

Vision 2020–How Shall We Meet The Future?

by Susan C. Rocha, IMLA President

I miss my blue *Texas Digest* books. I also miss seeing the hard copies of the *Southwest Reporters*, when they would arrive all shiny and new. I miss reading cases in two columns and seeing the key cites. I miss doing research by hand, and the hours spent in the law library reviewing cases, taking notes, and just plain thinking about the issue you were briefing or researching.

Those days are long gone. New lawyers do all their research on the Internet, faster and quicker. And, they tell me, their research is more thorough than what I was able to do by hand. You will never really convince me of that, but these days, law libraries are a thing of the past. My inbox gets at least 50 e-mails a day – from attorneys in my office, our administrative staff, my city clients, the bar association, my family and friends, and various organizations, committees, and work-related clients. I carry a Treo, so I am never, ever, far from my office and work. All of these devices were supposed to make our lives easier, but, instead, have made our work life more intense. With these instant communications, clients expect instant responses and answers. I often tell my clients, "This isn't McDonalds – you don't get fries and a legal opinion in under three minutes."

But it is a fact we all have to face. I have been practicing law for over 25 years. The newest attorney in our office has been licensed for two years. He does much of his own typing and drafting. He even has two computer screens in his office. I, on the other hand, have to consult with my 15-year-old nephew on how to use my own cell phone.

If you have younger lawyers in your office who are more adept at research, please ask them to contact one of the Committee members with suggestions about the services they need, and support they think is important to them in the practice of law. All of us must engage in this dialogue, as it's important that we move with the times.

We all recognize that the times are changing, and how we practice law is changing, too. As IMLA members, we need to review the role that IMLA plays in our new world. On that note, I have asked several members of IMLA to form the IMLA *Vision 2020 Committee* to begin the dialogue of what IMLA can do better for our members. I have asked them to review the services that IMLA offers and discuss ways that we can improve. The Committee could sure use your help and suggestions. The Co-Chairs of the Committee are Bill Kearns and Susan Moore. You should have received a notice, e-mailed to all IMLA members, about this Committee, including a list of the members. A list of the members and their e-mail addresses is included on the following page. You, too, can help this Committee in shaping a plan for the future of IMLA and the delivery of services to our membership. Everything and anything is on the table. For example:



- Does the format of our programming need to change?
- Should we keep the Mid-Year Seminar and Annual Conference?
- How would you like to receive member services?
- Is the way we communicate with
- you too little, too much, or just right?
- What about the kinds of services IMLA provides?
- How can we make better use of our State Chairs and Regional Vice-Presidents?

These are just a few suggestions.

If IMLA is to stay a viable and necessary association in our newer city attorneys' offices, then we need to meet the needs of these younger attorneys in this ever-changing, technologically advanced, age. If you have younger lawyers in your office who are more adept at research, please ask them to contact one of the Committee members with suggestions about the services they need, and support they think is important to them in the practice of law. All of us must engage in this dialogue, as it's important that we move with the times. Our office's old digests are probably in a landfill somewhere (or hopefully, have been recycled). I wish I had kept them. I still miss them – but I do now own a flat screen, hi-def, television – I'm getting there.