Robert Reering is professor and librarian at Boalt
Hall Law School, Berkeley. He is currently a consult-
tant with West and has been a consultant for Lexis-
Nexis in the past.

Academia Now:
Nonpreferred Customers
By Penney Hazeltine

BEFORE CONSIDERING HOW LAW SCHOOLS
have been affected by the changes at Lexis-
Nexis and West, it's important to remember
that the two services have always had a different
impact on academic libraries.

In part this is because firm and school libraries
have different missions. Firms serve clients who
need quick turnaround and will pay for it. It's not
essential for firm libraries to own hard, copy versions
of every item; electronic access, even if it's expensive,
can be sufficient if it's fast and reliable. By contrast,
most law school libraries have a research mission.

We must provide a broad spectrum of legal literature
for students and faculty of different capabilities and
interests. We must also teach students and faculty
how to use the wide variety of research tools. Thus
we need both hard copy and electronic resources.

Lexis and Westlaw have also affected academic
libraries differently because they weren't created for
us, they were designed to support research for practi-
tioners. Much of the primary historical and sec-
todary material needed by law students and faculty
can be found on these systems. Fewer than 26,000
volumes of print materials in our library, for example,
are on Lexis at Westlaw.

But as Bob Reering notes above, Lexis-Nexis and
Westlaw have aggressively sought academic libraries
for the past two decades because they recognized
that we provided an excellent introduction to their
future customers. Now, however, both companies are
reevaluating the resources they've been offering acade-
mic users.

The marketplace is extremely competitive, with many
types of electronic tools vying for our dollar. Westlaw
and Lexis-Nexis are no exceptions. The profit motive,
always present in computer-based legal research, is
more apparent than ever in all aspects of the relation-
ship between law schools and Lexis and Westlaw.

Many of my colleagues have noted a decline in the
general level of service to law schools. Both companies
no longer support hardware (computers, modems),
and both withdraw their support (replacement, repair, paper,
card LOC) for dot-matrix printing. Their representa-
tives have larger territories and less time to spend on
site. At some schools Lexis and Westlaw have cut back
the hours of students hired as company representa-
tives. Both services also pay more attention to whether
"peripheral" uses—adjunct and affiliate professors,
lawyers, and visiting scholars—should have access.
These changes vary greatly from institution to institu-
tion and company to company, but are widespread.

Both companies have developed products specific-
ationally for the legal education market. Computer
modules, Web sites for law schools, The West Education
Network, and the Lexis-Nexis Virtual Classroom, all
with direct links to the writers' on-line systems. These
classroom-related products are being marketed directly
to the law school and faculty, often leaving the library
completely out of the picture. Clearly, both companies
are trying to win future customers by marrying their
on-line products to technology in the classroom.

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