

Award Winners 2023

One of the highlights of the BIALL Conference is the awards presentation, where the winners of the prestigious LexisNexis Award for Excellence; the BIALL Account Manager of the Year Award, the Wildy BIALL Law Librarian of the Year and the BIALL Supplier of the Year Award are announced. These awards are overseen by BIALL's Awards and Bursary Committee.

LEXIS NEXIS AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE 2023

This year there were two winners of the LexisNexis Award for Excellence. This award was conceived to recognise, celebrate and reward the dedicated performance and outstanding service given by legal information services, law libraries and teams managing legal collections and resources. The award is particularly unique as it is the only legal information service award that recognises the value and importance of dedicated teamwork within our sector. Winners are drawn from organisations that can demonstrate best practice through the implementation of a new service or a change to an existing service.

Sidley Austin was one of the two winners of this award in 2023. It has produced an initiative known as Just Ask which provides a channel where anyone in the firm can get the answers they need for any work-related question, or they could be connected to the right teams. The service launched in November 2022 to all 4000 personnel in the law firm, in its offices in the United States, Asia Pacific and Europe. The Library & Research Services team is based in each of these locations with a total team size of 33. The service had two key aims: to increase the productivity of those in the firm who need help; and to increase the number of requests relevant to the team.

To measure the success of the project, the Digital Initiatives team created a Tableau dashboard showing the number of Just Ask requests received as well as the research time spent on these. From launch in November 2022 until April 2023 the team received over 200 requests and spent over 85 hours collectively on these. It also saw a 12% increase in the number of research requests received in the same period.

From the outset, the key aim of Just Ask was to reduce the time it takes users to resolve internal questions by providing a concierge service, as well as to directly answer questions that require external input. For law firms, reducing lawyers' non-billable time is vital to help keep productivity high, and this was a key selling point of the initiative.

Examples of the concierge service include: connecting an associate with a paralegal to assist with a pro-bono matter; directing people to relevant information about

translation requests on the intranet; and connecting a secretary to the relevant team to get a package urgently sent to a client who had a power outage.

In terms of direct replies, the team has successfully provided information on private equity events for the year ahead to lawyers and it has helped a trainee do a basic translation of a public document using Google Translate. The team has also successfully used Quest to capture and reuse the knowledge gained in the process, which has enabled it to provide the service efficiently.

Another key benefit of Just Ask is providing research services to non-lawyers. Many teams at the firm engage in research and they now benefit from the team's skills. Examples include research for the Learning & Development team to provide a 'menu' of 'you may not know...' facts for an email to the firm about National Arab American Heritage Month. Similarly, another team member provided facts for Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

MILLS & REEVE

The second winner of the LexisNexis Award for Excellence 2023 was Mills & Reeve. The team from this law firm rebranded itself in June 2022, to become the Research & Information Team. It felt that this better reflected the service that it provided. The team also used the rebranding as an opportunity to raise its profile within the firm, to showcase its services and reach new audiences who may not have considered contacting it before.

To ensure information was as accessible as possible, profile raising included regular intranet announcements, short videos posted on the firm's Business Development Hub, attending team meetings and presenting at various internal events. The team also took the opportunity for a restructure and a revamp of its strategy, aligning it more closely to the firm's strategy.

The rebrand has had a significant impact on its service. It has noticed that the number of basic enquiries has decreased and been replaced by requests that are more complex. The decrease has been attributed to publicity campaigns signposting the self-serve options available. Meanwhile, the increase in complex enquiries is due to widening the user base so that partners (and others) who didn't realise the team could assist them with their work now come to them for research. The team has also found that some of their regular users are asking for more in-depth research than they previously would have done. Examples of this include detailed work for a government client on two different projects involving legislation and cases; providing in-depth analyses of particular sectors as background research for tenders; and offering SWOT analyses for sectors / industries.



From left to right: Diane Miller (BIALL President at time of presentation), and Agnieszka Dyzma (Sidley Austin)



From left to right: Diane Miller, Emma Manuell and Lydia Green (Mills & Reeve)

BIALL ACCOUNT MANAGER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2023



The BIALl Account Manager of the Year Award seeks to recognise an individual working for a supplier who has gone the extra mile, or someone who provides a consistently good service. This year the award went to Lena Swan of LexisNexis.

Nominations highlighted that Lena always goes above and beyond to assist with any issues, while she can be relied on to listen to customer concerns. She takes

prompt action to resolve issues and queries and has provided “much needed continuity and expertise”, to quote one nomination. Another said that she was “always so enthusiastic and cheerful which always lifts the mood”, while someone else noted that Lena is “polite and professional but also friendly and easy to talk to”.

WILDY BIALl LAW LIBRARIAN OF THE YEAR 2023

This year’s recipient of the Wildy BIALl Law Librarian of the year award was Susan Boyle, who has played a vital role in the Irish BIALl group, where she helped arrange regular catch-up sessions during the pandemic to aid the mental health and wellbeing of members who might have been struggling with the isolation at that time. She continued to support all of her colleagues as they dealt with the sudden uncertainty in their lives while still having to continue to provide a service to all of their users. Her caring approach has made a lasting impression on all of those who work with her.

A project to bridge self-paced learning and reference support for Early Career Lawyers was already up and running, but during lockdown Friday online lunchtime meetings took place to discuss and share ideas and solutions to the problems that they faced. This radical, reflective practice exercise evolved into the Lawyering toolkit (See Issue 2 of LIM [Summer] 2023) and eventually to a plenary paper for the BIALl Conference 2022 and now a report on the background issues. Our award winner brought colour, image, workflow and libguide



From left to right: Diane Miller, Susan Boyle, (Law Librarian of the Year) and John Sinkins (Wildy & Sons)



From left to right: Diane Miller, José Alberto Suárez López, Gavin Sheridan and Jakob Cosorobă (VizLegal)

skills to the project, moving libguides themselves into a different path at the same time.

BIALL SUPPLIER OF THE YEAR AWARD 2023



The aim of the BIALL Supplier of the Year Award is to reward outstanding best practice by a supplier or publisher in the field of legal information. The winner of this award for 2023 was VizLegal.

Members' comments about VizLegal included that it has been consistently improving its platform, making content accessible that otherwise would not be searchable or reliably retrievable; its product has saved countless hours of research by gathering content and providing a robust, flexible search as well as providing customisable alerts; and that the onboarding process goes above and beyond and makes moving to a new platform an exceptionally smooth affair.