

# Connecting Outside the Library Walls

## **Perspectives from Private, Academic, and Public Libraries**

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# San Diego Law Library



## Vision

The San Diego Law Library will become everyone's first choice for finding legal solutions, pursuing access to justice, using advanced technology, and learning how the law works for them.

## Mission

### **LAW MADE PUBLIC**

The Law Library is dedicated to **bringing law to the people:**

We welcome all people to help them find the law.

We **partner with legal services providers** to help people understand and use the law.

We advocate for free and open access to the law and the justice system. [*emphasis added*]

# Why Collaborate Outside the Library?

- “. . . combined voices are more effective than single voices.” [*Libraries, Coalitions, & The Public Good*, p. 111]
- Collaboration is mutually beneficial when it is done strategically with the mission and values of each institution in mind.
- Libraries have to move to **where** library services are **needed**, collaboration/sharing should be the norm. [*Outfront with Stephen Abram*, p. 145]
- We can't afford, *any of us*, to duplicate materials, staff time, and efforts.
- Delivery of law to the public and collaboration are in our Library's mission statement so we are intentional about outreach and partnering with other institutions.

# How Do We Collaborate?

- Inside the Library

- San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program* weekly family law legal clinic
- Legal Aid Society* Consumer Law clinics weekly at El Cajon and Chula Vista library locations. Legal Aid also offers Unlawful Detainer Clinics in those locations on a weekly basis.
- Elder Law & Advocacy* virtual clinic held 2 times each month at Main Law Library location
- Legal Aid Tax Clinic* held at Law Library every last Wed. of the month
- Civil Appellate Self Help workshop held monthly at Law Library in collaboration with *Legal Aid Society*, the *Fourth District Court of Appeal*, and the *San Diego County Bar Association*
- Divorce Mediation Group* holds training workshops in partnership with the Law Library the first 3 Wednesdays of each month.
- Community Office Hours held in library for *Speaker of the Assembly Toni Atkins* (monthly).
- Vendor *CEB* holds classes in library and the library receives educational recordings at no cost.
- Library courthouse locations used each Friday for Family Law Settlement Conferences-Chula Vista.
- San Diego County District Attorney* holds DA Truancy Clinics at our Vista law library location each month.

- Outside the Library

- Thomas Jefferson School of Law* legal clinic held in partnership with *SDLL* at the El Cajon Branch of the *San Diego County Library* system (weekly)
- At the *San Diego County Library*-El Cajon Branch *SDLL* provides a law librarian on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays of each month; access to four premium legal databases on two computers during all open hours of the public library branch; *SDLL* membership services; and educational sessions and presentations for the public and law library patrons in the El Cajon location. *SDLL* also donated a small self help law collection for this location.
- At the *Chula Vista City Library*- Civic Center Branch *SDLL* provides a law librarian on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays of each month; access to four premium legal databases on two computers during all open hours of the public library branch; *SDLL* membership services; and educational sessions and presentations for the public and law library patrons in the Chula Vista location. *SDLL* also donated a small self help law collection for this location.
- Foundation for Democracy & Justice* civics class held at the *San Diego City Library*.
- Law Week clinics at *El Cajon Public Library* and our own Vista library location. This is a collaboration with local Bar Associations in each location.
- Law & Comics* at the *San Diego City Library*.

# Use of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Why?

- Useful to clearly state and document responsibilities and manage expectations
- Forces each party to think things through in advance of entering into a collaborative arrangement
- Sets a timeline for review to ensure the collaboration is working; allows flexibility in changing the arrangement at any time (or even getting out of the arrangement at any time).
- Helps each party learn about the other and form a common vision
- Should be reviewed by attorneys from each side and the formality of an MOU dictates that this step gets done

# What Should the MOU include?

According to the Nonprofit Risk Management Center at <http://www.nonprofitrisk.org>, an MOU should contain the basic content:

1. Statement of Intent
2. Names of the Parties
3. A time period with start and end dates
4. Assignments/Responsibilities
5. Disclaimers
6. Financial Arrangements (who pays for what [if needed])
7. Risk Sharing
8. Signatures

# Questions for Discussion

In any collaboration and in drafting an MOU you should be able to answer some or all of the following questions:

Name at least 2 outside the library agencies with whom you might collaborate?

What will your library get out of it?

Will the other party get more out of it than you do? [this is OK by the way]

What are the alternatives?

Why are you forming this collaboration?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of each party?

What contribution is each party expected to make?

What are the risks?

[adapted from *Libraries, Coalitions, & The Public Good*, p. 132]

# Sources

- Abram, Stephen, Judith A. Siess, and Jonathan Lorig. *Out Front with Stephen Abram: A Guide for Information Leaders*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2007. Print.
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- Smallwood, Carol. *Librarians as Community Partners: An Outreach Handbook*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2010. Print.