

# KING COUNTY LAW LIBRARY



2020

# ANNUAL REPORT

*Letter from the Executive Director - **page 2***

*Reference Numbers - **page 6***

*Collection Update - **page 7***

*Financial Report - **page 8***

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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With groundwork laid over several years resulting in reverting to our historical name, more efficient use of our physical space, long-term price protection for the collection, and reconfiguring staffing and financial operations, the outlook for the King County Law Library at the start of 2020 was very bright. As part of our staffing restructure, we created a new outreach services librarian position and welcomed Ross Zimmerman to our staff in late February 2020.

As the new outreach services librarian, Ross was charged with creating innovative systems to develop, organize, deliver, and market legal information & services both in the law library and out in the community. Within two weeks of his start date, the law library offices and the courts were closed due to the corona virus outbreak. The law library initially planned for a two-week closure, on the assumption that the virus would be quickly contained. As it became evident that the physical closure would last much longer than two weeks, it was clear that not just Ross's job duties, but the entire service model of the law library would need to be reimagined.

To put this in historical perspective, the King County Law Library celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2019. In many ways the law library's service model had not changed much over the course of the century. The library offered space and legal research resources within the courthouse for attorneys, judges, and the public to check out books, study the law, work on their cases, attend legal clinics, and receive research assistance from library staff. All this activity centered on the physical space of the law library. With access to the physical space unavailable during the pandemic closure, the entire service model of the library was turned on its ear.





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Undaunted by the change in circumstances, from the date of the initial closure on March 13th, the law library remained operational, offering remote reference services via phone and email. Library staff moved into high gear to develop tools and resources to replicate in house services including the following:

**Video Chat Reference:** *A video chat reference was developed to replicate in-house reference interactions with patrons. With the video chat reference, librarians can show patrons books and help navigate web resources in real time. In fact, some of the functionality of the video chat reference is an improvement on the in-house capabilities. For example, being able to send links immediately and directly through the chat function allows patrons to seamlessly begin to use resources on their own.*



**Remote Access to Legal Research Databases:** *The legal publishing industry is comprised of very few players and has not had to adapt to market demands as have other publishing sectors. Prior to the pandemic there was much resistance to allowing public law libraries to offer remote access to legal research databases. With in-person access limited and print book sales flagging, several publishers reconsidered their access policies. HeinOnline, the National Consumer Law Center and Nolo Press all began allowing remote access to their databases.*

**Remote Access to eBooks via Lexis Digital and Wolters Kluwer Cheetah:** *Just as legal publishers did not allow remote access to their databases, they also prohibited public law libraries from allowing remoted access to their eBooks. In what is one of the brightest silver linings to the pandemic disruption of normal operations, both LexisNexis and Wolters Kluwer began making eBooks available for remote use, something public law libraries had been requesting for years. The law library now has a robust collection of legal treatises in eBook format that are available for remote checkout.*



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**"What to Expect When..." & "How to..." Videos:** The advent of Zoom hearings, online scheduling and increased expectations for e-filing created a lot of confusion for self-represented litigants. The law library partnered with attorneys and court administrative staff to create a series of videos to help make sense of changing court rules and procedures. The "What to Expect When ..." and "How to Videos..." break down common court procedures and rules into a more easily understandable framework.

**Infographics:** Through our interactions both on the phone and via email, we discovered that research guides that are overly text-heavy are an impediment to many patrons. We began creating image-based infographics to help patrons understand the basic concepts behind various legal subjects. The infographics provide a helpful gateway into complex legal subject matter and facilitate more effective use of traditional research guides as patrons get deeper into the research.



**Webcast Self-Help Workshops & Classes:** Prior to the pandemic our Self-Represented Litigant Workshop series and other classes for pro ses were taught in person. The law library was able to quickly transition those classes into webinars and continue providing educational instruction during our closure.

**Downloadable Form Packets:** One of the most common services that we provide at the reference desk is to help patrons access court forms. In addition to the forms that are available via the Washington Courts and King County Superior Court websites, the law library has many form packets that are created in-house. Prior to the pandemic, these form packets were only sold in print at the library to protect the law library's intellectual property rights. In order to continue to make our form packets available during the pandemic we created a download system for our forms that allows people to buy the forms remotely while still protecting our work product.





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www.



**Creation of User-Friendly Website Interface:** With most of our patrons now encountering our law library for the first time via our webpage rather than walking through our front doors, it became imperative to have a very simple and intuitive website interface. We completely revamped our homepage making it much easier to quickly access our most popular resources.

**Curbside Book Checkout:** Borrowing print books is the lifeblood of our subscriber program and we ramped up a checkout process as soon as feasible in terms of safety protocols in the courthouse and for our patrons. We set up online selection and reservation systems to schedule appointments for pickup. Our “curbside” was located on the 6th floor lobby and returned books were quarantined for 36 hours before recirculating.



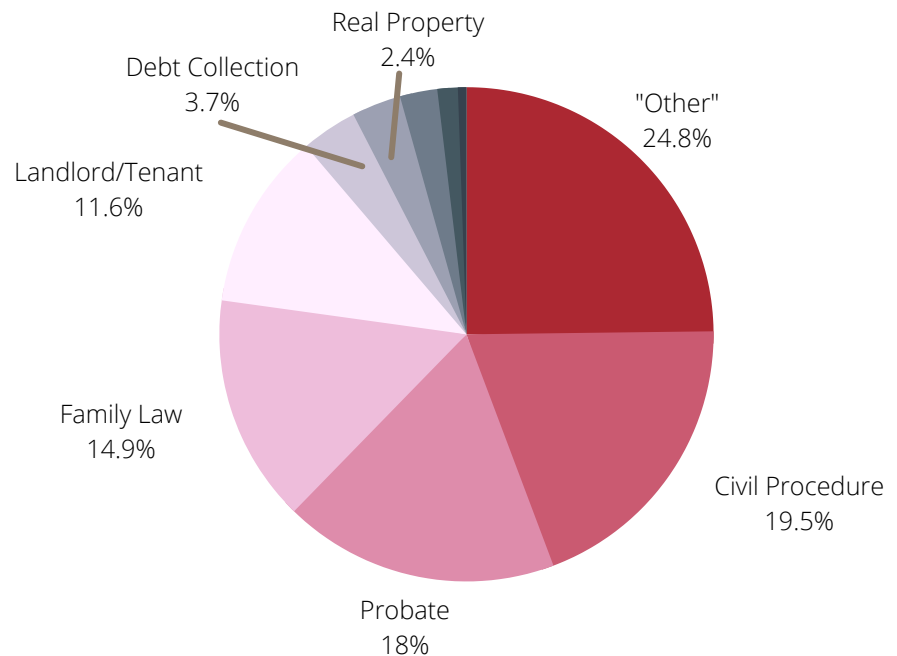
In many ways the pandemic closure netted positive results for the law library. Like other businesses and organizations, the law library made the happy discovery that many of the pandemic workarounds were surprisingly effective. As we adjusted to the “new normal,” we did so inspired by the possibilities created by our changed circumstances. And, for the most part, the change is for the better as the law library (and the courts) become more firmly grounded in the digital world.

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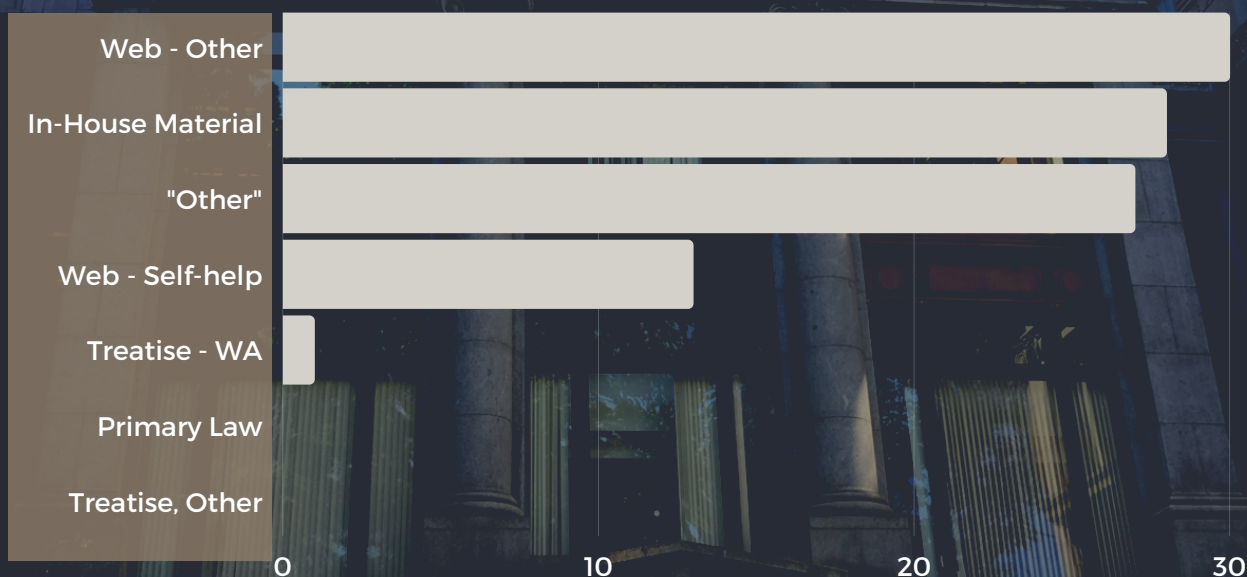
The closure of our physical locations also had an effect on the types of interactions we had with patrons.

Excluding questions about the availability of our services during the closure, a lower percentage of our interactions were about civil procedure, and probate questions made up a higher percentage.

During the closure, we relied more heavily on our own content (form packets, training materials, etc.) and online resources while answering patron questions.



## RESOURCES USED (%)





**39,313**

Number of Titles

**3,686**

Volumes Removed

**735**

Volumes Added

**6**

Volumes  
Missing/Lost

## MOST CHECKED OUT

- 1.** Washington Practice v.17 - Real Property
- 2.** Newberg on Class Actions
- 3.** RCWA
- 4.** Winning Evidence Arguments
- 5.** Washington Practice v.19 - Family & Community Property

## INCOME

Filing Fees	\$617,561
Fee-Based Services	\$41,879
Other Income	\$432,542
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,091,982</b>

## EXPENDITURES – SEATTLE

Books & Periodicals	\$277,083
Operating	\$51,230
Payroll/Benefits	\$483,866
Capital	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$812,179</b>

## EXPENDITURES – KENT

Books & Periodicals	\$48,866
Operating	\$14,305
Payroll/Benefits	\$157,718
Capital	\$0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$220,989</b>

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