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### Best Practices for Developing and Running Legal Tech Programs in an Academic Setting

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# ALL LIBRARIANS CAN RUN LEGAL TECH PROGRAMS





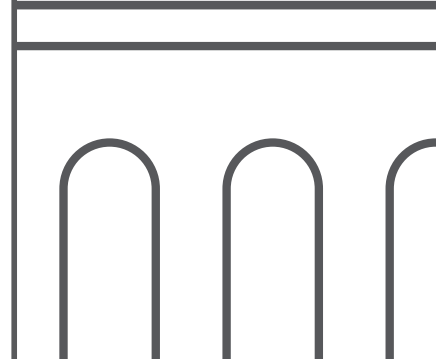
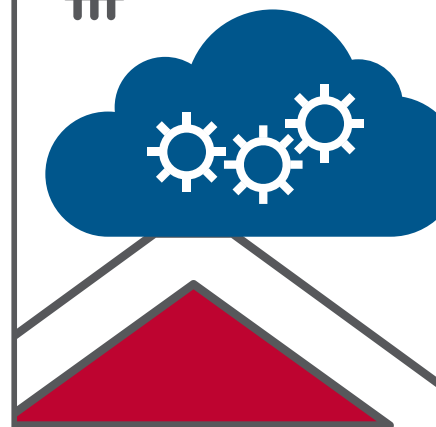
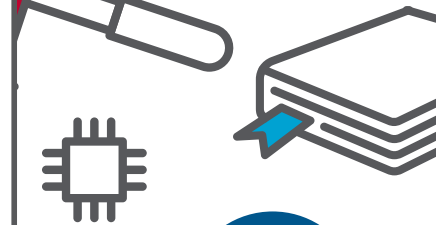
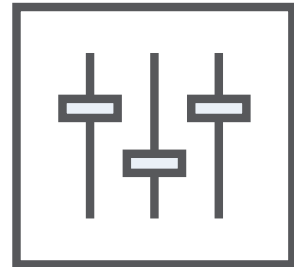
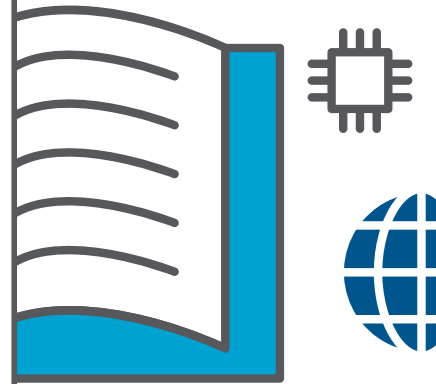
## Best practices for developing and running legal tech programs in an academic setting.

BY JENNIFER DIXON, JANET KEARNEY & KELLY LEONG

**A**s law schools embrace the importance of technology in today's legal practice and the value of exposing students to its role in their future careers, the responsibility often falls to law librarians to develop legal tech programming. However, in addition to worrying about the usual time and budgetary constraints, academic law librarians may feel unsuited to the task if they have limited tech backgrounds or areas of responsibility seemingly far removed from legal tech. Despite these potential obstacles, all law librarians can harness their expertise in research and instruction to create valuable legal tech programs. Following are top tips for developing a range of law school legal tech programs. While this article is based on our experiences at Fordham Law, these best practices apply to any and all potential programs, regardless of budget or scope.

### Getting Started

**LawTech@Maloney Library**—the slate of legal tech programs presented through the library at Fordham University School of Law—includes a semester-long Law Practice Technology class focused on giving students hands-on experience with technology and an understanding of practice trends and ethics. The LawTech@Maloney Library programs also include the Procertas Legal Technology Assessment, an online software platform purchased by the library that focuses on basic tech in the major office applications; Lunch 'n' Learns, which are short presentations given over the lunch hour, focusing on topics such as the promise of blockchain in law and cybersecurity for attorneys; and legal tech modules, which are librarian-taught instructional sessions presented in doctrinal classes such as civil procedure, introducing e-discovery, and legal analytics. In August 2021, the Library launched a new initiative, the Maloney Library Law Practice Technology Certificate, which enables students to earn a certificate by completing select programming.



## Top 10 Best Practices

**1 Determine the legal tech needs of your institution and align your program with the strategic goals of the library and/or law school.** Whether your law school is working to graduate practice-ready lawyers or your library is taking an active role in legal tech programming, aligning your program to institutional strategic goals can help garner support within the library and the broader law school. If you do not have written strategic goals at your institution, you should open a dialog with various stakeholders, including the library administration, career services, and any professional programs.

**2 Determine what resources your library can dedicate to a legal tech program.** Complete this step early on, as your determination will dictate the scope of your legal tech program. One of the largest considerations at this stage is staff availability to develop the program. As with all new programs, initial development will take more staff time, and maintaining the program will be less demanding. Other staffing considerations should include the necessary skills, such as project management, and the ability to develop or maintain relationships with other law school departments. In addition to staff resources, you will need to consider the costs involved if purchasing any software like Procertas, providing food for Lunch 'n' Learns, and offering prizes if you choose to incentivize the program.

**3 Design your program based on the relevant strategic goals and staff resources you have available.** Lunch 'n' Learns are one of the most malleable types of programming and an attractive entry point for building a legal tech program. Lunch 'n' Learns that utilize tech vendors as guest speakers take minimal time to set up and can be low cost. Guest speakers remove at least one task—developing and delivering a presentation—from the law librarian's to-do list. Other programming options, including training software such as Procertas, come with a price tag and require more staff time to manage and troubleshoot. (Learn more at [bit.ly/MA22procertas](http://bit.ly/MA22procertas).)

**4 Develop a marketing plan and timeline in advance of launching the program.** Our library has an existing marketing plan that includes a checklist of all marketing opportunities within the law school, from flyer boards to digital monitors. Your marketing plan should include a general timeline of when to distribute and advertise using each method. For example, our weekly internal law school newsletter has a deadline. We have found that day-of emails to students often translate to higher turnout.

**5 Advertise, advertise, advertise.** Every library has hosted a program where one, two, or zero students attend. This is always disheartening, but with active law school programming it can't be avoided. This is where advertising becomes especially important. Email and flyers are two of the usual methods of advertising programming, but here we will highlight some other options.

- » Co-sponsor an event with a student group or another law school department such as career services.
- » Place a table outside the library space where students congregate. At Fordham, the library hosts an "Ask a Librarian" program called *Table of Authorities* in a central space in the law school. This allows us to interact with students who do not visit the library.
- » For libraries where law librarians are teaching courses, promote the legal tech program in your classes.
- » Reach out to on-campus student groups that focus on technology and the law, lawyering skills classes, clinics, and other advanced skills classes.

**6 Think broadly about what legal technology means to your users.** In what context will students be using these skills? Think about where your students are employed and what skills they will need to know across all these environments. Not all students will utilize data analytics, but it is likely that all students need to use Microsoft Word. It's almost guaranteed that all students will need to understand their ethical obligations in regard to technology. Focus on teaching these types of transferable skills and not only trendy new technologies. While specialized programs on skills such as artificial intelligence and blockchain are fun and interesting to many students, remember that legal tech isn't always fancy. You may need to strike a balance between trying to get as many students to attend a program (because it sounds cool) as possible and trying to educate students on less "sexy"-sounding topics they still need to know.

**7 Collaborate across departments in the law school.** Working with other units of the law school means that you can expose more students to these skills, which can grow the program. Although the library can feel siloed within the law school, this is a fantastic opportunity to meet and build relationships with other staff from around the school, while also integrating valuable library programming into the work of the law school as a whole. Legal tech lends itself to this particularly well because of how common tech is in the law school environment, so a variety of departments will naturally have an interest in legal tech programs. For example, there are centers, offices, classes, and student organizations that revolve around technology and the law. These partnerships can range from working with the Legal Writing department to incorporate

basic Word training before the 1L brief to co-hosting panels with interested student groups that focus on technology and the law to giving an e-discovery lecture in civil procedure classes.

**8 Know what you are hoping to accomplish.** With all the effort put into organizing these programs, how do librarians measure success or identify areas for improvement? The first step is to articulate what, exactly, we hope to accomplish with a given program. These learning outcomes should be narrow enough that they are actually achievable within a short presentation or training module. With Procertas, our goal is to familiarize students with basic Microsoft Office skills relevant to legal work and give them a chance to practice and gain confidence using these programs. For legal tech Lunch 'n' Learns and in-class modules, we aim to introduce as many students as possible to legal technology concepts and enhance their understanding of why technology matters for legal work. Specific modules have their own learning objectives—for the in-class e-discovery module, for example, students should be able to describe the e-discovery process and gain experience using a professional e-discovery platform.

**9 Plan to measure your learning outcomes and goals.** The easiest outcome to measure is attendance—helping us to understand how many students we have managed to reach with this training. We keep count of how many students complete Procertas assessments or attend module sessions. Other learning outcomes are tougher to assess. For Procertas assessments, we distribute a survey, asking students to agree or disagree (on a scale of 1 to 5) with statements like “I learned new skills in Word” and “I feel more confident in my basic technical skills after completing the trainer.” For modules, we used a survey to ask, “How useful was this program?” (on a scale of 1 to 5) and “Would you like to attend more programs about Law Practice Technology?” For all program surveys, we also leave space for open-ended comments, which has yielded a number of useful suggestions and critiques from students, such as this feedback on Procertas: “It was horrible to actually do it (I’m not tech savvy), but I am glad I did and feel it gave me confidence to proceed with technical stuff in the future.”

**10 Evaluate your program.** Reflection is key. Annual internal assessment of these programs to discuss accomplishments and challenges is also a valuable opportunity to consider survey responses and the law librarians’ own observations of student engagement. It is also an excellent time to reconsider goals, methods, and learning objectives for the upcoming year and implement changes.

## Moving Ahead

Academic law librarians can create successful legal technology programs that introduce students to vital topics and skills. Keeping these best practices in mind ensures that legal tech programs can be run efficiently without overtaxing the library’s resources, while permitting law librarians to focus on the priorities of their institutions and the needs of their students. Take it from a manager, a collections librarian, and a foreign and international law librarian: any and all law librarians can run legal tech programs. ■

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## READ

Lindsey Carpino, Annie Mentkowski & Clanitra Stewart NejdI’s article “Building Strategic Partnerships Through Collaboration Between Law Libraries,” from the March/April 2020 issue of *AALL Spectrum* at [bit.ly/MA20partnerships](https://bit.ly/MA20partnerships).



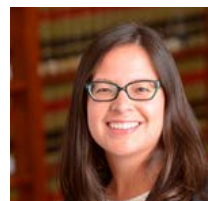
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