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## **Radical shift in the role of Legal Librarians as they become responsible for crucial market intelligence**

∞ Library departments expect to merge with Marketing departments

The role of legal librarians is taking a radical shift as law firms are increasingly turning to them to provide crucial research and more rigorous statistical analysis to underpin their marketing strategies. According to research by Sweet & Maxwell, the leading legal information providers, 56% of Library and Information departments are now providing market intelligence to internal departments.<sup>1</sup>

The research carried out by Sweet & Maxwell, a Thomson business (NYSE: TOC; TSX: TOC) found that legal librarians are now working with a far greater business focus. 70% of senior information professionals revealed that they are now under pressure to deliver commercial benefits to their firm.

Alina Lourie, Director of Legal Online at Sweet & Maxwell comments: “Legal Librarians are no longer just tasked with researching changes in the law. They are now being asked to contribute to the overall commercial development of law firms. Their research function is changing rapidly.”

“By providing strategically important information on which markets to target and which services to provide legal librarians can feed into the decision-making process, helping Marketing departments to form a sophisticated strategy underpinned by close market scrutiny.”

“As law firms develop more sophisticated fact based strategies library and information departments are beginning to play a more central role in their firms’ business development drive.”

“New technology has meant that lawyers can now obtain access to research resources on their desktops. This has seen the role of the Library become more focused on training and advising rather than carrying out research themselves, giving them a greater remit to work with Marketing and Business Development teams.”

The research found that what was once simply known as the “Library” has now become “Information Services”, “Library and Information”, “Knowledge” or “Legal Information” in over 60% of law firms, proving that the department is becoming increasingly dynamic and broad based in its functions.

**25% of Library and Information departments expect to merge with Marketing**

Sweet & Maxwell’s research reveals that a quarter of Library and Information departments expect to merge with Marketing over the next two years. 76% of senior

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<sup>1</sup> Research conducted amongst senior information management professionals in 50 commercial law firms. 46% of respondents are from Top-100 firms

information management professionals say they are working with other legal support departments more than ever before whilst 60% have recognised the need to recruit commercially focused individuals to their department.

However, a fifth of senior information management professionals believe that one of the key challenges of their role is promoting their department within their firm.

Alina Lourie comments: "Library and Information departments are playing an increasingly central role within law firms and many senior information professionals are keen to publicize what their department has to offer to the rest of the firm."

### Legal Services Bill will mean law firms will have to raise their game

According to Sweet & Maxwell's research only 34% of respondents think that the Legal Services Act will have a positive impact on their firm, with half of respondents believing that the Act will pave the way for new market entrants and new ways of doing business that will increase competitiveness across the legal market as a whole.

96% of senior information professionals already believe that the legal market is becoming increasingly competitive, with 86% anticipating that their firm will need to work harder to win new business in the future.

Alina Lourie comments: "Over half of senior information professionals say that they enjoy getting involved in business and client development. The Legal Services Act is certain to bring further opportunities for them to become involved."

Sweet & Maxwell says that utilizing the real benefits information departments can deliver will help ensure law firms remain competitive.

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### Notes to editors:

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