

Profile of Oregon County Law Libraries in 2011

- Every county in Oregon has a public law library.
 - All county law libraries operate under the oversight of their counties and some also operate under the additional oversight of a professional law librarian.
- County law libraries receive funding from a portion of court filing fees.
 - These funds are dedicated for law library purposes only.
 - Revenues for law libraries vary greatly by county resulting in a variety of law libraries.
 - Law libraries differ from county to county depending on funding.
- All 36 county law libraries offer internet access available to attorneys and litigants for legal research.
 - 31 county law libraries have online database subscriptions for performing legal research.
 - 28 law libraries provide legal document delivery in print or electronic formats.
 - 26 law libraries provide help in using and understanding online databases and print subscriptions.
 - 22 law libraries provide patrons with legal research questions assistance by telephone.
 - 6 counties provide professional staff operating a full-service law library; 11 counties provide part-time staff operating a law library less than 40 hours per week; 19 counties do not have dedicated staff.
- In a recent survey of Oregon attorneys and judges 87% of respondents said they use their county law libraries at least several times a year, 92% agree or strongly agree that county law libraries are essential for self-represented litigants, and over 93% believe county law libraries are essential for providing equal access to legal materials.
- Self-represented litigant use of county law libraries has tripled over the past five years.
 - Oregon county law libraries:
 - help level the legal playing field for all Oregonians.
 - play a unique, important role in providing equal access to justice for all Oregonians.

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History of Oregon County Law Library Authority and Funding

The Oregon Legislature authorized the establishment of county law libraries and provided for their funding with a portion of the litigant filing fee. (1907 Oregon Laws, Chapter 239; 1927 Oregon Laws, Chapter 222)

Historically, in the more populated counties, the county maintained a law library for public use as well as a judge's library in the judge's chambers or courtroom. In the less populated counties, the law library was often a small library located in or near the judge's chambers or courtroom. In the instances where the law library was located in the judge's chambers or courtroom, the judge's staff performed the duties of the librarian.

In 1981, the Legislature declared that in the best interests of the people of the state, the judicial branch should take over from the counties the administration of the court system, including all court personnel. However, the county law library and the courthouse remained the facility of the county. (1981 Oregon Laws, Special. Sess., Chapter 3). The judge's staff, now State employees, were no longer permitted to maintain the county law library. Consequently, the administration and maintenance of the county law library shifted to different departments within each county.

From 1927 to 1963, all counties except Multnomah collected a fee that ranged from 10% in 1927 to 40% of the uniform filing fee in 1963. From 1907 until 1965 Multnomah Law Library received a flat fee set by statute, ranging from \$1 to \$2. After 1965, the Legislature set the amount of the law library fee up to 40% of the uniform filing fee for all county law libraries, including Multnomah.

In 1997, the percent was reduced to 33% of the uniform filing fee. The 1997 reduction of the law library fee was the result of a number of issues : 1) Increased costs of the judicial system; 2) Legal Aid's loss of Federal funding; 3) The legislative integration of the Circuit and District Courts, resulting with the District Court filing fee equaling the Circuit Court filing fee; and 4) Extreme pressure by the collection people to reduce the law library fee because the Circuit Court's uniform filling fee jumped from \$65. to \$97. (1997 Oregon Laws Chapter 801).

In 2007, the legislature again reduced the percent of the filing fees county law libraries receive to 28%. Costs for operating and maintaining law libraries, including legal research materials in print and online, have continued to rise.