

Law school's library makes laptops available to its students

By Heidi Toth/Staff Reporter

The Texas Tech School of Law library is making mobile technology readily available to law students.

Robert Hu, head of public services for the law library, said the library recently began a new program that allows law students to check out laptop computers for up to three days.

He said the law school purchased 30 Dell computers with several different programs and made them available to students to use inside the law school facilities.

Students also can take them home or even out of town if necessary.

He said in addition to the computer and carrying case, the student

receives instructions on how to use the machine, along with documentation containing computer policies and forms to fill out.

The library also included a survey form for students to complete. Hu said the student responses had been good so far. Most of the comments were positive, and the few complaints had to do with computer glitches.

"Initially there were some minor bugs," he said.

So far only 50 people have checked out computers, Hu said, but because the program started at the beginning of the summer, all of the law students are not aware of this option.

"I suspect checkouts will go up pretty fast," he said.

The policy for checking out a computer is strict, Hu said. Students are expected to return the computers on time.

He said if a computer were turned in 10 minutes late, the user would be fined \$20, with a \$25-a-day fine until the computer is returned.

Gerald Miller, a second-year law student, said he was an avid user of the computers in the summer.

He checked them out every weekend, he said, often traveling

with a laptop.

"If you go out of town, the work doesn't stop," he said.

Miller also said in addition to the programs the computers had, he was able to transfer his personal settings to the computer while he was using it.

"It's basically like having a mobile office," he said.

Sunday Austin, a third-year law student from Amarillo, used the

computer checkout program all through the second summer session.

She said the program was excellent, especially for law students. Because most of her notes are reduced to typing anyway, she said, having a laptop in class saved her time and lessened her workload.

However, Austin said she was not happy with the computer policies. She said they were unreasonable and inconsistent, concerning deadlines and late returns.

"The penalties for being late are entirely too strict and arbitrary," Austin said.

Miller disagreed, saying that although the late fees are high, it's understandable given the value of the product and the limited number of computers the library has.

He also said it's important to bring the computers back because it's difficult to stretch 30 computers between 600 law students.

Melissa Putman, a third-year law student from the Dallas/Fort Worth area, said she had not used the computer checkout service yet, but that it was a positive development for the law school and added to the quality of her education.

"I think it's great because in class it's very helpful to take notes with a laptop," she said.

Kyle Walker, a third-year law student from Llano, was not aware of the program but reacted with little enthusiasm when he heard about it.

"More power to them, sounds good to me," he said.

"It's basically like having a mobile office."

— GERALD MILLER
Tech Student