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# SCALL Newsletter

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**LA Law Library: Renovated, Reclassified, Reorganized, and ... Radiant ... text by Patricia Pelz Hart, photos by Tanya Cao**

## LA Law Library: Renovated, Reclassified, Reorganized, and ... Radiant ... text by Patricia Pelz Hart, photos by Tanya Cao



The **Los Angeles County Law Library** has rebranded itself as part of a multi-year effort to reclassify and reorganize its collection, capped most recently by a year of building renovation. Now styled **LA Law Library**, it gleams inside and out.

### LA Law Library History

The Los Angeles County Law Library was started in 1891 by local attorneys, five years after establishment of a local bar association.

For its first sixty years, the home of the library was in the courthouse of the L.A. Superior Court on Hill Street, in downtown Los Angeles. In time, however, attorneys were tired of traipsing to the courthouse in order to use the law library. A seven story library building was erected across the street. The new structure, at 301 West First Street, was designed by the same architect who would do the Stanley Mosk courthouse. Construction took place from 1951-1953, with an addition built in 1969-1970.

The collection grew to an exceptional size, positioning LA Law Library as a leader in access to legal information. LA Law Library is now the second largest public law library in the country, second only to the Law Library of Congress.



### Remaking the LA Law Library

By the new millennium, the Los Angeles County Law Library was a highly respected institution. It had an impressive collection, many online services, excellent bibliographic control, estimable patron services, and a dedicated staff. A top rate institution, however, knows it must never rest on its laurels.



Marcia J. Koslov, the executive director of the LA Law Library

In June 2005, **Marcia J. Koslov** became the executive director. Under her leadership, LA Law Library undertook a series of changes that have vastly improved the library, from its inner workings to its outer appearance.

Most of the reforms were completed or well underway by Nov. 7, 2012, when Marcia gave a tour to two SCALL librarians. The visit was arranged with the aid of **Leigh Garcia**, communications coordinator, and **Eustorgio Barajas**, executive assistant to the chief executive officer. **Douglas J. Myers**, communications director, helped explain library history to the visitors.

Its legal and official name remains the Los Angeles County Law Library. As a manifestation of a renovated self, however, the library has been rebranded. It is now known as **LA Law Library**. A new logo serves as a quick means of identification.



## LA Law Library: Renovated, Reclassified, Reorganized, and ... Radiant *... continued*

The library paid for the renovations with money from its reserves. As do the other county law libraries, the LA Law Library gets its money primarily from filing fees.



### Building's Exterior

The outside entrance walls have been painted in Sahara Sand, a warm terra cotta color. A new roof, below-grade [below soil level] waterproofing and elastomeric paint protect the building from the elements. New irrigation and drainage systems regulate water usage of drought tolerant- plantings.

Next to the entrance are seals representing official bodies at the time of the building's construction. Tinted a golden hue and resting on a blue-grey base to match the blue pearl granite retaining walls, the eight seals are (left column, then right column):

Great Seal of State of California  
 Supreme Court of the United States  
 U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit  
 U.S. District Court, Southern District of California  
 Supreme Court of California  
 District Court of Appeal of California, Second Appellate District  
 Superior Court of Los Angeles County  
 Municipal Court, City of Los Angeles

Two of the seals currently have only historical value. Los Angeles is now in the Central District of California, not the Southern District. California Municipal courts were folded into Superior Courts when the court systems were unified.

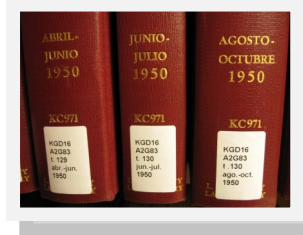


### K Class: *Made in L.A. Changes to Made in D.C.*

The Library of Congress did not write the K schedules until after 1969. During the preceding years, the staff in Los Angeles decided not to leave their works unclassified or in limbo. Instead, Los Angeles created its own Class K-Law scheme from the 1948 classification schedule prepared by the Library of Congress. Initially published in 1951, the system was based on the letter K but differed in many respects from the K schedules later developed by LC.

The L.A. scheme was picked up by other libraries as a means of classifying their law titles during the years before the K schedules were fleshed out. Once the K schedules were published, however, there was a general move to the Library of Congress system. LA Law Library nevertheless continued to apply its own scheme.

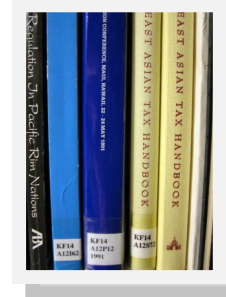
Adoption of the Library of Congress K schedules was a major aim of Marcia Koslov. In her view, a library of great status and leadership should adhere to the standards adopted by similar institutions. In addition, it became increasingly difficult to hire new staff to work with a classification system of which few candidates had any experience.



The new labels overlay the old ones. LC classification KGD is for Law of Mexico and Central America: Guatemala



The old L.A. classification label. KE in the LC classification is for Law of Canada



The old L.A. classification label.



The old L.A. classification label. KJ in the LC classification is for History of law (Europe)

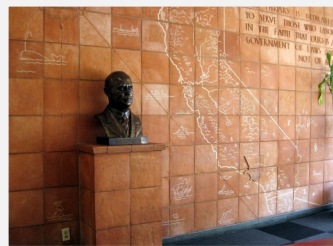
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... continued

The library had about 185,000 titles in 2005. About half of the titles were not yet included in the online catalog. The uncataloged titles, mostly foreign law, provided the impetus to move to the LC classification system. Reclassification and retrospective conversion were then initiated for all holdings cataloged or uncataloged. At the same time, the library began to review its collection holdings. Second and third copies of many sets not needed for circulation purposes were discarded and a scanning project for briefs (see below) was begun. The empty shelving created the necessary space to begin the reclassification and subsequent reshelving process for 800,000 physical volumes. That reclassification process continues today. The new and old numbers can be seen on many spines.

### Lobby

A vibrant lobby welcomes all. On the right is a topographical map of California drawn against a wall painted in the same color palette as the outside walls. A bust of **Thomas Wilfred Robinson**, county law librarian from 1896-1938, pays tribute to the library's past. A display case affixed to a post permits an unobstructed view of the latest display. New carpet in varied shades of grey soothes while it leads to the inside.



### Main Library Floor

The third floor of the law library is the only floor open to the public. Shelved there are high-demand volumes of California, state, and federal law, treatises, and self-help works. Reference, foreign reference, and the circulation desk are in direct line of the main entrance.

Renovation over the last year altered many aspects of the public areas. The circulation and reference desks and the copy center are in new locations. For those familiar with the pre-renovation layout, the reference desk is where the numerous drawers for the print card catalog stood. The reference office is situated in the original typing room, and the office for the Director of Reference/Research is in the old telephone booth area. All collections have been moved, with duplicate volumes added or weeded.

The textured soundproofing for the upper walls of the main reading room is about the only original element left untouched through the renovation process. New gray carpet complements the lobby carpet, but with its own design touches. The majority of furniture is part of the 70's renovation, but upgraded with electrical outlets. 24 new pc workstations were added in two separate locations.

More than 20 online databases including Lexis, Westlaw, Bloomberg, and HeinOnline are available inside the Law Library

and in the branch and partner locations. Only those attorneys who participate in the Members Program have remote access.

Through its "We Bring the Library to You!" campaign, LA Law Library offers e-Delivery and document delivery of its collection to everyone from the general public to large law firms. A training center, conference rooms and small offices may all be rented out. Library administration, as well as the Programs/Partnership team and the Communications team are on the third floor. Collection Management services (technical services), technology and the scanning process are on the ground (first) floor.



Main floor internet stations

Main floor self-help books



First floor stacks



First floor wood desks.





### Members Study

In 2010, the LA Law Library introduced a Members Program, aimed at solo practitioners and small firms of two to twelve attorneys. There are currently two hundred and fifty individual and small firm members.

For an annual fee, Members have their own quiet place for study, research, and reading. Duplicate copies of California resources are within easy reach. A special phone line lets members call in with reference questions. Unlimited use of online databases, including remote access to seven of the databases, is provided.

An elevator that opens into the Members Study rises directly from the attached parking structure. Two small conference rooms are at the back of the study room.



### Building and Shelving

The building was built of concrete on a foundation of rock. In the non-public areas, the metal shelving is built in and *cannot be moved*. The ceiling of each floor is, in fact, supported by vertical struts connecting the shelves at the ends of the rows. It is unknown if the struts actually pass through the concrete. From one floor to another, however, the struts are stacked up in matching rows. No one is taking any shelves down to check if the ceiling would stay up without them.

There are thirty-five *miles* of shelving throughout the building. Of that, ten miles are for foreign law; five miles are for briefs; and one mile is for international law. There is no compact shelving in the library.

Sensors turn off lights on the non-public floors when no motion is detected. The building has four elevators that work, and two electric dumbwaiters that don't.

### Scanning of Briefs

LA Law Library has the most comprehensive collection of California Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal briefs in the state. The collection dates back to the beginning of the courts.

Current briefs are scanned as they arrive. In the last three

years, LA Law Library has scanned 2 ½ million pages of briefs. Brief scanning is a project between the library and **LLMC-Digital**. When a volume is to be scanned, the **guillotine** first slices off the binding. Pages are then fed into the high-speed scanners – there are three of them. In addition, there is a large step and repeat camera for materials that cannot go through the high-speed scanners. Scanning staff handle the briefs start to finish, including a quality control process. The scanned briefs are then wrapped, boxed and shipped the LLMC salt mines in Kansas for preservation purposes.

### Integrated Library System

The library uses the **Voyager** system as its integrated library system. On spine labels, the top line is for the location. For example, **RR** stands for reading room.

### Branches and Library Partnerships

LA Law Library has five branches located throughout Los Angeles County and partnerships with public libraries in Compton, Lancaster, Pasadena and Van Nuys as a way of bringing its collection to more members of the public and legal community.



## LA Law Library: Renovated, Reclassified, Reorganized, and ... Radiant *... continued*

### Staff

The staff includes eighteen professional librarians and several professionals in other fields, such as communications, IT, finance, and building engineering. About forty additional staff members complete the roster.

Although Marcia knew quite a bit about library space planning and construction, **Jaye Nelson**, Senior Director, Information Services, was involved in every detail and personally responsible for many of the renovations. While professional construction crews handled the new walls, painting and carpeting, Jaye led the technology, CMS and facility staff in many of the interior changes and additions. All staff, in particular the Reference/Research staff, were involved in collection decisions and are especially noted for maintaining good-humor and excellent service during the years of construction, both internally and externally.

### Library as Film Location

LA Law Library is a location of choice for films. Some scenes from the 2011 movie *Ramparts*, were filmed on site. The movie starred Woody Harrelson, Ben Foster, Sigourney Weaver, and Ned Beatty.

Following the heels of their first-ever Pro Bono Week Celebration, LA Law Library will host an MCLE session, *In Re Garcia*, organized by LACBA Barristers. Close to 150 attorneys and members of the legal community are expected to attend this January 17, 2013 event.

### Marcia Koslov to Retire

In October, 2012, the LA Law Library announced that Marcia J. Koslov had decided to retire effective December 31. Susan Steinhauser, the president of law library's board of trustees, thanked and praised Marcia.

*During Marcia's tenure, our collections and use of technology have been refined; the services we offer to the public and legal community have grown; and partnerships with public libraries, bar associations and the courts have been built. Most evident, the Law Library has been renovated both inside and out, to meet the changing demands of the evolving library user. LA Law Library News Release. Oct. 17, 2012.*

### Conclusion

Start with second largest law collection in the country. Keep up the use of an effective integrated library system. Draw upon the knowledge and abilities of a committed and capable staff.

Bite the bullet to change the K classification system, even though it means hundreds of thousands of new spine labels and hours upon hours of stack redesign and physical reshelving.

Recognize that the concrete building may be sixty years old, but it has stood the test of earthquake time, and it contains a very large area spread over seven floors. The metal shelves on all floors may be immovable, but they are strong, they are sufficient in number, and they are already in place.

Make careful use of money prudently saved by farseeing custodians.

Place in the hands of a shrewd manager of outstanding talents. Push yourselves to the limit for seven and a half years.

The result is a library that was very good in 2005 and is even better in 2012. Located in the heart of the Civic Center District in Downtown LA and steps away from the new Grand Park, LA Law Library today has the resources, organization, flexibility, capabilities, and design to be the leader in access to legal information for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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