

**Sonoma County  
Public Law Library**

**Strategic Plan**

**2018 - 2023**

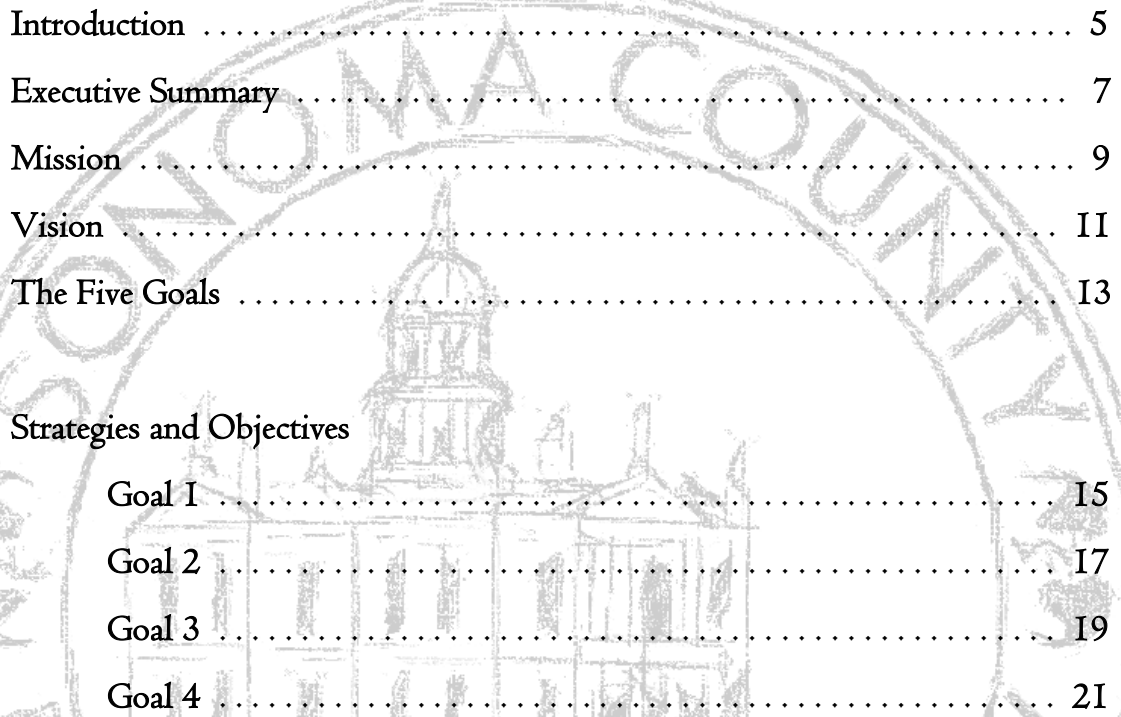


Sonoma County old Courthouse 1885-1969





TABLE OF CONTENTS



Introduction .....	5
Executive Summary .....	7
Mission .....	9
Vision .....	11
The Five Goals .....	13
Strategies and Objectives	
Goal 1 .....	15
Goal 2 .....	17
Goal 3 .....	19
Goal 4 .....	21



## INTRODUCTION

The Sonoma County Public Law Library is a state local government agency separate from the county government. County government is required by statute to provide the Law Library space, utilities and maintenance. The Law Library is governed by its own Board of Trustees consisting of five judges, one representative of the Board of Supervisors and one representative of the Bar Association. Law Library operations are financed primarily by a portion of civil filing fees. Filing fee revenue is declining statewide, however because of *in forma pauperis* filings and an increase in alternative dispute resolution where no filing fees are paid. The Library does not receive general fund revenue.

At the present time the Library is located on 2604 Ventura Avenue in Santa Rosa. The Library is open to the public Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Saturdays 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Library is open exclusively for Empire college students use Monday to Friday 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

The collection is over 26,000 books, CDs, and other material. It is offered to the public free of charge. There are updated federal and state codes, statutes and regulations as well as a huge number of secondary sources including treatises, law reviews, encyclopedias, ALR annotations, Restatements, dictionaries, and legal newspapers. Guidebooks from CEB, Matthew Bender, Thompson Reuters, Rutter Group, and many other publishers are available for the public. The Library provides, also without charge, online legal databases such as Westlaw and Advance LexisNexis.

The library staff consist of a full time Director and a part time Library Technician. Library staff assist patrons in finding specific references or materials needed. Data collected by library staff over a 24-month period, from March 2016 through March 2018, show average utilization of approximately 104 patrons per week over the entire period. The primary users of the library have been lawyers in the community who may lack ready access to a comprehensive collection of legal reference materials. However, beginning in the late 1990s, public use of the library increased as the number of *pro se* litigants (self-represented) began to grow in response to the cost and complexity of legal representation. Library data show that while lawyers still represent the largest group of library users, members of the public rank close behind, followed by law students from Empire Law School and Santa Rosa Junior College. In terms of trends, legal professional use of the library averages 51 patrons per week. Public use of the library averages 43 patrons per week. The library has also entered into an agreement with Empire College School of Law to provide reserved hours (4:00pm – 6:00pm, Monday through Friday) for student use of the library. During the school years, approximately 15 students per week use the law library.





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The need for a new strategic plan grew out of the December 6, 2016 Agreement between the County of Sonoma and the Sonoma County Public Law Library. According to Exhibit B of the Agreement, the Sonoma County Public Law Library shall present a Long-Term Sustainability Plan to the County Board of Supervisors. After hiring a new director in 2017, the Board of Trustees worked with the staff to develop a Strategic Plan to be used as a framework for guiding the activities and decisions of the Law Library for the next five years.

For most of the past seven years, the Sonoma County Public Law Library has experienced severe difficulty in managing its budget. These difficulties stem almost entirely from a decline in revenues, and more specifically, a 39 percent decline since 2009 in civil court filing fees, the library's primary revenue source. The library's management response has been two-fold:

- Development of alternative revenue sources (donations, county subsidies, and service contracts) now accounts for nearly one third of total revenues supporting the law library. Revenues have reversed their decline and instead have increased by 21 percent over the last 2 years.
- Substantial reductions in staff expenditures, as well as spending on books and periodicals, have reduced operational spending.

This strategy has been successful in sustaining law library operations in the short-term. The last two fiscal years show positive budgetary balances.

However, the long-term financial viability of the law library still remains an issue. The current budget relies on nearly \$100,000 in donations and County subsidies. Assuming the County subsidy will not continue and that donation levels are unpredictable, the financial condition of the library for the future is uncertain. Moreover, library Board members indicate a goal of enhancing law library services, which will necessitate increased spending. A sustainable management plan requires realistic assumptions on revenues, combined with operational decisions to align spending within these limits.

The Strategic plan was drafted by the Law Library director Nikolaos Pelekis. On May 16, 2018, the director submitted the draft plan to the Law Library Board of Trustees for review. The Strategic Plan was approved on May 30, 2018 during the Board of Trustees meeting.



Small Conference Room





## OUR MISSION IS TO:

Provide the public,  
legal professionals, and students  
with legal resources  
and the highest quality of service  
in order to provide access to justice  
and information.

Large Conference Room





## VISION



The vision of the Sonoma County Public Law Library is to be a significant legal information resource center, for Sonoma and neighboring counties, committed to excellent service. The Sonoma County Public Law Library strives to provide an environment that is conducive to learning and research.

Over the next five years, our focus will broaden to include enhancing the services and the facilities. Staffing, services and collections will be expanded to better meet the needs of ethnic minorities, seniors, low income, homeless, and other special populations of our community.

**ORDINANCE NO. 25.**

**T**HE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE

County of Sonoma do ordain as follows:  
That the act of the Legislature of the State of California, entitled "An Act to Establish Law Libraries," approved March 31st, 1891, and each and all of the provisions of said act shall apply to and be in force in the said County of Sonoma.

This ordinance shall be in full force and effect on and after the 22d day of June, A. D. 1891.

Passed and approved this 5th day of June, A. D. 1891, by the following vote:

- Supervisor Cady, Aye,
- Supervisor Clark, Aye,
- Supervisor Mead, Aye,
- Supervisor Sales, Aye,
- Supervisor Smith, Aye.

F. A. SMITH, Chairman.

[SEAL] Attest: L. W. JUILLIARD,  
County Clerk and ex-officio Clerk of said Board  
of Supervisors. jun12w2t



## THE FIVE GOALS

### **Goal 1:**

**Develop and empower staff to provide more efficient service.**

### **Goal 2:**

**Secure the financial stability of the Library.**

### **Goal 3:**

**Increase the Library's visibility in the community.**

### **Goal 4:**

**Modernize the Library with user-friendly, electronic material.**

### **Goal 5:**

**Restore collection to 2013 level.**





## STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

### **Goal 1:**

#### **Develop and empower staff to provide more efficient service.**

- Maintain a budget for staff education (Legal Research classes).
- Require staff to participate in workshops of Legal Aid and MCLEs.
- Work with the local Bar Association for a discount or fee waiver for the MCLE participation by the Library staff.
- Leverage additional assistance through the use of library interns and volunteers.
- Hire additional Help-desk staff-person with legal background.
- Develop Spanish bilingual support by assembling bilingual info packets and materials.
- Meet with legal advocacy groups and court clerks to discuss ways we can better assist the public, e.g., by having them provide written instructions, along with title and/or form number, to patron before sending to the library.
- Update and augment the Library's policies for staff service.
- Hold quarterly staff-volunteer meetings.
- Encourage patron feedback and staff evaluation.





## STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

### Goal 2:

#### **Secure the financial stability of the Library.**

- Provide additional benefits to the patrons who pay a membership.
- Apply for Library Service & Technology Act grants from the CA. State Library system.
- Work with the local County Public Library to apply for government programs.
- Explore potential for discounted group purchasing with other law libraries.
- Work with CCCLL to explore creative opportunities for resource and cost sharing.
- Practice proactive awareness of legislation and other issues affecting law library funding.
- Develop annual fundraising events.
- Create and host more MCLE events.
- Partner with local Bar Associations for financial contributions.
- Negotiate financial support agreement with SRJC, providing incentives.
- Review our standing orders twice per year to identify irrelevant material to discontinue ordering.
- Document resource utilization and discontinue purchases or subscriptions of rarely used materials.
- Become a Passport Acceptance Facility.
- Work with CCCLL to explore creative opportunities for resource and cost sharing.



## STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

### Goal 3:

#### **Increase the Library's visibility in the community.**

- Host “Lawyers in the Library” program more often.
- Partner with local legal advocacy organizations to hold legal clinics and workshops.
- Expand outreach to community groups and schools of all kinds – law, college, high school, middle schools, and elementary schools.
- Provide Law Library information brochures to the county public branch libraries, county agencies, local courts, Legal Aid, and other legal advocacy groups.
- Increase contact with community organizations.
- Reach out to neighboring counties that lack adequate Law Libraries.
- Identify specific target groups to be the focus of library outreach.
- Maintain Website with frequent news updates.
- Expand Social Media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
- Work with other agencies to add a link to our website on their websites.
- Write quarterly articles for local newspapers.





## STRATEGIES AND OBJECTIVES

### Goal 4:

#### **Modernize the Library with user-friendly, digital material.**

- Build an electronic database of often-used legal forms.
- Use Public Library's self-Help electronic material.
- Use Technology to promote efficiency and effectiveness in public services.
- Make the Library a paper-free in its operation.
- Budget for a five-year replacement cycle for all technology tools.
- Replace all public computers with new units.
- Investigate electronic vendors and products for better services and prices.
- List the collection inventory on the Library's website.

### Goal 5:

#### **Restore collection to 2013 levels.**

- Make sure that we cover every single topic with at least one resource.
- Create inventories of different publishers.
- Request book donations.
- Use recycled updates available from larger law libraries.
- Activate a book security system.







Windsor



Petaluma



Russian River Guerneville



Bodega



Armstrong Redwoods



Wineries Cloverdale



Apple Orchard Sebastopol



Fort Ross Jenner



Sonoma