



## **WILLIAM D. BLOCK MEMORIAL LAW LIBRARY & SELF-HELP CENTER**

**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE THE CIRCUIT COURT OF LAKE COUNTY, ILLINOIS  
DIVISION OF JUDICIAL OPERATIONS**

**SMAART PROGRAM REPORT**

**March 2016, Rev April 2016**

**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE THE CIRCUIT COURT OF LAKE COUNTY, ILLINOIS**  
**DIVISION OF JUDICIAL OPERATIONS**

**Mission Statement**

The mission of the Circuit Court of Lake County is to serve the public. The Court accomplishes this mission by providing a fair and responsive system of justice, committed to excellence, and fostering public trust, understanding and confidence.

**Supportive Statement of the Division of Judicial Operations**

The Division of Judicial Operations supports the mission of the Court by providing an array of legal-related services and supportive functions to both internal and external Court customers in a manner that advances public trust, understanding and confidence in the legal system.

**Goals of the Division of Judicial Operations**

The Division of Judicial Operations assists the judges of Lake County by executing operations involved in the fair and orderly administration of judicial case processing. The supportive functions of the division include the delivery of information, resources, and services to the public designed to improve their access, navigation, and use of the legal system. The goals of the division include:

- To provide support services to the judges in order to improve the administration of judicial case processing.
- To provide an educated and well-trained staff to the Court in order to enhance the supportive services available to the judges and the public.
- To provide resources, information, and services to the public in order to improve their access, navigation, and use of the legal system.
- To provide communication and education to the public in order to increase awareness and understanding of Court services and accomplishments.

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**Program Purpose**

The Lake County Law Library is named after the late William D. Block, who served as a Judge for the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit from February 1, 1975 until June 27, 1996. The Lake County Law Library was renamed in honor of Judge Block on February 10, 1998.

It is the purpose of the William D. Block Memorial Law Library to serve the public. It accomplishes this goal by providing an open and efficient system of access to the Library's collections and services for the judges, attorneys, and citizens of Lake County.

**Program Description**

The Law Library is located in the first floor lobby of the Lake County Courthouse. The William D. Block Law Library is open to all, including the general public. Only members of the Lake County Bar Association, however, may check materials out of the Library under certain conditions.

Library facilities and services include seven public computer work stations, all with Internet accessibility, a "soft seating" area, a television/VCR unit for viewing video depositions, Ambassador Pro Reading Machine, and VideoEye Image Magnifier. The computer work stations allow users to access the following services: Word processing programs, spreadsheets, and online access to legal research databases. Copier and Fax services are also available through the library.

The Library collection currently includes approximately 20,000 books and 7,000 microfiche documents. Additional resources include statutes, regulations, and case law from all 50 states and the federal government via online research databases. Along with the traditional Regional and Federal Reporters, Codes, Digests, Illinois Institute for Continuing Legal Education (IICLE) and Form Books, the Law Library's print collection includes Illinois practice materials and form books. The library's catalog can be searched online through its catalog available at <http://lccatalog.lakecountyil.gov/ics-wpd/>.

The Law Library is staffed by a law librarian, a paralegal and a senior clerk who can assist with print and online legal resources. In addition, the Law Library website provides information on the facility as well as guides and handouts to assist users and the general public (<http://19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us/services/Pages/LawLibrary.aspx>).

**Center for Self-Representation**

The Center for Self-Representation was established in 2003. The Center is designed to assist individuals who choose to represent themselves in court without an attorney. Materials are available to Self-Represented Litigants include fill-in-the-blank forms, procedural checklists,

reference resources and guides, as well as access to the complete collection of the court's Law Library. These resources are available in both print and electronic format.

Nationally, one of the flagship court-based self-help centers is the Self-Service Center of the Superior Court of Arizona, Maricopa County (Phoenix). In Illinois, the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit's Center for Self-Representation in Waukegan may be the closest thing to the Maricopa County model (The Legal Aid Safety Net, 2005). The Center is firmly rooted in a customer-service philosophy, offers both printed and Internet-based resources, and covers a wide range of legal topics.

### **Performance Measures**

Beginning in 2015, the staff of the Law Library gathered statistics beginning the last quarter of that year regarding the number and types of patrons who are accessing resources and the types of questions staff receive from patrons. These statistics will remain ongoing as a part of the library staff's efforts to ensure accountability and transparency.

#### **Patrons Assisted by Law Library Staff**

The Law Library assists legal professionals and Self-Represented Litigants with accessing the resources of the Law Library and center for self-representation. Statistics gathered for the types of patrons fall in two categories: Attorneys, which can include paralegal or other staff who work for attorneys, and Self-Represented Litigants, which can include patrons visiting the Law Library and center for self-representation who are representing themselves in a court case or who are visiting on behalf of a friend or family member who is representing themselves. These statistics include both in-person and phone inquiries brought to Law Library staff. These statistics record who asks library staff questions, and may reflect the fact that attorney patrons are more comfortable using library resources on their own, without the assistance of library staff.

	OCT 2015	NOV 2015	DEC 2015	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter 2015 Total	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter 2015 % of Total	JAN 2016	FEB 2016	MAR 2016	1 <sup>ST</sup> Quarter 2016 Total	1 <sup>ST</sup> Quarter 2016 % of Total
Self-Represented Litigant	946	835	949	2,730	73%	985	1103	1360	3,448	76%
Attorney	355	304	366	1,025	27%	295	317	457	1,069	24%

Statistics taken during this period show that each month, over 70% of questions received by library staff are from Self-Represented Litigants, while less than 30% are from attorneys and legal professionals.

#### **Services Provided at the Law Library**

The Law Library provides assistance with legal research materials, court forms, and court and county information. Statistics gathered for the types of services provided by library staff fall in

four categories: Forms, which includes requests for and questions about 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit court forms and forms from other self-help websites such as Illinois Legal Aid Online; Research (Print/Electronic) which includes assisting patrons with print and online legal research materials; Print/Delivery Requests, which include courtesy copies for Judges' chambers and print requests sent to the Law Library's email account for pick up; and General Assistance, which are any miscellaneous questions such as directional assistance around the courthouse and county complex, assistance with photocopiers, and computer issues.

	OCT 2015	NOV 2015	DEC 2015	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter 2015 Total	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter 2015 % of Total	JAN 2016	FEB 2016	MAR 2016	1 <sup>ST</sup> Quarter 2016 Total	1 <sup>ST</sup> Quarter 2016 % of Total
Forms	722	605	730	2,057	52%	760	848	940	2,548	55%
General Assistance	315	270	322	907	23%	275	334	487	1,096	23%
Print/Delivery Requests	256	246	270	772	20%	230	227	326	783	17%
Research (Print/Electronic)	77	56	68	201	5%	79	87	84	250	5%

Statistics show over 50% of questions posed to library staff are related to court forms; this may be attributable to frequent referrals of Self-Represented Litigants to the Law Library from the Circuit Clerk's office. Less than 10% of questions are related to print and electronic legal research materials. Printing requests, which are mostly attributed to attorney patrons, comprised 20% of questions. Assistance with questions of a general nature comprised a little more than 20%.

#### Types of Legal Questions Received at the Law Library

The Law Library receives questions about all types of court proceedings in the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit. Statistics gathered for the type of legal questions received at the Law Library are divided into four categories: Family, including divorce and parentage actions; Juvenile, including adoption and emancipation actions; Civil, including small claims, evictions, and name change actions; and Criminal, including questions about traffic, misdemeanor, and felony court actions.

	OCT 2015	NOV 2015	DEC 2015	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter 2015 Total	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter 2015 % of Total	JAN 2016	FEB 2016	MAR 2016	1 <sup>ST</sup> Quarter 2016 Total	1 <sup>ST</sup> Quarter 2016 % of Total
Family	408	377	433	1,218	53%	512	533	631	1,667	56%
Civil	343	263	337	943	41%	348	387	449	1,184	40%
Criminal	35	39	27	101	4%	24	34	39	97	3%
Juvenile	10	9	5	24	1%	14	20	11	45	1%

Statistics show that family law questions comprised over 50% of the court proceedings asked about in the Law Library. The category with the next highest total was civil law, at 41%; followed by criminal law at 4% and juvenile law at 1%.

#### **Spanish Speaking Assistance by Library Staff**

The Law Library has two bilingual employees on staff: a full-time senior clerk and a part-time paralegal. Staff records how many instances in which they utilize their Spanish speaking abilities to answer questions about court forms, procedures, and self-help resources from Self-Represented Litigants.

	OCT 2015	NOV 2015	DEC 2015	4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter 2016 Total	% of 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter 2015 Self- Represented Litigants (2730)	JAN 2016	FEB 2016	MAR 2016	1 <sup>ST</sup> Quarter 2016 Total	% of 1 <sup>ST</sup> Quarter 2016 Self- Represented Litigants (3448)
Instances per Month	89	71	75	235	8%	117	116	136	369	10%

These statistics show that about 10% of interactions with Self-Represented Litigants are with Spanish speaking Self-Represented Litigants.

#### **Conclusions**

- The Center for Self-Representation is an integral component of the Law Library's day-to-day services.
- The Law Library statistics show that more Self-Represented patrons ask library staff for assistance than attorneys. This may indicate that attorneys are more comfortable using the Law Library on their own without assistance required from library staff.
- Statistics also show more forms assistance than research assistance is requested at the Law Library. This may be reflected by the fact that the Circuit Clerk's office refers many Self-Represented Litigants to the library with forms questions.
- As county demographics change, the number of primarily Spanish-speaking Self-Represented Litigants seeking assistance will likely increase.