COUNTY LAW LIBRARY TASK FORCE REPORT

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**Executive Summary**

On September 16, 2003, Governor Gray Davis signed Assembly Bill 1095, marking the first successful legislative effort to study and address the fiscal and structural health of California’s county law libraries. During the last 50 years, the majority of legislation pertaining to county law libraries was limited to securing authorization to increase the law library filing fee, an approach that would potentially provide short-term relief but ultimately not remedy the continuing financial woes of county law libraries statewide.

AB 1095, authored by Assembly Member Ellen Corbett, increased the scope of examining law libraries to focus on their condition on both an individual and a statewide level. The bill recognized that the ability of county law libraries to be fiscally healthy and provide current, essential publications and services is linked to the “quality of justice dispensed to citizens of California.” To address these issues, the bill charged the Judicial Council with creating the County Law Library Task Force. The bill indicated that the task force membership would consist of nine representatives appointed by three entities: the judicial branch, the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), and the Council of California County Law Librarians (CCCLL).

These appointed members of the County Law Library Task Force were charged with accomplishing the following duties: (1) review the state of existing county law libraries, (2) examine existing standards for county law library operations, (3) document the funding mechanisms currently available for the maintenance and operation of county law library facilities, and (4) recommend funding sources and financing mechanisms for support of county law library operations and facility maintenance. The chair of the County Law Library Task Force divided the membership into three subcommittees that were then each assigned one of the first three numbered tasks above.

The subcommittees convened and the task force began to discuss their findings in terms of recommendations for law libraries. The task force was consensus-driven and it proposed a new small claims fee and three savings options, including joint-purchasing arrangements, multijurisdictional program options, and creative partnerships with self-help centers. This final report will elaborate on these recommendations and also cover the history and evolution of county law libraries, key challenges and concerns of county law librarians and library patrons, an analysis of county law library funding mechanisms, and further study needed for county law libraries in the future. Assessing this range of information assisted the task force in focusing on the “bigger picture,” specifically in envisioning the form that county law libraries could adopt to best serve Californians in years to come. The state faces a significant challenge in funding county law libraries in 58 counties of varying size, location and resources. Therefore, an equally multifaceted approach and solution is necessary.
The task force offers this report as a catalyst for future examinations of California’s county law libraries. As will be discussed, county law libraries are increasingly used by self-represented litigants and other nonattorneys and play an important role in providing Californians with resources for their legal affairs and in ensuring their access to justice.

**County Law Library Statutory Scheme**

The statutory structure of county law libraries is located in Business and Professions Code sections 6300 to 6364. The original statute was crafted in 1891. The statutes outline the main funding mechanism of county law libraries, facility and staff support, and access for law library patrons. Also, they delineate the manner in which the county board of supervisors interacts with the law library trustees. Lastly, they cover the creation, membership and responsibilities of a board of law library trustees.

**County Law Library Patrons**

The statute provides that “a law library established under this chapter shall be free to the judiciary, to state and county officials, to members of the State Bar, and to all residents of the county, for the examination of books and other publications at the library or its branches.” However, the board may levy fines and charges for violation of the rules of the county law library or to cover special services such as photocopying or a messenger service. With the exception of county officials and members of the judiciary, the board may require law library users to pay “such security, as it may provide to insure the safekeeping and prompt return” of county law library materials. The code specifies that “the board of law library trustees may require persons other than members of the judiciary, county officials, and members of the bar resident in the county, to pay such dues as the board may fix for the privilege of removing books and other publications from the library.” In addition, “with the approval of the board of supervisors, the board of law library trustees may charge individual members of the bar resident in the county fees for the removal of books and other publications from the library” and “these fees shall not exceed the cost of providing the service.”

**Funding**

The principal source of funding for county law libraries is a dedicated portion of the civil filing fees. Business and Professions Code section 6321 provides that county law libraries will receive “on the commencement in, or the removal to, the superior court of any county in this state, of any civil action proceeding, or appeal . . . the party instituting such proceeding, or filing the first papers, the sum of one dollar ($1) as costs, in addition to the fees fixed by law.” As of January 1, 1995, the board of supervisors may increase those costs by no greater than $3 increments in any year.

In addition to this allotted portion of the civil filing fee, the county law library receives financial support in the form of quarters and some basic services from the county. Under Business and Professions Code section 6361, “The board of supervisors of the county in
which the law library is established shall provide sufficient quarters for the use of the library upon request of the board of law library trustees.” The board of supervisors need not provide quarters if the law library trustees determine that it has sufficient and surplus funds. Provisions for the quarters may include “suitable furniture, window shades, floor coverings, lighting, heat, and telephone and janitor service.”

The treasurer of the county holds all money collected for the county law library in a trust fund or trust account. In addition, the board of supervisors may set apart a maximum of $1,200 in any one fiscal year to go into the trust fund. The money is disbursed by the board of law library trustees. Each board must submit an annual report for the preceding fiscal year to the board of supervisors by August 15 of each year. This report includes the condition of the trust fund, as well as full statements of all property, periodicals, publications and money received.

**Board of Law Library Trustees**

In each county, a board of law library trustees governs the county law library. The following sections outline the membership and responsibilities of the law library trustees.

Membership. The membership of the law library trustee board is dependent on the number of superior court judges in each county. If no more than three judges are on the bench in a county, then each of those three judges is ex officio a trustee. In counties with more than three superior court judges, all judges elect four or five from their group to serve as law library trustees. Regardless of the manner in which judges become law library trustees, any judge, whether ex officio or elected, may designate a member of the State Bar or a citizen of the county to act for the judge as trustee.

The chair of the board of supervisors is also ex officio a law library trustee. Similarly, at the request of the chair, the board may appoint another member of the board of supervisors, a member of the State Bar, or a citizen of the county as a replacement. The board of supervisors appoints as many additional trustees as is necessary to create a board of either six or seven members. There is a maximum of two residents of the county who can serve as law library trustees who are not also a judge, member of the State Bar or member of the board of supervisors.

Law library trustees appointed by the board of supervisors serve one-year terms. These appointees serve until the first meeting of the board of supervisors in the succeeding January. In addition, there are county-specific exceptions to law library trustee term limits in San Diego and Los Angeles Counties. In all counties, the office of law library trustee is an honorary position without salary or other compensation.

Responsibilities. Each board of law library trustees establishes and maintains a county law library and may lease or construct quarters. The board may also establish and maintain branches of the county law library. If the board elects to erect a library building
for the county law library, “it may borrow money for that purpose and repay the loan from its future income.” For the county law library or its branches, the board may purchase books, publications and other personal property. Each board also controls the appointment, salary and removal of any employee.

The Changing Nature of County Law Libraries

Many of the challenges facing today’s county law libraries can be found in their origin and history. The struggle to increase filing fees for county law libraries persists today. However, extra demands from new patrons requesting different services also puts pressure on county law libraries of a statutorily older era.

To approach solving the complex predicament of today’s county law libraries, it is valuable to understand their changing nature, services and patrons over the last century.

Origin and Development of Law County Libraries

The origin of county law libraries can be credited to William B. Olds of San Francisco. Olds was an attorney who attempted to found a law library in 1853. The library was essentially a law book collection purchased for $20,000 that was housed in City Hall. While it would be open for general use, Olds hoped that the San Francisco Bar Association members would voluntarily offer financial support for his investment. When he was unable to garner enough support, he offered it to the State of California. In 1856, three years after Olds’ attempt to establish a law library began, the collection was purchased and delivered to the California State Library.

Almost 10 years later, in 1865, San Francisco bar leadership established the San Francisco County Law Library Association to provide a law library for bar members. In a few years, the library accumulated many volumes, but ultimately found that private funds and membership dues would be insufficient to maintain and update the collection, let alone hire a librarian. This need for financial backing, combined with a growing group of patrons, led to a petition to the Legislature to create a public law library.

In March 1870, the Legislature enacted the San Francisco Law Library Act, which mandated that a fixed share of civil filing fees be allocated to fund a county law library. In addition, the act required the City and County of San Francisco to provide facilities, resources and services with monies from the General Fund. Lastly, it mandated that members of the California bar as well as citizens of San Francisco would have full access to the county law libraries for a monthly fee. With this act, California became the first western state to fund a public county law library with a portion of civil filing fees.

Four years later the San Jose Law Library was established by a statute similar to the legislation that created the San Francisco Law Library. Meanwhile, Los Angeles
attorneys were experiencing the same difficulties that San Francisco faced before the San Francisco Law Library Act passed. In the 1880s, Los Angeles Assemblyman John R. Mathews decided to introduce a bill that would go beyond legislation affecting only one regional jurisdiction. He proposed a statewide plan that would allow, but not require, the creation of law libraries in every county. They would follow the same financial funding scheme and draw from civil filing fees. The bill became law in March 1891, a little more than 20 years after the San Francisco county law library was established.\textsuperscript{14}

Although the creation of a public county law library was at the discretion of the county, within one year of the passage of the bill 25 public county law libraries had been established in California. In 1907, the Legislature codified county law library statutes, adding only the ability of the county’s board of supervisors to discontinue a county law library and its services.\textsuperscript{15} While the statutes were first put in the Political Code, they were recodified into the Business and Professions Code in 1941.

In the 40-year period from 1907 to 1947, amendments were made to permit the creation of county law library branches and alter the manner in which board members were appointed. Amendments relating to income included allowing the collection of fees in municipal courts, permitting additional income from the board of supervisors, and allowing the purchase of property for the county law library with trust fund monies.

However, it was only in June 1947 that the maximum law library portion of the civil filing fee allotted to county law libraries increased from $1 to $2. Within 15 years, fees increased by $1 increments twice, and by 1968 the fees were increased to a $5 maximum. In 1972, the statutes dictating law library fee increases became more complex, with counties with a population of more than 4 million people restricted to a $5 fee, while the remaining counties were allowed a maximum fee of $7. Los Angeles County, with a population of more than 4 million, continues to be restricted to a lower fee amount.\textsuperscript{16} In 1980, the filing fee maximum was set at $12. Ten years later, legislation to raise the maximum fee to $20 was successful. In addition, provisions were established to allow for increases to the $20 maximum fee in $3 increments, beginning in 1995. Today, county law library fees vary from county to county.\textsuperscript{17}

**Evolution of County Law Library Materials, Technology and Staffing**

County law libraries have changed dramatically over the past 30 years, and the needs of county law libraries and their patrons have changed as well. During this time, the larger county law libraries have evolved from the traditional world of card catalogs and books to facilities that offer their users a range of technologies and media. This began in the early 1970s with Westlaw and, later, expanded with LexisNexis, automated catalogs and circulation systems. These technological advances have allowed for the addition of many materials in nonbook formats such as microfilm and microfiche, sound and audio/video recordings, CD-ROMs, and a proliferation of online resources.
Many smaller county law libraries have experienced even greater change. Thirty years ago, these libraries might have been maintained by a judge’s secretary or other court staff member. Currently, full-time librarians operate many of these growing libraries, and many rely heavily on computers. In some cases, these libraries have struggled to keep pace with the fast growth of their communities, which were once rural or nonurban.

Today, county law librarians have very different backgrounds and qualifications than their predecessors. Some law librarians have both a law and a graduate library degree. Others have legal practice experience. Many law librarians participate in outreach programs such as the online reference service “Asknow,” as well as help expand public access to legal information through library Web pages. As a profession, law librarians play a vital role in the extended legal community of lawyers, paralegals, legal document assistants, unlawful detainer assistants, students, self-represented litigants, and the ever-growing number of nonattorneys researching legal matters that pertain to their own personal and business lives. In all, county law libraries and their patrons reflect many of the social changes that have affected the entire nation over the past 30 years.

**Changing Patterns of County Law Library Use**

The services and users have changed significantly in the lifetime of county law libraries. Originally, law libraries served the judiciary, legal community, and members of the bar. Now there is a growing contingent of law library users who are self-represented litigants and nonattorneys. In the Los Angeles County Law Library, 45 percent of the patrons are self-represented litigants or nonattorneys. In both the Alameda and San Francisco County law libraries, at least half of the users are nonattorneys.

It is important to note that not all of these nonattorney users are self-represented litigants. While many of them are using the library to prepare for court appearances, a significant number of patrons are utilizing the county law library for other purposes. Californians from all backgrounds use their county law library to assist them with a variety of purposes, such as researching federal law, drafting their own contracts and wills, organizing businesses, managing rental property and even completing academic assignments. In addition, many library patrons, both attorneys and nonattorneys, use the county law libraries to prepare for criminal trials and appeals.

With an increase in nonattorney users, county law libraries are being relied on to perform a multitude of different services. When those using county law libraries were predominately attorneys, the role of law librarians involved maintenance of the library and general assistance to its users. Now, county law librarians are often asked to be a resource for legal matters by self-represented litigants and nonattorneys. In many counties, county law libraries and their librarians often become the last and only option to obtain legal information for litigants who plan to represent themselves in court as well as for other nonattorneys who need to research various legal issues.
As evident in the history of California law libraries, private donations in years gone by were barely sufficient to operate law libraries for a population of bar members. Today, the challenges facing county law libraries are exacerbated by other factors such as the declining revenue source, inflation, and the rising costs of legal publications, subscriptions, and online databases. The effect of inflation only started to be addressed legislatively in 1983, when law libraries realized the limited buying power of the maximum law library portion of the civil filing fee. The rising costs of legal publications and subscriptions prevent many law libraries, which are already working with a declining income, from updating and adding to their collections. Online legal databases can be expensive and require state-of-the-art computer terminals and Internet access, among other resources.

County Law Libraries at Their Century Mark
In 1991, California public county law libraries celebrated their centennial. In looking back at the life span of county law libraries, one observation is especially evident: The county law libraries existent at that century mark were very different institutions than county law libraries at their inception or, indeed, even from county law libraries today. In a 2001 study, Anne Marie Gold found that more than 9 out of 10 county law libraries get at least 70 percent of their income from civil filing fees, and over half of all law libraries receive at least 95 percent of their income from these fees. The Gold study also finds that while almost all county law libraries augmented their filing fee at least once in the last five years, 60 percent of county law libraries have had their overall filing fee income decrease in the same time period. Legislation regarding county law libraries over the last 50 years has predominately focused on ways to increase income through civil filing fees. Yet, 7 out of 10 of those libraries experienced a 10 percent decrease in their revenue from filing fees, while an additional 2 out of 10 libraries had a 25 percent decrease in their filing fee income.

The Funding Mechanism of County Law Libraries
In the last century, county law libraries have seen major changes in their users, their facilities and the price and formats of legal publications. The evolution of the libraries also has been influenced by the increase of self-represented litigants and other nonattorneys, as well as by the increased use of alternative dispute resolution services. The result of these factors is rising costs and declining revenues in an institution whose resources are increasingly in demand and whose funding mechanism is inadequate.

As previously mentioned, the statutes governing the funding of county law libraries allocate a portion of the county’s civil filing fee to the county’s law library trust fund. In 2004, the average law library portion of the civil filing fee statewide was $23.20. Since the law library portion of the fee was established at $1 in 1891, there have been numerous requests for legislation to increase the law library portion of the civil filing fee.
Beginning in 1995, the statutes allowed county law libraries to request each year and add, at the approval of the board of supervisors, a maximum of $3 to their portion of the civil filing fee. The libraries are financed primarily through this funding mechanism, so it may not be surprising that 90 percent of county law libraries receive 70 percent of their income from the filing fee portion. While not all civil filings are declining, those filings whose fees include the portion dedicated to the law libraries continue to produce less revenue for county law libraries.

The County Law Library Task Force identified five current sources of funding for county law libraries: (1) filing fees, (2) county general fund support, (3) county facilities and services, (4) grants and (5) miscellaneous income.

**Civil Filing Fees**
Task force members recognized that, in general, filing fees are not adequate to meet the needs of most county law libraries. They noted that while filing fees account for most of the total county law library revenues, the cost of quarters and related services (utilities, janitorial, security), which many counties provide, significantly widens the gap between filing fee income and total library expense of many county law libraries. Currently, county law library filing fees range from $4 to $44. Task force members note that the broad range of filing fees is being discussed in the context of the Uniform Civil Fee (UCF) proposal. Presently, there is not sufficient information explaining the decline of civil filing fees.

**County General Fund Support**
On a statewide level, county general fund support for law libraries continues to vary from county to county and from year to year. In the 2001–2002 fiscal year, the boards of supervisors of nine surveyed counties contributed a total of $600,000 of additional funding. Of that sum, the San Francisco County Law Library received $471,000 from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. In three of those nine counties, county general fund support has since been withdrawn, which contributed to the closure of the Plumas County Law Library in 2004. Statewide, increasing pressure on limited county resources has made it unlikely that counties can be expected to be a stable source of additional funding in the future.

**County Facilities and Services**
As noted above, there are variations in county-provided library facilities statewide. While some counties provide quarters and services, other counties provide little to none of these resources. For many county law libraries, estimates of the value of county-provided resources equal 20 to 25 percent of filing fee revenues, which is approximately $6.5 million. In view of the statewide trend in declining revenues from civil filing fees, it would be challenging for many county law libraries to provide their own quarters. However, considering the ongoing budget crisis, counties are experiencing difficulties in providing sufficient quarters for their county law libraries. Currently, there is tension in
many counties between county law library boards and boards of supervisors over not only the funding for facilities but also interpretations of the underlying statutes and their implementation.

**Grants**
While most county law libraries receive no funding from grants, some libraries have benefited from this type of funding. For example, a few county law libraries received technology grants for public Internet terminals. However, even for those county law libraries, grants do not constitute an appreciable portion of the overall funding of library operations. In general, grants are designated for specific projects and are usually a minimal source of income that cannot be used to fund operations.

**Miscellaneous Income**
With their continual decrease in filing fee revenue, most county law libraries have been forced to explore miscellaneous revenue sources. The income from these funding sources varies greatly from county to county. Typical sources include gaining interest on trust funds and charging county law library patrons for using copying machines or conference rooms. Other county law libraries have used revenue sources such as borrowing fees or even rental of roof space for cell phone antennas. Some libraries engage in fundraising, establish “friends” groups or create foundations to raise money. Still, regardless of the creativity in or success of implementing these miscellaneous funding strategies, the income from these alternative revenue sources is minimal and insufficient to bridge the gap between decreasing filing fee income and increasing expenses. The task force also noted that “a reliance on miscellaneous income would tend to divert the law library from its primary task of providing library services.”

**Future Funding of County Law Libraries**
County law libraries can no longer afford to depend primarily on the current funding mechanism. The task force agreed that it is inadequate and recognized the need to identify better supplemental funding mechanisms for the future. A number of funding options, both traditional and nontraditional, were discussed by the task force, resulting in one new funding option and three saving options that the group could recommend with consensus. Other funding and saving options considered by the task force are listed in the appendix. The task force expressed frustration with its inability to identify additional specific funding options. The scarcity of feasible solutions to the current funding mechanism for law libraries refocused the task force on investigating savings options that would help alleviate some of the financial problems that result from the current statutory scheme. The following section addresses this approach.
Recommendations for County Law Libraries

California has perhaps the most extensive county law library system in the country. At one end of the spectrum is the Los Angeles County Law Library, which serves a populace of nearly 10 million, and at the other end is the Alpine County Law Library, which serves a population of just over 1,200 people. This system has a multitude of challenges, but the County Law Library Task Force believes it is a critical asset for the public that must be strengthened and enhanced.

One of the charges to the County Law Library Task Force was “to recommend funding sources and financing mechanisms for support of county law library operations and facility maintenance.” The task force identified small claims as a potential source for supplemental county law library funding. In addition to this funding recommendation, the task force also focused on a number of cost savings measures and alternative program options that can help maximize resources. They are: (1) joint-purchasing arrangements, (2) regional program options and (3) creative partnerships with self-help programs.

The following sections explain the new small claims fee and three savings options recommended by the task force. They are all ways to better utilize revenues, despite possible fluctuations in filing fee income. Ultimately, these recommendations could apply systemically to current as well as future county law libraries.

Small Claims Court Fees
The task force observed that many law library patrons are small claims litigants, who often rely heavily on county law libraries for support. Historically, no portion of the small claims filing fees has been dedicated to county law libraries. Therefore, the task force recommends increasing the small claims filing fee by $1 for every $1,000 in dispute. This fee will be used exclusively as a source of funding for county law libraries.

Joint-Purchasing
County law libraries experience a significant challenge in maintaining a current and comprehensive law library collection, while legal books, publications, periodicals, and online legal databases continue to increase yearly in price. For example, the price of serials and periodicals has increased more than 150 percent between 1998 and 2003. It is not only the price of legal materials that can be burdensome to law libraries, but also the costs of paper, ink cartridges and other items that are necessary to daily operations. According to a 2001 survey, two of the most heavily used services are copiers and typewriters. Use of these services requires many supplies, and thus increases costs to the law library.

The County Law Library Task Force recommends joint-purchasing as a means to provide potential savings for county law libraries. On behalf of several judicial branch entities, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) issued an open invitation to vendors to submit volume-purchasing proposals for various products and services. Currently, the
AOC has arrangements with Office Depot, Corporate Express, ADP, FedEx, and the General Binding Company. These companies provide recycled paper, office supplies, payroll services, shipping and binding services, respectively. In addition, the AOC is currently soliciting companies for joint-purchasing contracts for toner, copy machines and legal materials. To date, the list of approved accounts includes the trial courts, appellate courts, the AOC, and the Habeas Corpus Resource Center. The AOC has confirmed that county law libraries are eligible to participate in existing joint-purchasing agreements and would also be eligible to take part in future contracts.

If county law libraries elect to utilize joint-purchasing, no library would be obligated to participate. Under the AOC’s joint-purchasing process, involvement is voluntary, and the libraries would be free to purchase from another vendor, especially if they were able to secure more favorable prices on their own. Participating entities manage their own accounts, and are able to separately negotiate for and purchase supplies at special rates. Current savings from the rates being negotiated by the AOC are approximately 30 percent of current retail prices.40

The AOC is currently investigating joint-purchasing options for legal publications and subscriptions. Task force members have stated that law libraries would be very interested in access to discounted print and digital law materials, and the task force believes that county law libraries should bargain as a group for a judicial branch rate with companies such as Thomson-West and LexisNexis. Again, county law libraries would be able to pursue purchasing contracts individually if it is a more advantageous or preferable option. As county law libraries differ greatly in their resources, joint-purchasing is recommended as an opportunity for securing savings locally, rather than as a statewide prescription and requirement.

**Multijurisdictional Program Options**

Statutorily, county law libraries neither fall completely in the jurisdiction of the county nor come under the judicial branch. Thus, when examining county law libraries on a statewide level, the ability to articulate the “typical” law library becomes exceedingly more difficult. These complexities challenge any attempt to generate standards that are appropriate for all county law libraries. However, organizing law libraries by size (usually corresponding with region) offers a productive start to establishing suitable standards.

Generally, county law libraries can be categorized into small, medium and large libraries, which often correspond with rural, suburban and urban regions. Each size and region has its unique challenges. For example, small county law libraries in rural counties are often geographically removed from librarians, personnel and extensive legal collections. Moreover, inadequate revenues from civil filing fees result in limited funding, which makes it impossible for many of these libraries to offer a full range of services to their customers. As a result, some county law library patrons must travel long distances to use
more fully staffed and equipped law libraries. Yet, larger urban and suburban county law libraries have their own challenges, too. They are often already overwhelmed with the increased demands from self-represented litigants and other nonattorneys, as well as with the decline of revenues that cover their library operations and services.

The task force therefore recommends a form of regional programs that utilizes joint ventures between county law libraries that would benefit from collaborating and sharing resources. Participation would be voluntary and strictly an option to county law libraries. This could include the idea of establishing regional law library centers that would serve less-populated counties. The task force also discussed creating uniform infrastructure for locating and referring legal materials for all county law libraries, but especially to service smaller, neighboring county law libraries. Ultimately, a multijurisdictional law library system could be a way to adapt to the regional habits and needs of county law library patrons, as well as more efficiently use limited law library funds.

**Creative Partnerships with Self-Help Centers**

Self-represented litigants and other nonattorneys represent half of the law library patrons in many counties, and they use the county law library for many purposes, not just preparing for civil litigation in state court. These patrons often request more than the location of legal references; they also ask for legal advice and guidance. Regardless of their qualifications, county law librarians are legally prohibited from giving legal advice. However, experienced law librarians are able to lawfully assist patrons by eliciting the information they need to direct them to the appropriate books, resources and referrals.

The County Law Library Task Force recognizes that there are some roles that county law libraries cannot legally or financially fill. The task force recommends establishing creative partnerships between self-help programs and county law libraries. Collaboration between these two entities might more effectively serve the changing population of county law library patrons. Although they are also unable to give legal advice, staff at self-help centers would be able to provide, translate and assist with forms and instructions; host workshops conducted by attorneys and court personnel; explain how to access the court system; and even direct customers to the resources of the county law library. A partnership of self-help centers and county law libraries could offer important tools and the services for self-represented litigants and other nonattorneys to handle their legal matters.

**Looking to the Future**

The County Law Library Task Force intends this report to be a catalyst for the future of California’s county law libraries. The challenges facing county law libraries stem from many factors, such as the statutory scheme and the changing nature of county law libraries. Since the task force convened in March 2004, it has grappled with numerous challenges; nevertheless, it was able to identify a new funding option and three savings
options that may help alleviate some of the pressures on county law libraries. The task force unanimously agreed, however, that these recommended solutions must be regarded as supplemental to the fiscal health of county law libraries, not central to their successful operation.

In looking forward to more fiscally sound county law libraries that serve the needs of their various patrons, the task force recommends further study to:

- Identify and enact additional funding sources
- Assess the potential impact of a uniform civil filing fee on county law libraries
- Review and update Business and Professions Code sections 6300 to 6364
- Produce an updated needs assessment for county law libraries
- Explore the feasibility of qualifying county law libraries to participate in the State Bar’s dues check-off program
- Investigate collaborations of county law libraries and self-help centers

The task force has identified the items above as being fundamental to the future of county law libraries. Further study into these topics is the next step to create the effective changes necessary to provide Californians the legal resources and services that they need.

Endnotes

1 Stats. 2003, ch. 394, § 1 (AB 1095, Corbett).
2 See chart 1.1 in appendix for members.
3 Stats. 2003, ch. 394, § 2.
4 See chart 1.2 in appendix for subcommittee membership.
5 Bus. & Prof. Code, § 6360.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Bus. & Prof. Code, § 6361.
11 Id., § 6348.2.
12 Stats. 1870, ch. 173.
14 Stats. 1891, ch. 225.
15 However, in 2002, the provision to discontinue a law library was repealed. (Bus. & Prof. Code § 6365.)
16 In 1980, the filing fee maximum in Los Angeles County was $5; in 1990, it was set at $10. In 2005, the fee was $18, and only a $2 increase per year is permitted.
17 See appendix for County-by-County Law Library Fees.
18 See appendix for County Law Library Task Force Questionnaire.
21 Law library patrons use county law libraries for a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to, researching state and federal administrative law and regulations; researching federal law such as civil rights, immigration, environmental, and bankruptcy law; doing tax and estate planning; researching small claims, family law, and landlord-tenant matters; organizing new businesses and running existing businesses; and checking the California Building Code and other resources unique to law libraries.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
27 Gold, supra, fn. 23.
28 Court Statistics Report (2004), www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/documents/csr2004.pdf. It should be noted that the task force was aware of the SB 940 working group on enhanced collections and applauded its efforts.
29 See appendix for County-by-County Law Library Fees.
30 See appendix for Uniform Civil Filing Fee Fact Sheet.
31 County Law Library Task Force Subcommittee #3 Report (May 10, 2004) 2, on file with the AOC, self-reported.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Task Force Subcommittee, supra, fn. 31, p. 3.
35 Ibid.
37 Serials include periodicals (academic and commercial), court reporters, citators, codes, digests, legal encyclopedias, newsletters, looseleaf services, and supplemented legal treatises.
39 Gold, supra, fn. 23.
40 County Law Library Task Force Minutes (Dec. 3, 2004), on file with the AOC.