CONTRA COSTA COUNTY PUBLIC LAW LIBRARY

ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

1026 Escobar Street, Suite 2C
Martinez, CA 94553
http://www.cccpllib.org
(925) 655-4600

RECEIVED
OCT 22 2025
CLERK BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
CONTRA COSTA CO.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	**1**
Message from the Director	**2**
Introduction	**3**
Mission	**3**
Vision	**3**
What We Do	**3, 4**
Clinics & Workshops	**4**
Reference Interactions	**4, 5**
Funding	**5, 6**
Contra Costa Public Law Library Trust FY 2024-25 Financial Condition Statement	**7**
Board of Trustee & Staff	**8**
Statements from Library Users	**9**
Looking Ahead	**10**
Recording Secretary and President Signatures	**11 – 13**

Message from Director Amreet Sandhu

Welcome! On behalf of the Board of Trustees and staff of Contra Costa County Public Law Library, and in fulfillment of the requirement of Business and Professions Code §6349, it is my pleasure to present our law library's 2024-25 Annual Report.

The fiscal year ending June 30, 2025 dovetailed into a summer of change for our library, its branches, and its staff. I began serving in my position on August 1, 2025, after our fiscal year ended. Our former Director Carey Rowan retired soon after on August 29, 2025 with an impressive 17 years of service to our library. This report was compiled in September combining the shared knowledge of Director Rowan, our incredible staff, and previous reports.

My role at the library brings with it many changes. Some changes are small, such as switching our preferred fonts. Other changes are larger, such as completing tasks related to the closure of our library's David del Simone Memorial Richmond Branch while still supporting law library users throughout Contra Costa County in remaining connected to our print and digital collections, local forms and instructions, our knowledgeable staff, and our extensive resources. Amidst the changes, one distinguishing feature of our library remains our top priority: ensuring the continued exceptional treatment our library users receive when entering our library to conduct their own legal research.

Having worked in several libraries and legal settings, it was immediately clear to me that our staff is our greatest asset. Observing our reference and information team handle phone calls, emails, and in-person library visits with trauma-informed care, near-endless patience, refined skill, and even humor when appropriate in providing legal information to Contra Costa County residents—many in crisis—helped me understand why our library has the strong reputation it does within both the California County Public Law Library system and the larger library user community. I have personally witnessed our staff calm and even bring smiles to the faces of community members with whom we all interact either inside or outside of the library. In addition to supporting members of the bench and bar, our staff assist those who feel they are in hopeless legal situations to gain some understanding and command of their cases. These library users leave feeling they may have a chance at accessing justice. It is nothing short of amazing work, and it benefits us all.

I am honored to be a part of this team. Let's get started as we take a look at staffing and governance or who we are, what we do, how we do it, funding, where we have been, and where we are going.

Introduction

Business and Professions Code §6340 mandates that each county in California has a law library located in the county seat. Contra Costa County is highly compliant, with its law library located in Martinez. The Contra Costa County Public Law Library serves everyone, including the general public, judicial officers, members of the bar, and students.

Law Library Mission

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 vetted, updated, and relevant 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.

Vision

The vision of the Contra Costa Public Law Library is to be a significant legal information resource committed to excellent service. The law library strives to provide an environment that is conducive to learning and research, offering vital resources to those with no other means of accessing them.

What We Do

The law library provides access to legal information, court forms, referrals to other services and agencies, as well as offering workshops and clinics. There are computers for patrons to use for legal research, online workshops and completing court forms.

Library patrons are served in person at the Reference and Information Desk at the front of the library, but remote services are also available. We are available via phone and through a dedicated reference email address: reference@ll.cccounty.us.

Many patrons approach the library needing forms or forms packets, but often people are bewildered as to how to complete the forms. The library provides samples of many of the most common forms which patrons can use to help them understand the complexities of the paperwork and complete it correctly. Staff is also able to direct library users to the current California Judicial Council form instructions and other self-help guides through

Nolo Press, Continuing Education of the Bar, West/Thompson Reuters, and Lexis print and digital materials. Some of these materials are available remotely to assist users within the county who cannot access our physical location. We offer California-specific material on almost all areas of law, as well as federal statutes and case law. Our physical collection contains approximately 40,000 items, with 1,062 items updated in FY 2024-25, amounting to a total of $179,398.81.

The law library provides seven public service computers that can be used for research, completing workshops, or preparing court paperwork. We also provide a laptop to library users requiring one for remote/Zoom hearings.

Clinics & Workshops

Our Lawyer in the Library clinic, now in its 15th year, remains extremely popular with self-represented individuals. Lawyer in the Library provides free legal consultation to unrepresented persons with a legal problem or question who need information, direction, or advice from an experienced attorney. Several clinics were held during Fiscal Year 2024-25. The Court Accounting workshops offered via Zoom is another popular program available to individuals needing to submit an accounting to the court. Petitioners in decedent estate cases and those who are required by statute to submit a court reporting in conjunction with a conservatorship appointment frequently request a space in the class. Staff reports that five classes were held during the fiscal year.

Reference Interactions

Law library staff members are often asked what types of questions our patrons ask when visiting, emailing or calling the library. Here are some examples of the types of inquiries we routinely receive:

Adoption
Appeals
Bankruptcy
Conservatorship
Credit card lawsuit
Custody
Cyberbullying
Decedent estate
Divorce
Elder Abuse
Employment
Eviction
Expungements
Financial support
Fraud
Guardianship
Identity theft
Immigration
Mechanics Lien
Name Change
Neighbor law
Personal Injury
Police Misconduct
Power of Attorney
Restraining order
Small Claims
Trust

Staff reports that in any given month at the law library, the bulk of library users request legal information on family law matters, including navigation to and instructions for completing forms. As an example, in July 2024 reference interactions included more than 740 questions about family law, with 500 of those including questions about forms, and 270 of those questions including requests for samples. Staff reports that the next most frequently asked for topics include restraining orders, landlord-tenant issues, and civil procedure topics.

Staff estimates that self-represented litigants are the overwhelming majority of in-person library users, three-quarters of email users, and half of phone users. Staff estimates that attorneys comprise a small minority of in-person library users, one quarter of email users, and the other half of phone users.

Funding

Funding for county law libraries in California diminished 40% since California Statute Chapter 311 (2008) became effective, making it impossible for law libraries to increase their portion of civil filing fees, which accounts for at least 90% of their funding base. Other factors, including filing fee reductions granted to select individuals, and fee waivers, along with changes in the jurisdictional limits for small claims courts during the last decade, have contributed to declining revenues, not only for law libraries, but also for the courts.

Meanwhile, Director Rowan reports that the figures for the Contra Costa County Public Law Library show an increase in demand for services more than tenfold. Unlike general public libraries, such as those under the jurisdiction of counties or cities, public law libraries receive no funding from the tax base. Since 2019, the Council of California County Law Librarians obtained bail-out funds for law libraries on three separate occasions. Although these cash awards have helped law libraries, they are not permanent solutions.

Contra Costa County Public Law Library staff instituted several measures in response to the financial crisis. The library closed its Pittsburgh and Richmond locations, with staff shortages and low patron usage necessitating the Richmond branch's closure. To bridge the gap, the law library trustees facilitated the involvement of a west county coalition of organizations to provide services to residents. The County was very receptive to this idea. Staff increased the selectivity of collection acquisitions and discontinued participation in off-site workshops, seminars, and professional conferences, with staff now only accessing training that may be done at no cost and remotely. Creating sustainable funding for California's county law libraries is a critical goal for the future.

Contra Costa County Public Law Library: Funding and Revenue Facts

Business & Professions Code §6340 mandates that each county have a law library. The current method of funding law libraries has resulted in cuts to our law library's operating budgets. An inability to find a legislative solution threatens this valuable resource which has served Californians for more than 100 years.

Per Business & Professions Code §6321 et seq., the funding source for California's county law libraries is a small portion of civil court filing fees. No revenue is generated from services that do not involve a court filing, such as estate planning or starting a business.

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

SB 1407 (2008) established a moratorium on the ability of California's County Law Libraries to increase their portion of civil filing fees. This resulted in an ongoing economic crisis for county law libraries statewide.

Contra Costa Public Law Library Trust
FY 2024-25 Financial Condition Statement

Balance Sheet

	Accounts	Totals
Assets		
Cash & cash equivalents	0010,0020	$1,972,724.17
Accounts receivable	0100	$90,862.13
Due from other funds	0180	$9,792.03
Total assets		**$2,073,378.33**
Liabilities		
Accounts payable	0500, 0510	$46,480.00
Due to other funds	0540	$6,258.40
Subsequent accounts payable		$426.92
Total liabilities		**$53,165.32**
Fund Balance		
Prior year fund balance		$1,967,541.02
Current year income		52,671.99
Total fund balance		2,020,213.01
Total liabilities & fund balance		**$2,073,378.33**

Profit & Loss Statement

Revenues		
Charges for services, court filing fees	9600	$1,048,696.51
Revenue from fax, copies, donations, & state supplemental funds	9800	$120,927.00
Receipts	0800	$80,614.48
Total revenues		**$1,250,237.99**
Expenditures		
Salaries & benefits	1000	$559,113.00
Services and supplies	2000	$635,711.00
Miscellaneous	3000, 3611, 3614	$2,742.00
Total expenditures		**$1,197,566.00**
Net income		**$52,671.99**

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 & Professions Code §6300

Contra Costa County Public Law Library Board of Trustees		
	Hon. Terri Mockler, President, Board of Trustees	
Hon. Virginia George, Vice-President		Nolan Armstrong, Esq., Secretary, Ended Term January 2025
Hon. Wendy Coats, Trustee		Hon. Melissa O'Connell, Trustee, Ended Term January 2025
Hon. John Devine, Trustee		Hon. Robert Leach Trustee, Joined February 2025
Joshua Klein, Esq., Trustee		Steven Piser, Esq. Trustee, Joined February 2025

Law Library Staff

Contra Costa County Public Law Library Staff	
Carey Rowan, Full-time, Library Director and Secretary to the Board, Retired August 29, 2025	Denise Mendoza, Full-time, Administrative Assistant, Office Manager, and Collection Development
Shannon Benson, Full-time, Library Assistant, Tech. Services, Reference and Collection Development	Daniel Randleman, Full-time, Library Assistant, Reference
Deanna Ray, Full-time, Library Assistant, Reference	Taeho Chung, Part-time, On-call Library Assistant, Reference
Ebony Tramble, Part-time On-Call Library Assistant, Reference, Departed January 2025	

Statements from Law Library Users*

**Identifying information has been removed to respect patron privacy*

"Family Law Gurus, I just wanted to share my appreciation for all of your guidance and enormous patience while I try and navigate through a world I do not know. I especially want to share my gratitude for your kindness when I found myself without enough to eat and you shared what you have... with me! A strange combination of shame, gratefulness, and embarrassment all wrapped in one huge thank you." *July 2025*

"Hello, I came to the law library and wasn't feeling well with all the things I have been through with my divorce and keeping my son safe and Ms. Deanna was wonderful and helpful. I'm really glad that she was here. She's wonderful." *February 2025*

'Mrs. Deanna is always so kind, so nice, so sweet and courteous to customers and always goes above and beyond doing her job and doing it well. She is amazing and I thank God for people like her who always is willing to help people in need." *March 2025*

"I'm grateful that the library is here for residents to use to learn about the law. I received essential guidance here from the reference books and your library staff are a very helpful and knowledgeable resource." *May 2025*

"This is my feedback about my interactions with Ms. Shannon. This is my third time coming to the law library every time Ms. Shannon has helped me a great deal. She is very kind, professional, and knowledgeable. She goes to details and explains them more than once without making people feel uncomfortable. I would like to express my deep appreciation to her for the help that she provided for me and my son. I was able to overturn a false claim and order to vacate." *May 2025*

Looking Ahead

Plans for the 2025-26 Fiscal Year will focus on the following areas:

- Expanding outreach services to library-users throughout the county, and outside of Martinez;

- Updating communication platforms, software, materials, and policies to reflect current library changes and needs; particularly regarding the consolidation of services into one location;

- Collaborating more closely with community legal service providers, the Contra Costa County Bar Association, and the Contra Costa and Richmond Public Library systems to offer increased services and referrals for those who need them;

- Gaining information on additional sources of revenue and legislative possibilities for California's County Law Library system and funding increases;

- Pairing collection development and collection management with the needs of library users within budget parameters;

- Hosting quarterly budget reviews;

- Continuing and perhaps expanding programs such as Lawyer in the Library and Court Accounting workshops;

- Completing tasks related to the closures of the David del Simone Memorial Law Library in Richmond; and

- Providing ongoing excellent service to all who seek assistance at the Contra Costa County Public Law Library.

Annual Report of the Board of Law Library Trustees
County of Contra Costa, State of California
Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025

TO THE HONORABLE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF CONTRA COSTA, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

The undersigned, Recording Secretary of the Board of Law Library Trustees, County of Contra Costa, State of California, respectfully submits this report of the finances of the said trust and other information as might be of interest, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, based upon information provided her by the Auditor-Controller of said County and Arlene K. Mose, CPA hired by the Board of Trustees of the Law Library, all information she believes to be true pursuant to Business & Professions Code §6349 & §6350.

Respectfully submitted this 22nd day of October, 2025.

Signed_____

Amreet Sandhu, Recording Secretary
Contra Costa County Public Law Library Board of Trustees

Annual Report of the Board of Law Library Trustees
County of Contra Costa, State of California
Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025

TO ROBERT CAMPBELL, AUDITOR-CONTROLLER
COUNTY OF CONTRA COSTA, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Pursuant to §6349 and §6350 of the California Business and Professional Code, the Board of the Public Law Library Trustees respectfully submits to the auditor of the county its annual report of the condition of its trust, with full statements of all property and money received, the number of books, periodicals and other publications on hand, the number added by purchase, gift, or otherwise, and other information as might be of interest for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

Respectfully submitted this 22nd day of October, 2025.

Signed_____

Amreet Sandhu, Recording Secretary
Contra Costa County Public Law Library Board of Trustees

Annual Report of the Board of Law Library Trustees
County of Contra Costa, State of California
Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2025

TO THE HONORABLE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF CONTRA COSTA, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Pursuant to §6349 and §6350 of the California Business and Professional Code, the Board of Law Library Trustees respectfully submits to the Honorable Board its annual report of the condition of its trust, with full statements of all property and money received, the number of books, periodicals and other publications on hand, the number added by purchase, gift, or otherwise, and other information as might be of interest for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

Respectfully submitted this 22 day of October, 2025.

Terri Mockler

Hon. Terri Mockler, President
Public Law Library Board of Trustees
County of Contra Costa, State of California