COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT:
THE QUESTIONS WE FACE
These questions represent just part of an average day in the lives of the librarians and staff of the Kress Law Library, and illustrate the issues that arise on an almost daily basis when trying to determine the best way to develop the library's collections. It is used to be enough for a law library to have federal and state primary materials, and a few digests and some annotated—there are three books on the shelves—for good measure. As recently as 1961, the reference collections were considered adequate for the needs of our growing law school.

Even in recent decades with much the same types of publications on the shelves and access to UNIS or Westlaw databases, our average law student was no longer able to perform research if not all, research assignments. Thus, law libraries are now used as libraries in a law school.

Today's law students and legal scholars are engaged in research at such complex and interrelated levels that those familiar to previous generations, even as our research staff and just a decade ago, are now vital to the law. Our scholars need to study the future of space law, and the history of constitutional law, to name just a few.

How long will it take you to find the information?

Will it be here in time for class tomorrow?
Our last decade of intensive growth has moved us toward the threshold of greatness. We are now counted among the few research-quality law libraries in the country. Nevertheless, we still have work to do.

What about the scholarly decade or even a generation from now, when new needs for a piece of information we've scoured some time before by interlibrary loan or found on the web? Ten years from now, will it still be Venues, LEXIS or the Internet? We've already seen many brave innovations of the sort that we can engineer now. Will we still be able to borrow it from another library? (Although we belong to a large network of libraries from which we can borrow much of what we need, no library will have in their entire 10-volume set of the Laws of Mississippi, even if they need the single chapter about nuclear power.) In some respects, we have no choice today but to hope that someone else may be a little bit more imaginative. Despite the advent of computerized legal research resources, building a research collection requires more than just library staff's imagination. Despite the advent of computerized legal research resources, building a research collection requires more than just library staff's imagination.

Moreover, reliance on the web and on interlibrary loans for scholarship presents a more general, but sometimes an intractable problem — the instability of sources. It is tempting to dismiss the temporary and inconstancy of the web. But it is foolish to do so. The web is an extremely rich and contentious arena for legal information. And, as it is a very dynamic field, it is very easy for information to disappear. But a more serious problem is that sources are often unstable, that is, they are constantly changing. This makes it very difficult to keep track of the sources, and even more so to use them. So, even though it is easy to use the web, it is difficult to use it effectively.

Our last decade of intensive growth has moved us toward the threshold of greatness. We are now counted among the few research-quality law libraries in the country. Nevertheless, we still have work to do. Let's take a look at the latest developments. First, let's look at the latest developments. First, let's look at the latest developments. First, let's look at the latest developments.

In the United States, the traditional sources of legal information, such as court opinions and legal books, continue to be the primary sources of legal information. However, the Internet has become an increasingly important source of legal information. The Internet has become an increasingly important source of legal information. The Internet has become an increasingly important source of legal information. The Internet has become an increasingly important source of legal information.