



CONTRA COSTA COUNTY PUBLIC LAW LIBRARY

ANNUAL REPORT -- July 2020-June 2021

LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S LETTER:

I am pleased to present the annual report for the Contra Costa County Public Law Library, covering fiscal year 2020-2021, in fulfillment of the requirement of California Business and Professions Code §6349. Aside from providing detailed financial information about the library's funds, as required by the statute, the report demonstrates who we are and what we do. The format has been updated, and this year, we look back not only on the previous fiscal year, but also on the last decade so as to provide a more in-depth perspective.

The last fiscal year has been among the most challenging periods of my career. In the spring of 2020, COVID-19 struck the entire world, including the law library, almost without warning and certainly without adequate time to prepare. And it has yet to release us. This brought about many changes for all of us and certainly for the law library.

Aside from the usual concerns faced by county law libraries throughout the state, such as decreased revenues juxtaposing increased demands for services, the law library was forced to close for ten weeks in the spring of 2020, in accordance with the ten-week pandemic-driven courthouse closure. In June, the main branch in Martinez reopened for remote and curbside service only until it was possible to reopen to in-person service on May 17, 2021, almost a year later. The Richmond branch remained closed during the reporting period, with a July 2021 reopening planned. During the time period between the end of the ten-week closure and the actual reopening of Martinez in May of this year, staff struggled with many issues including obtaining materials needed, such as disinfectant wipes, masks and gloves, all of which were difficult to locate for many months. Other challenges included creating signage, and developing other measures for keeping staff and library users safe, all in a rapidly changing environment. Of paramount importance was finding new and alternate ways of serving users while carrying out the library's mission and ensuring that the people of Contra Costa County have the legal information needed to access the justice they seek.

We wish to thank our users for their patience and loyalty as we all work together in trying times to assist people in meeting their legal information needs. A special thanks goes to the Board of Trustees of the Contra Costa County Public Law Library for its ongoing support, wisdom, and counsel. It is an honor to serve as the director of the law library.

Carey Rowan

Respectfully submitted _____

Carey Rowan, Library Director

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. 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:

- County law libraries in California receive over 90% of their funding from a small portion of civil court 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.
- Creating sustainable funding for California's county law libraries is a critical goal for the future. Previous reports have estimated sustainability for the law library 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. (Business and Professions §6340). The current legislature in California appears to understand California's county law libraries and the vital role they play in access to justice for all Californians. There is hope that legislation providing for ongoing funding will be forthcoming. Such legislation would replace the unworkable and archaic method of funding which now exists.

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY PUBLIC LAW LIBRARY: FUNDING AND REVENUE FACTS

Per Business & Professions Code §6321 et seq., the main funding source for California's county law libraries is a small portion of civil court filing fees.

More than 90% of revenues for county law libraries in California are derived from civil filing fees. In Contra Costa County, 91% of law library funding is from filing fees.

Senate Bill 1407 (2008) established a moratorium on California's county law libraries' ability to increase their portion of civil filing fees. This resulted in an economic crisis for law libraries throughout the state.

Business & Professions Code §6340 requires each county to have a public law library. The current method of funding is outdated and unsustainable. Stable funding for these valuable resources which have served Californians for more than 100 years must be established.

Appendix A: Analysis of Fiscal Year End Financial Information, July 2020- June 2021

Prepared by Arlene Mose, CPA on 9/7/21.

REVENUES	Account #	
Court filing fees & nontaxable	9681	\$632,456
State Supplemental Funds	9975	183,922
Miscellaneous Nontaxable Revenue	9975	6,128
Pooled earnings	0800	12,016
TOTAL REVENUES		\$834,522

EXPENSES		
Permanent salaries	1011	\$ 205,591
Temporary salaries	1013	29,693
F.I.C.A.	1042	5,252
Retirement expenses	1044	75,193
Employee group insurance	1060	41,466
Retiree health insurance	1061	27,565
Unemployment insurance	1063	1,761
Workers' compensation insurance	1070	(216)
Office expenses/ Outreach/ Forms	2100	5,879
Postage	2103	156
Communications	2110	6,378
Telephone exchange service	2111	3,458
Memberships	2200	720
Rents and leases- Equipment	2250	10,056
Maintenance- Equipment	2270	2,668
Request Maintenance	2284	241
Auto Mileage	2301	11
Professional/Specialized Service	2310	5,426
Data Processing Service	2315	3,462

Electronic database services	2323	190,646
Information security charges	2326	342
GSD courier service	2331	1,430
Other Telecomm Services	2335	3,514
Insurance	2360	13,153
Adult materials: Library books	2461	255,341
Specialized printing	2473	5,147
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$894,333

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY PUBLIC LAW LIBRARY TRUST FUND BALANCE - SUMMARY	
Trust fund balance at beginning of FY 2020-2021	\$1,290,360
Total revenues - FY 2020-2021	783,903
Total revenues - FY 2020-2021 (May 2021)	50,618
Total expenses - FY 2020-2021	(894,333)
Trust fund balance at close of FY 2020-2021	\$1,230,548

**WHAT WE DO – A DECADE OF SERVICE
LOOKING AT THE NUMBERS**

**326,620 patrons
visited the Law
Library from
2010-2020.**

**The average number of annual
visits to the Law Library's
website is 6,456.**

**37,150 Library
Patrons used
our computers
in the past
decade.**

**92 % of all
reference
questions are
submitted by
unrepresented
persons.**

**An average of
222 books are
used daily in the
Law Library.**

**908 people
received court-
required
Conservatorship
training provided
by the Law Library
in the last 10
years.**

**More than 3,000
people have received
assistance from
volunteer attorneys
at our Lawyer in the
Library clinic since it
began.**

**An average
of 197 people
attend
Guardianship
workshops at
the Law
Library each
year.**



THE COLLECTION:

- The law library's emphasis is based on having a relevant, balanced collection which serves the needs of all users: the bar, the bench, the general public, professionals and elected officials, and students.
- Having a balanced collection, relevant collection means offering both print and online resources in a variety of legal topics, with heavy emphasis on California law, but including federal and multi state material.
- 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, Lexis Digital Library, and Nolo Press. 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. Both Lexis Digital Library and the Nolo Press online subscription are especially important in this COVID era as these are services which library users can access without having to physically come to the library.



- The library offers WiFi access for its users if needed.
- 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.

WHERE WE ARE

BUILDINGS AND EQUIPMENT:

Normally, 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 the west county from the second floor of the Richmond courthouse.

When the library is fully operational, public computers, photocopying, scanning and faxing services are available.

The Martinez branch is currently open; however, Richmond is closed with reopening expected early in the new fiscal year once stable staffing is achieved.



During the previous fiscal year, it became known that the court needed the space currently occupied by the Law Library. The county Board of Supervisors hopes to make space available for the library in a planned new building to be located on Pine and Main Street in Martinez. This would mean a relocation of the Martinez branch to the new site which is approximately one block away. The location is excellent since it is still close to all three courthouses in downtown Martinez. Law library staff will work with Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors and County Administration as well as the court as needed to ensure the success of this plan.

WHO WE ARE

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

"There is in each county of this State a board of law library trustees, which governs the law library established for the county under the provisions of this chapter." Business and Professions Code §6300.

CURRENT BOARD OF TRUSTEES	
Dean Barbieri, Esq. – President	Hon. Theresa Canepa – Trustee
Hon. Barry Baskin – Vice-President	Hon. Jill Fannin - Trustee
Nolan Armstrong, Esq. – Secretary	(2 Vacant seats)

STAFF:

The most extensive library collection on earth would be of little value without staff to guide and assist library customers in its use. And the best staff in the world would be rendered less effective without appropriate governance. Such governance is set forth in the state statute, as referenced above.

- The main branch (Martinez) has staff permanently assigned to the location.
- The Richmond branch, when open, is staffed by a combination of extra help workers and permanent staff from the main branch who rotate through the schedule.
- Staff works as a team, and the team functions in cooperation with colleagues from other law libraries when outside assistance or resources are needed.
- 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.