

**CONTRA COSTA COUNTY PUBLIC LAW LIBRARY
ANNUAL REPORT TO TRUSTEES AND BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
July 2018 – June 2019**



INTRODUCTION:

Business and Professions Code §6340 mandates that each county in California have a law library located in the county seat. Contra Costa County is highly compliant, having a main branch of the law library in Martinez as well as a smaller branch inside the Richmond Courthouse. A third branch was established inside the Pittsburg Courthouse in 2010, but lack of funding forced the closure of that branch, effective September 1, 2017. The Contra Costa County Public Law Library serves everyone, including the general public, judicial officers, members of the bar, and students.

MISSION OF THE LIBRARY:

The library's mission statement guides the activities of the library: *To provide all members of the community access to research materials to aid in understanding and preserving legal rights.* Law library trustees and staff want the people of Contra Costa County to recognize the law library as their primary source for legal information. The law library strives to render the highest quality of service to the community by providing a current, balanced collection of materials and resources along with trained staff dedicated to assisting users in meeting their legal information needs.

FUNDING:

- The amount of funding public law libraries receive from tax-based sources is zero. County law libraries in California receive over 90% of their funding from a small portion of civil court filing fees.
- In Contra Costa County, 93% of the law library's revenue is derived from civil filing fees.
- Senate Bill 1407, passed in 2007, established a moratorium on increases in filing fees. The moratorium was later extended. The result has been an inability of law libraries to increase their primary revenue source despite the fact that the cost of legal materials rises an average of 10-15% per year.
- During that same time period, the Contra Costa County Public Law Library's filing fee revenues declined 39%
- Other factors, including filing fee reductions granted to select individuals, and fee waivers, along with changes in the jurisdictional limits for small claims court during the last decade, have contributed to declining revenues, not only for law libraries, but also for the courts.
- County law libraries throughout California are experiencing the same revenue shortfalls that we are seeing in Contra Costa County, all the while, the number of self-represented litigants seeking help in California's county law libraries continues to grow.
- The Council of California County Law Librarians has been working to seek solutions to this complex and serious problem for many years, but there is still not a viable plan, such as a piece of legislation, in place to protect funding for county law libraries, although the governor did approve a budget which included some emergency funding for county law libraries.

- After a decade of frozen funding, county law libraries in California were awarded a one-time allotment of bail-out funds in the amount of \$16.5 million, collectively. In accordance with the library's commitment to providing excellent service to our users, the funds, totaling \$551,632 received in late 2018, are being used to address staffing shortages and gaps in the collection caused by reductions necessitated by the funding crisis.
- Creating sustainable funding for California's county law libraries is a critical goal for the future. Sustainability for the law library is estimated at 5 years, based on the current revenue stream. This means that unless changes are made in the way county law libraries in California are funded, the future of all law libraries, including the Contra Costa County Public Law Library is under serious threat, and public law libraries may cease to exist, despite a state statute mandating their existence.

SERVICE AND SERVICES:

The county law library operates the Martinez Branch 45 hours per week, and Richmond branch is open 40 hours per week, as was the Pittsburg branch prior to its closure. Most users fall into one of two distinct user groups: Legal professionals (the bar and the bench) whose background affords them a greater understanding of legal research materials, although they may require assistance and access to a variety of materials and services, and the general public, most of whom are severely lacking in an understanding of law itself and are usually unfamiliar with legal research materials. This latter group often requires extensive help from library staff.

- During Fiscal Year, 42,194 people contacted the law library, either by telephone, email, mail or in person to access our services. This represents an 8% decrease over the previous year. A possible explanation for the decrease may be related to the forced closure of our east county branch due to lack of funding.
- An additional 4,983 people used the library remotely by visiting our website.
- Our figures show significantly greater use by the general public than other members of the community. For example, only 2% of the emails and phone calls were from attorneys; the remaining 98% were from the general public. Seventy-six percent of computer users in the library were members of the lay public, compared to 24% computer use by legal professionals; and 92% of the reference questions came from unrepresented people with little or no legal training.

MEETINGS AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES:

- A monthly board meeting with was scheduled during each of the 12 months of the year, with 2 meetings cancelled due to lack of quorum. Ten meetings were held. The library is in strict compliance with the Ralph Brown Act and Section 6304 of the California Business and Professions Code.
- Staff training was downsized again this year due to budget shortfalls and fiscal uncertainty. Improved funding will make it possible to resume training staff in needed areas.

PUBLIC RELATIONS, MARKETING AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES:

Outreach was ongoing throughout the year. Here are some highlights:

- The library was represented at the Richmond Senior Health and Information Fair in May, which had an excellent turnout this year.
- Library staff also participated in various outreach activities sponsored by the Contra Costa County Bar Association, including the annual Bridging the Gap program.

BUILDINGS AND EQUIPMENT:

The Contra Costa County Public Law Library currently serves patrons county-wide in two locations, all of which are housed inside courthouses:

- Martinez – The main library, conveniently located in the A.F. Bray (criminal court) building;
- Richmond – Serving west county from the second floor of the Richmond courthouse;
- The library replaced all of its photocopy machines in June, 2019. The new machines are faster than the old ones, and we were able to reduce our costs.

THE COLLECTION:

- The library holds more than 40,000 books.
- Collections are up to date and kept in good order and condition.
- Holdings include more than 100,000 non-book items (microforms and CD-ROMs).
- Subscriptions to online services include the following: CEB's Onlaw, Westlaw, Heinonline, and Commerce Clearinghouse Tax Service. Online subscriptions make it possible for staff and library users to access statutory and case law for all 50 states and Washington D.C., a large body of law review and journal articles, as well as other extensive content. These services are very popular with both user groups and are frequently requested.
- Collection development is an ongoing process for the library. This means that the library's collection is constantly scrutinized for changes that need to be made, with an eye toward serving the needs of our patrons in the most cost-effective manner possible.
- For several years, declining revenues have necessitated collection development aimed at identifying material that could be eliminated and replaced with a less expensive source. All library materials are evaluated when they come up for renewal or when updates are received. Although care is taken to avoid reductions which would result in a decreased level of service to our users, declining revenues force the library to cancel subscriptions wherever possible.

PERSONNEL:

- The main branch (Martinez) has staff permanently assigned to the location.
- The Richmond branch is staffed by a combination of extra help workers and permanent staff from the main branch who rotate through the schedule.
- Although the demand for services is rising, increasing staffing significantly has been difficult due to declining revenues.
- The staff of the Contra Costa County Public Law Library remains committed to serving all users in accordance with the library's high standard of excellence.

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PROJECTS AND PLANS:

- Plans for the upcoming fiscal year will focus on the library's ability to continue to meet the research and information needs of its users within a difficult economic climate.
- The practice of evaluating all updates and renewals of library materials will continue and staff will work closely with the board of trustees to ensure that a balance of materials is available to serve our diverse users.
- Outreach will continue but will be limited due to the library's small staff and declining revenues.
- Senior citizens will again be an important focus in our outreach program. We look forward to participating in senior fairs within the county next spring.
- The law library coordinates and sponsors court-mandated training for non-professional conservatorship petitioners. Typically, a family member petitions the court to become conservator over a relative who is no longer able to care for himself or herself, personally or financially. The conservatorship training program will include 7 live workshops in 2020, with plans to work on offering filmed training sessions for conservators who have difficulty accessing the in-person trainings, such as individuals living out of the area. We offer two levels of workshops: training for families with older conservatees, and training for families with young adult conservatees.
- The library will continue to work with professional fiduciaries, the Probate Court, and families in the area who are in need of conservatorship services.

COMMENTS:

Although the Contra Costa County Public Law Library is operating in a time of special economic challenges, the staff and trustees remain committed to serving the people of Contra Costa County. A special thanks goes to the Board of Trustees of the Contra Costa County Public Law Library for its ongoing support, wisdom, and counsel.

Carey Rowan

Respectfully submitted

Carey Rowan, Library Director

Appendix A: Analysis of Fiscal Year End Financial Information, July 2018- June 2019

(Based on County General Ledger Closing dated 08/26/2019 - Prepared by Arlene Mose on 10/28/19.

REVENUES		Account #	
Court filing fees & nontaxable	9,681	\$	833,960
ONE TIME	9,975		551,632
Miscellaneous nontaxable revenue	9,975		86,596
Pooled earnings			29,513
TOTAL REVENUES		\$	1,501,701
EXPENSES			
Permanent salaries	1,011		199,938
Temporary salaries	1,013		59,246
F.I.C.A.	1,042		8,547
Retirement expenses	1,044		75,247
Employee group insurance	1,060		39,224
Retireee health insurance	1,061		25,143
Unemployment insurance	1,063		1,384
Workers' compensation insurance	1,070		509
Office expenses/ Outreach/ Forms	2,100		10,759
Postage	2,103		184
Communications	2,110		8,552
Telephone exchange service	2,111		3,712
Minor computer equipment	2,132		685
Food	2,150		362
Memberships	2,200		720
Rents and leases- Equipment	2,250		11,873
Maintenance- Equipment	2,270		1,868
Transportation and travel	2,300		8
Auto mileage employees	2,301		11
Non-County Prof Specialized Svs	2,310		17,456
Data processing services	2,315		3,598
Data processing supplies	2,316		100
Electronic database services	2,323		170,128
Information security charges	2,326		260
GSD courier service	2,331		1,228
Insurance	2,360		9,636
Adult materials: Library books	2,461		248,252
Training and registrations	2,467		25
Specialized printing	2,473		16,176
Office equipment & furniture	4,951		44,093
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$	958,923

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY PUBLIC LAW LIBRARY TRUST FUND BALANCE - SUMMARY	
Trust fund balance at beginning of FY 2018/19	\$ 844,963
Total revenues - FY 2018/19	1,501,701
Total expenses - FY 2018/19	(958,923)
Trust fund balance at close of FY 2018/19	\$1,387,741

Appendix B: STATISTICAL AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS, JULY 2017 – JUNE 2018

	MARTINEZ		RICHMOND		TOTAL	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
NUMBER OF WEBSITE VISITS	-	-	-	-	4,983	100%
NUMBER OF WEBPAGES VISITED	-	-	-	-	13,145	100%
NUMBER OF VISITS (GATE COUNT)	32,956	81%	7,857	19%	40,813	100%
MATERIALS / RESOURCES USED						
BOOKS— LEG. PROFESSIONALS	1,226	40%	500	46%	1,726	100%
BOOKS—GENERAL PUBLIC	1,805	60%	584	54%	2,389	100%
BOOKS—TOTAL	3,031	100%	1,084	100%	100%	100%
CD-ROMS— LEG. PROFESSIONALS	35	92%	0	0	35	100%
CD-ROMS— GENERAL PUBLIC	3	8%	0	0	3	100%
CD-ROMS--TOTAL	38	100%	0	0	38	100%
COPIER USE— LEGAL PROFESSIONALS	235	73%	87	27%	322	100%
COPIER USE—GENERAL PUBLIC	973	86%	160	14%	1,133	100%
COPIER USE--TOTAL	1,108	82%	247	18%	1,355	100%
COMPUTER USE— LEGAL PROFESSIONALS	721	83%	146	17%	867	100%
COMPUTER USE—GENERAL PUBLIC	2,101	76%	672	24%	2,773	100%
COMPUTER USE—TOTAL	2,822	78%	818	22%	3,640	100%
SERVICES RENDERED						
REFERENCE/RESEARCH— LEGAL PROFESSIONALS	24	55%	20	45%	44	100%
REFERENCE/RESEARCH—GENERAL PUBLIC	320	59%	219	41%	539	100%
REFERENCE/RESEARCH—TOTAL	344	59%	239	41%	583	100%
QUICK ASSISTANCE— LEGAL PROFESSIONALS	215	78%	60	22%	275	100%
QUICK ASSISTANCE— GENERAL PUBLIC	2,788	81%	675	19%	3,463	100%
QUICK ASSISTANCE—TOTAL	3,003	80%	735	20%	3,738	100%
HELP BY PHONE/EMAIL—LEGAL PROFESSIONALS	27	79%	7	21%	34	100%
HELP BY PHONE/EMAIL—GENERAL PUBLIC	1,082	80%	265	20%	1,347	100%
HELP BY PHONE/EMAIL—TOTAL	1,109	80%	272	20%	1,381	100%
HELP WITH FAX— LEGAL PROFESSIONALS	8	100%	0	0	8	100%
HELP WITH FAX— GENERAL PUBLIC	24	71%	10	29%	34	100%
HELP WITH FAX— TOTAL	32	76%	10	24%	42	100%
CASH TRANSACTIONS— LEGAL PROFESSIONALS	217	90%	23	10%	240	100%
CASH TRANSACTIONS—GENERAL PUBLIC	6,803	92%	626	8%	7,429	100%
CASH TRANSACTIONS—TOTAL	7,020	92%	649	8%	7,669	100%
PROGRAMS & SPECIAL SERVICES						
LAWYER IN THE LIBRARY (ATTENDANCE)	261	65%	141	35%	402	100%
CONSERVATORSHIP WORKSHOPS (ATTENDANCE)	-	-	-	-	146	100%