



San Francisco Law Library
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(415) 554-1792 □ <http://www.sflawlibrary.com>

LAW LIBRARY BUDGET PRESENTATION

FY 2023-24 and FY 2024-25

June 16, 2023

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 in the Budgetary & Operational Challenges section below.

Law Library Funding

The law library's appropriation is funded by the general fund. Pursuant to State Law and the SF Charter, the city is required to fund three management positions, utilities (DT services & telecom), rent, materials and supplies, and valuable papers insurance. The mayor's proposed appropriation for FY 2023-24 is \$1,794,860, a 16% decrease from the \$2,131,664 current year appropriation, but does not include funding for the third Charter-mandated head of technical services position. The city does not fund all other essential library staff salaries, their benefits, library materials including print and legal databases, equipment, liability, and other insurance, furnishings, computers, reproduction costs, public legal education programs, reference services, and all the other expenses a library needs to function. Those costs are paid by the library's share of civil court fees which declined drastically during COVID. As a result, the law library had to lay off two reference librarians, a technical services clerk, and weekend staff, and cancel major legal database and print subscriptions. The law library is unable to replace these positions due to the cost. As a result, the head of technical services position is critically needed to facilitate broader outreach and reference services for the public.

The law library's overriding mission is to provide the people of San Francisco free access to legal information and specialized reference assistance in the use of those resources so they may preserve their rights and conduct their legal affairs.

DT Appropriation - The law library's DT appropriation is an essential component of extensive legal information services to the public, legal profession, agencies, students, and others as it provides the secure and modern technology required to provide accessible access to justice. It supports access to critical legal databases, reference staff services, and library systems by providing a safe and secure network and internet access. Recent technology enhancements during COVID enabled the law library to expand its reach to a wider audience of patrons through virtual programs, communications, and remote legal database offerings.

Real Estate Appropriation - The library's space funded by the real estate appropriation enables the library to provide space for free access to public computers and other legal resources for extensive and free legal research information. The library is an essential resource for small businesses, solo/small firm attorneys, legal services, and the public who would be unable to afford these expensive legal databases and would thus be denied access. The library hosts free legal education programs, space for a legal services consumer rights clinic, and free use of conference rooms for legal meetings and programs.

Budgetary & Operational Challenges

Staffing Appropriation - The SF Charter mandates that the city and county fund three positions: the director, assistant director, and head of technical services. These positions ensure that the law library is managed by experienced legal information professionals, who lead a professional staff of reference, technical services, and clerical support staff.

Unfortunately, the head of technical services position has not been funded for the last several years although it is critically needed to expand outreach services and for additional reference support. The position has been vacant since FY 2008-09. The law 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 a 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, with the intention to fill the technical services position in FY 2017-18. However, at that time the city needed library stored materials in the basement of Brooks Hall to be vacated. The library agreed to postpone hiring for that position so that the funds could be used to pay for the Brooks Hall project.

In 2019-20 the city required cuts to department budgets, but with such a small appropriation, the library had no way to do that. However, 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 it was pressured to contribute the funds to the city's budget. The library was not in a situation to fill the position during the COVID years, but the law library did not commit to leaving the position unfilled in FY 2022-23. Although the city informed departments during the budget preparation period that there were sufficient funds so that cutbacks in appropriations would not be necessary for FY 2022-23 and departments were encouraged to fill vacancies, the mayor's budget office would not fund the position, "because the city had negotiated MOUs for other city positions and there were no longer funds available to fill this position." Furthermore, the law library was informed that since the previous two-year budget maintained the same unfunded status for FY 2022-23, and 24, the position would not be funded. That poses a catch 22, year after year. The library critically needs this position, none of the other necessary library staff are funded by the city, and this position needs to be added back into the budget. The law library respectfully requests that the funding be restored for this single position to comply with state law and the Charter.

Essential Resources Budgetary Challenges - Legal resources are not funded by the city. Legal materials are extraordinarily expensive, and the law library struggles to afford resources in the variety of formats required by the diverse nature of its patrons. Public law libraries are required to offer materials in both print and digital formats as well as a variety of literacy levels to serve our communities. The law library continuously reviews its resource contracts and collaborates with other departments and county law libraries to share resources and engage in savings through consortiums. Professional librarian staffing is important to assist patrons unfamiliar with legal resources and procedures. During COVID we lost two reference librarians, a technical services clerk, and the weekend staff to layoffs. The law library is limited in its outreach efforts and programming without funding for its third Charter-mandated position.

Library Performance Measures

The law library's performance goals measure its multi-format collection resources, outreach, and legal education programming, which are high priorities for the law library.

Budget Reductions

The law library's FY 2023-24 budget is a 16% reduction from the current FY 2022-23 budget due largely to a reduction in rent in a new lease.

Language Access & Poverty Alleviation

Language Access Assistance - 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.

This year the library transitioned to the new SF.GOV website and worked with Digital Services to increase accessibility and provide translation on our pages in Spanish, Chinese, and Filipino. A bilingual staff member provides Spanish communication assistance. Library staff use the Citywide interpretation line, when needed, and make referrals to legal services groups that specialize in working with patrons with different languages. E.g., [La Raza Centro Legal Asian Law Caucus](#) and [San Francisco Immigrant Legal and Education Network](#).

How the Law Library Provides Help to Alleviate Poverty Issues - Library resources, services, and programs are available free of charge to all, allowing patrons access to authentic legal materials to support their legal needs and protect their rights. Resources are provided in a variety of formats and levels, to allow patrons to understand the law on any topic including family law, housing, and employment issues. The library hosts a monthly free legal clinic on consumer rights, and offers free educational programs on important legal topics, such as landlord tenant issues, as well as courses on legal research so patrons can learn the law and conduct their legal affairs.

During and after COVID the law library has been flooded with questions from low-income parents, seniors, students, laid off workers, and business owners about illegal evictions, urgent child custody and child support issues, domestic violence, workers’ rights, small business relief, estate planning, and government benefits. Legal issues surrounding conservatorships, employment, housing, domestic violence, divorce, discrimination, health benefits, end-of-life care, and consumer debt continue to escalate as a result of current economic challenges. With the implementation of the CARE Act, (SB 1338, 2022), the law library anticipates that the courts and community organizations will refer family members to the law library to obtain CARE Act petitions and information packets, learn about the process and the respondent’s rights, and determine whether a loved one may be eligible for help, housing or public benefits under the CARE Act. Many of these patrons will need assistance from library staff using public computers to complete and print the required forms, and court-appointed attorneys for CARE Act respondents will use the library’s resources and legal databases to research relevant issues and prepare for status hearings. The law library will meet these new challenges in addition to the services it already provides.

Respectfully submitted,



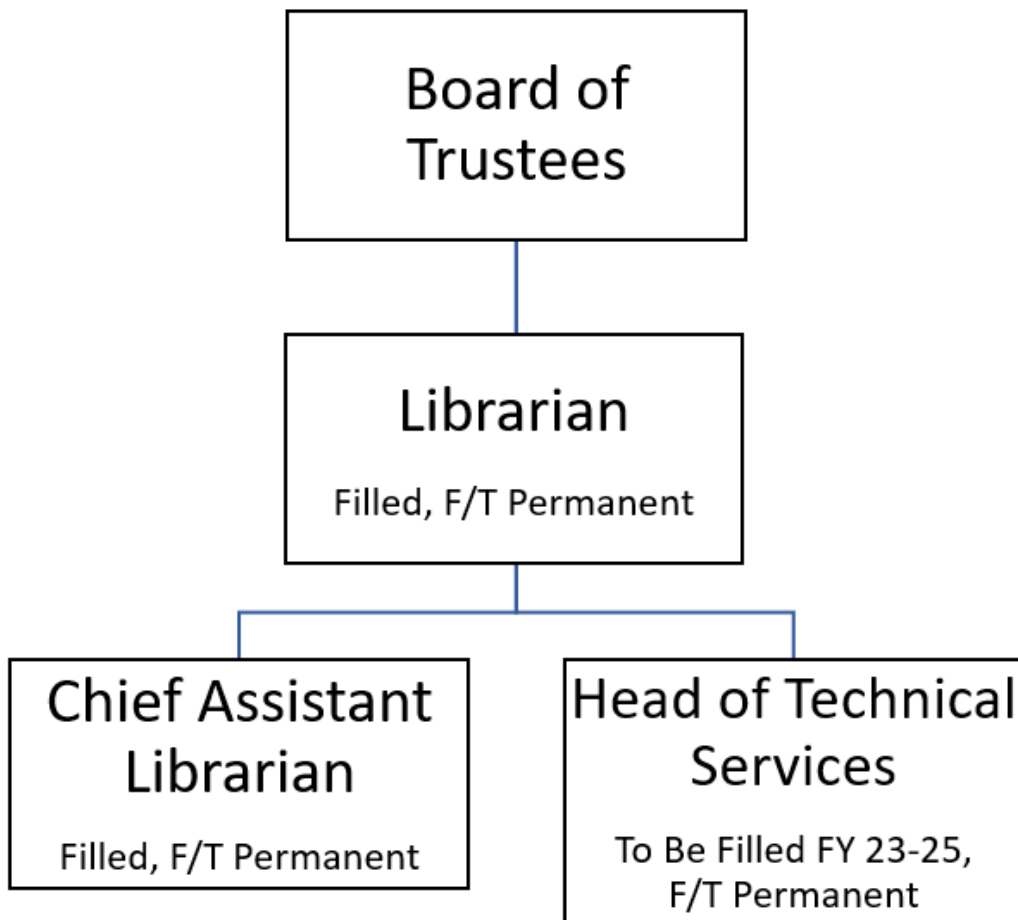
Marcia R. Bell, Director



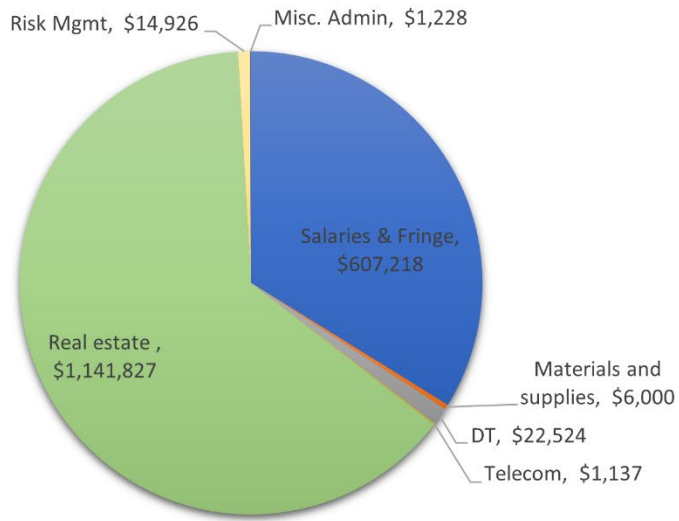
Diane M. Rodriguez, Assistant Director



**Organizational Chart
Fiscal Year 2023-24 & 2024-25**



Law Library FY 2023-24 Appropriation Total: \$1,794,860



■ Salaries & Fringe ■ Materials and supplies ■ DT ■ Telecom ■ Real estate ■ Risk Mgmt ■ Misc. Admin

SINCE



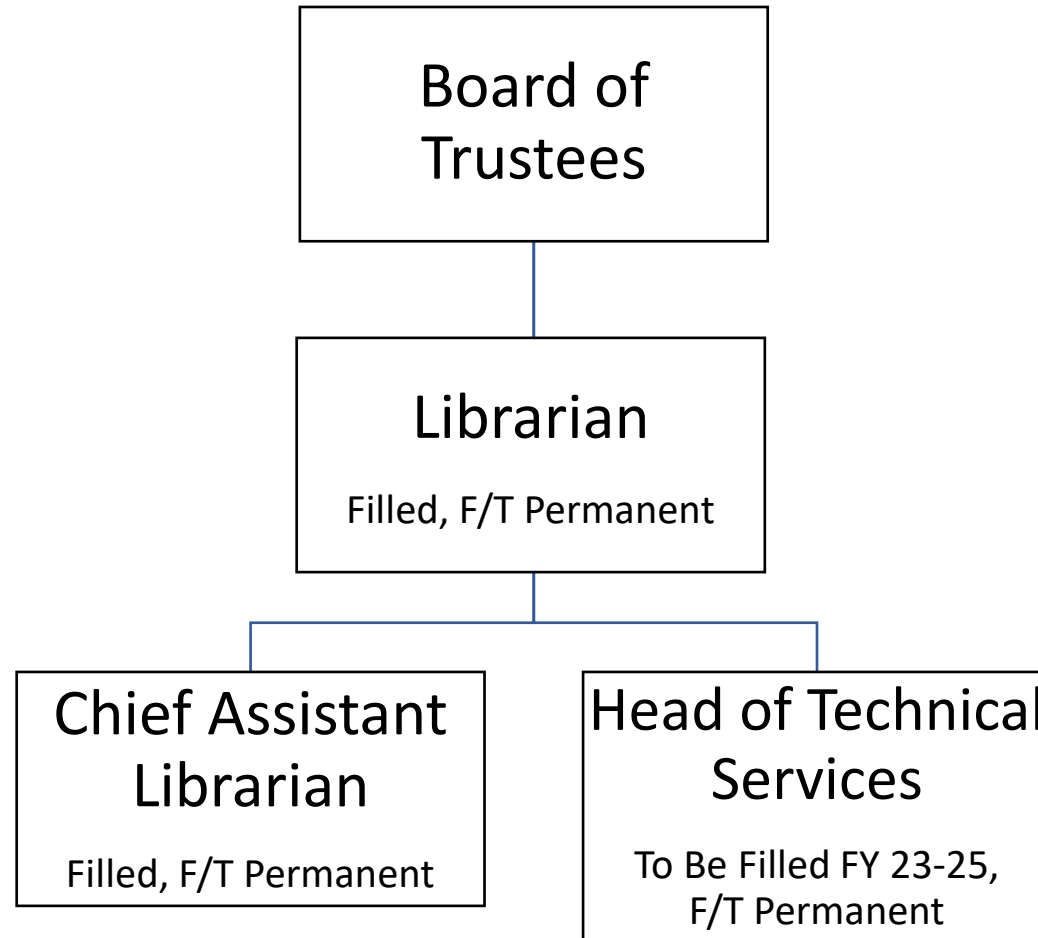
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SAN FRANCISCO
LAW LIBRARY

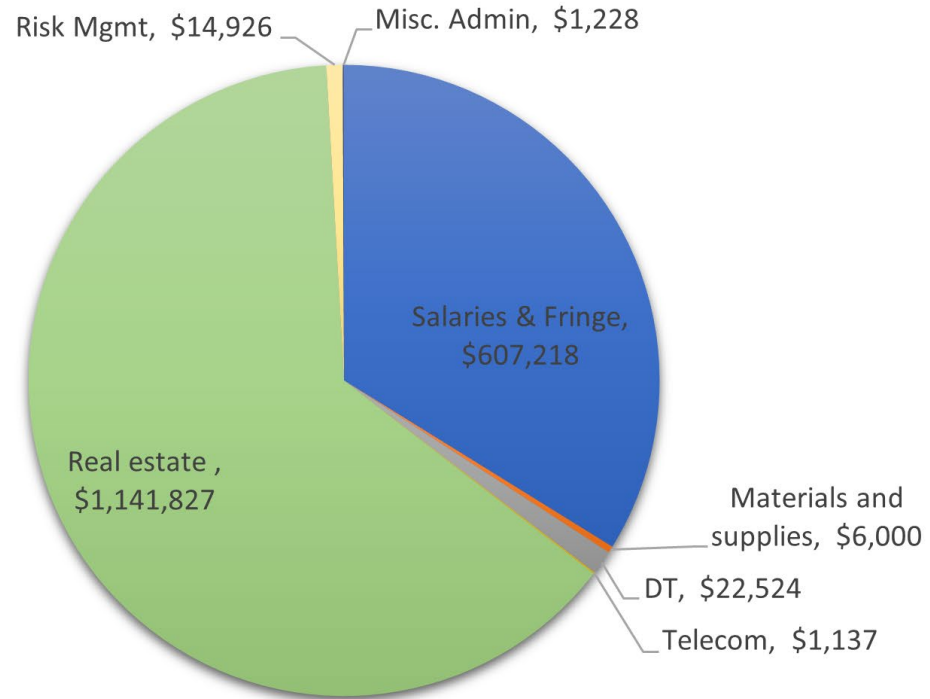
Providing the judiciary, the public, the bar, and city, county, and state officials free access and use of legal reference materials in order that they may conduct their legal affairs and preserve their legal rights.

<https://sf.gov/sflawlibrary>

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE: LAW LIBRARY

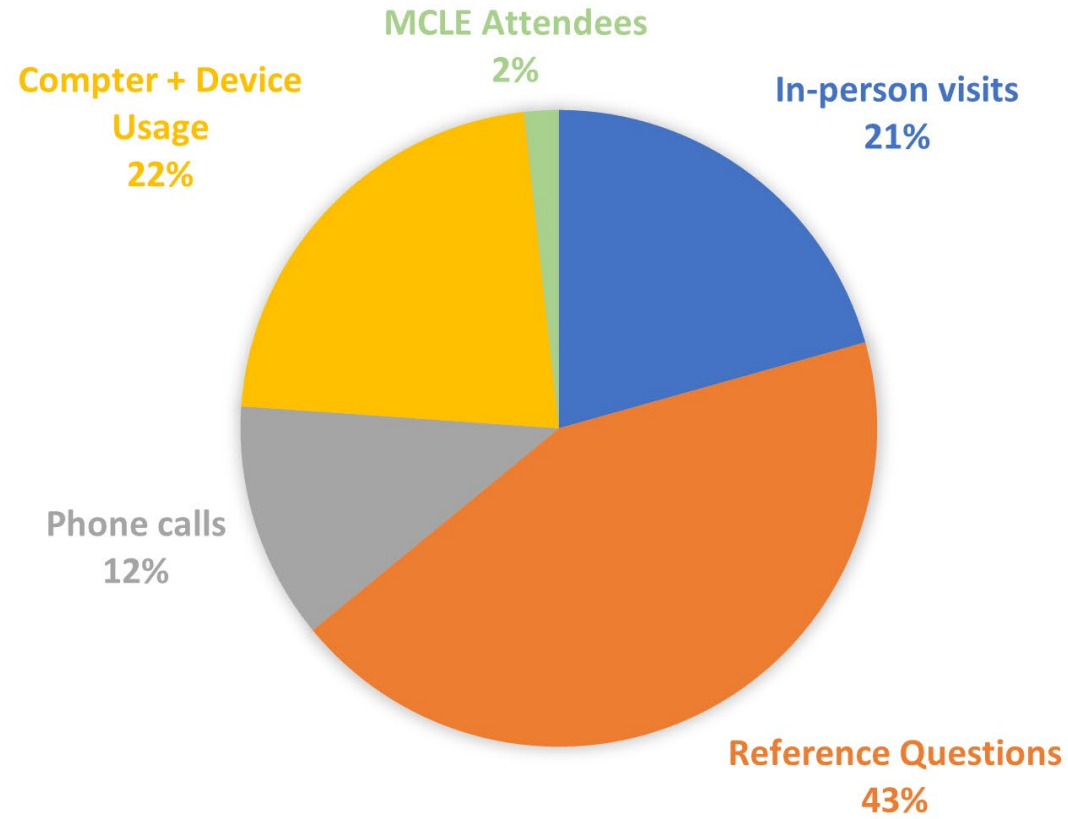


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OVER 10,800 PATRON INTERACTIONS JULY 2022 - MAY 2023



OUTREACH



SAN FRANCISCO
LAW LIBRARY

YOUR ACCESS TO JUSTICE
FREE AND OPEN TO EVERYONE



IN-PERSON HOURS:

MONDAY-FRIDAY 9:00AM-5:00PM

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT

SF.GOV/SFLAWLIBRARY

Our team of reference librarians are available in-person and remotely to help with expert resources and assistance. While we cannot give legal advice, we can help you get started on your path to understanding and tackling your legal issues, such as Evictions, Small Claims, and Bankruptcy.

COLLECTIONS AND SERVICES

- Free access to legal information in print and online
- Hundreds of do-it-yourself titles for non-lawyers you can also access through our website: <https://sf.gov/legal-databases>
- Public Computers for legal research
- Legal Research Assistance
- Free Lunchtime Speakers programs, with topics such as Rent Control and Estate Planning



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THANK YOU

I "won" this appeals case (the decision of the lower court was affirmed). **I was self-represented.** You HELPED me by providing me Shepard's. Guess what? Apparently, my case got "published," so **can now help other women.** Yay!!!

**You are a
wealth of
information.**

I just want to say you guys have been godsend during Covid!
Thank you very much!

Thank you, I have been moved by your **humanity.** What you give people is **rare.**

Thank you so very much cannot tell you how much this is **appreciated.**

Yesterday I beat XXXXX at Summary Judgment after litigating with them for about four (4) years in a Private Nuisance action. **It has been tough to get a lawyer to represent me,** as most lawyers in this locality didn't want to go up against a government-enabled monopoly. Thank you so much for providing such a great facility!