



San Francisco Law Library

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LAW LIBRARY BUDGET PRESENTATION

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Introduction:

The law library budget remains consistent year to year with no requests for new positions or funding for special programs. Any annual changes relate to rent, utilities or salaries and benefits, which are determined by the mayor's office with the exception of salaries which are solely the province of the law library board of trustees and set by that board, pursuant to the SF Charter. The library's appropriation is mandated by the SF Charter. The city appropriation funds three positions. One position needs to be filled, which is addressed below.

Staffing:

- **How many vacancies do you currently have in your Department and how does that number compare to vacancies over the last five years?**

Issue re: Head of Technical Services/Electronic Services Position (formerly called Bookbinder)

The SF Charter mandates that the city and county fund three positions: the Director, Assistant Director and the third position whose title was updated from Bookbinder to Head of Technical Services/Electronic Librarian in 1998, which is the modern iteration of bookbinder technical services, with the approval of HR.¹ The position has been vacant since FY 2008-09. The library was unable to find a suitable replacement with both technical services and systems experience, and in 2008-09 opted to use and pay for the services of private IT firm for the systems and desktop support portion of the position duties until quality control became an issue and DT took over systems, security, and desktop support about 2018, with the intention of filling the position when possible. The Library's priority during that time was the relocation of the law library from its "temporary" quarters in the Veterans building when City Hall was retrofitted. These efforts went from 1997 until Fall of 2013 when the library was moved to its current location.

- **Have you used budget savings from vacancies in the past?**

The Law Library rarely has vacancies. The director has been in her position for 31 years, the Assistant Director 8 years, with the exception of the Technical Services position.

In 2017-18, the law library proposed filling the Technical Services (Bookbinder) position, but the city needed the basement of Brooks Hall to be emptied. The city had stored a significant portion of the library's collection there, when there was no room yet at the library. The Law Library did not have its own funds to take on this months' long process, so the city proposed to utilize the Technical Services/Bookbinder position funding to pay for the expenses in 2018 -19. The law library agreed to do so and postpone filling that position.

¹ HR advised at the time that the same position number 0190 be used for the new name.

In 2019-20 the city required cuts to department budgets, but with such a small appropriation, the library had no way to do that. So, the library agreed to hold off again on filling the position so the savings could contribute to the city's savings mandate. The following two years the library wanted and needed to fill this position, but we were pressured to contribute the funds to the city's budget. And the library was not in a situation to fill the position during the COVID years. However, the law library did not commit to leaving the position unfilled in FY 2022-23, and the city announced early in the budget prep process that there were sufficient funds that cutbacks in appropriations would not be necessary.

- **How have these vacancies affected the work of your Department?**

The city does not fund our library staff salaries, their benefits, any library materials including print, legal databases, equipment, liability, and other insurance, furnishings, computers, and all the other expenses the library needs. Those costs are paid by the library's share of filing fees which declined drastically during COVID. Therefore, we had to lay off 3 people and cancel major legal database and print subscriptions. We are unable to hire for those laid off positions due to the cost, so the library desperately needs this position to be filled. We had to renegotiate our subscriptions to Westlaw and other databases and print subscriptions now that we reopened. We cannot be open to the public full time without sufficient staff. (We do continue to provide sophisticated digital reference when we are not open to the public.)

- **Why are these positions still vacant, please refer to both external and internal hiring obstacles?**

The law library proposed filling the position in 2022-23 and thereafter. In early May, the mayor's budget office told the law library that it could not fill the position because "because the city had negotiated MOUs for other city positions and there were no longer funds available to fill this position." Furthermore, we were told since the budget last year did not indicate an increase for this position for FY 2022-23, and 24, we also could not fill that position. That poses a catch 22. If the library does not fill the position for that reason, it cannot be added in the next three years unless it is part of the FY 2022-23 budget.

- **What is your plan to reach full staffing capacity in the upcoming years?**

We need support from the city to fill this Charter mandated vacancy. We are attempting to sort this out with the mayor's budget office before the budget hearing, but this has not happened at the time of this report.

- **How do you communicate your work with the public? Please include details on how you reach non-English speaking communities and how you communicate with cultural competency?**

Communication with the public

The law library is unique in that patrons are not interested in finding us until they have a need for legal information and/or a legal remedy. Much of our outreach to the public comes from partnerships with the courts and legal partners such as legal services, BASF, and solo attorneys; thus, we concentrate a great effort on advertising to and educating partners on our resources and services enabling them to provide public referrals to us including:

- Cross training and providing flyers and "legal prescription" handouts with directional information to SFLL to the SF Superior Court self-help center
- The library engages in outreach and cross-training with librarians at the SFPL Government Information Center, and the library also coordinate cooperative legal response services with the SFPL prisoner services team
- Library staff conduct library tours – virtually and in-person – to legal service partners to educate them on how the library services can help them and their clients

- The library hosts clinics, such as Bay Area Legal Aid’s Consumer Rights Clinics in the library to bring patrons to help and resources
- General ways the library communicates its work with monthly newsletter, and social media (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook)

How do you reach non-English speaking communities?

Because legal research for the public is already difficult without a language barrier and 99% of all legal information publications are in English, translations work best when a public patron can bring in a family member or friend to help interpret the legal issue and resources between a patron and our staff. Legal issues also tend to be private and working with a family member or friend also assists with confidentiality.

- Library staff use the Citywide interpretation line, when needed.
- The library makes referrals to legal services groups that specialize in working with patrons with different languages. (examples [La Raza Centro Legal Asian Law Caucus](#) and [San Francisco Immigrant Legal and Education Network](#))
- The California County Law Libraries consortium, of which the SF Law Library is a member, has a work group actively engaged in discovering and recommending publications in other languages for our pro-per patrons, sadly there are few good, current resources

How does the library communicate with cultural competency?

All legal issues are sensitive and our staff applies the same sensitivity training to all patrons questions regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or sexual orientation – per our [SFL Equity and Diversity Statement](#) on our website.

The library serves a diverse population, and several staff members’ origins are from different cultures. Unfortunately, some of our diverse staff has been challenged by patrons who are not culturally sensitive. Library policy and training require staff respect, awareness, sensitivity, and communication skills for all patrons including those from various cultures, the mentally challenged, the disabled and others. Serving people in need is our mission.

How is community feedback received, tracked, and incorporated into the work of your Department?

The library frequently receives feedback from the community in the form of in-person reporting, letters, email, and social media feedback. All feedback is reviewed for content and needs. Patron suggestions and recommendations are reviewed and considered. Ideas are frequently incorporated into our resources and services to make them more accessible. The director and assistant director monitor and review all feedback and respond to users concerns.

Each staff member shares the responsibility of creating and sharing content in our newsletters and social media to promote our services and resources. All staff participate in a portion of programming, newsletters, library tours, and social media posting.

As the library expands its staff to replace removed positions, we hope to have a staff member dedicated to outreach and patron experience.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia R. Bell, Director