

EXHIBIT 10
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STATE LAW LIBRARY
REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE
JANUARY 2005

The Montana State Law Library continues to strive to improve its performance in pursuit of its mission of providing access to legal information at the time and in the format that best serves the research needs, responsibilities and concerns of its constituencies. Having a user base that includes the entire state—the judiciary and all of state government, all of the practicing bar, and the general public—makes this a perennial challenge.

It is no secret that today most people want their information delivered electronically. In recognition of this paradigm shift, we have revised our systems to support different ways of learning and doing legal research, as well as the growing number of self-represented litigants we assist. The Montana Law Library adds approximately 16,000 pages to its website each month. In addition to the Supreme Court's opinions and the appellate briefs that are filed with the court, other legal materials that are in the public domain are also added. Court rules, legal forms, Attorney General's opinions, and Constitutional Convention materials are examples.

In 2002 we averaged 5,000 visits to our web site each month; now the number of unique visitors is over 7,000. Our site is visited more than 18,000 times per month. During the past year we have worked closely with the rest of the Judiciary to prepare the new Montana Courts website. This will be released in the very near future. It will present information about the courts and their administration in a very user-friendly fashion. A copy of the new home page is attached.

The library's website has an "Ask the Librarian" button, which generates a significant number of requests. Some are simple copy requests or queries that five years ago people would have phoned in. Most, however, are reference and research requests. The ones from public and private legal offices are generally no different than the traditional ones we answer. Requests for legislative histories, other state statutes, dates for limitations of actions, effective dates of statutes, and law journal articles are typical.

The biggest change we have seen has been the volume and variety of questions received from pro se litigants and the general public. Legal definitions, such as "what does 'right to work state' mean?" are common. Requests for legal forms for divorces, name changes and stepparent adoptions are frequent.

We get a few requests from students each month, asking for extensive research for their academic work. We also receive requests for legal advice constantly. To both of these categories our usual response is to send links to sections of the Montana Code or other parts of our website. We also give referrals to a number of other offices, such as Montana Legal Services and the Lawyer Referral Service operated by the State Bar of Montana.

The library added two public access Westlaw computer stations this year, and we worked with the local bar associations and courts to provide free Westlaw in Kalispell and Bozeman. Our public computers are in constant use. Clients use them for legal research, to locate law journal titles, and to do Internet research. We also have made the law library a wireless environment, so that users can use their laptops and handheld devices to access the Internet and their e-mail accounts.

We know that reports and documents remain on government websites for an average of only 44 days. Thus we are working with other stakeholders in Montana government to fashion a plan for permanent public access to government information that is born digital. We also know that 60% of all Internet searching done by professionals does not yield the information sought. Consequently our reference staff spends a lot of time helping people negotiate the Internet. The common belief that everything is available for free on the World Wide Web leaves many people quite frustrated. We generally find that in these cases the material that is sought is too old (generally published before 1998) or is a commercial source that will never be free on the Internet, or that the search techniques were flawed.

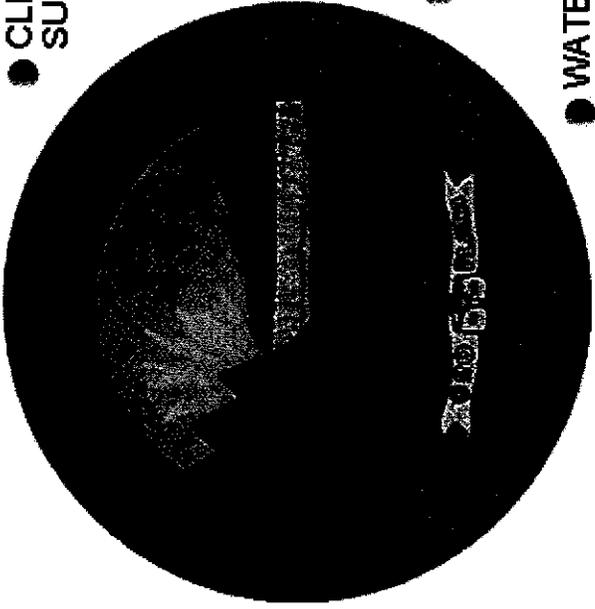
Our staff of eight people now spends half of its time on digital information—either in digitizing print sources, arranging them on our Web site, or assisting others in searching the Internet. This is a significant change over past years. We continue to migrate from print titles to electronic licenses so that we can e-mail people the information they are seeking. This gives them their information faster, and diminishes the amount of copying and mailing or faxing that we need to do. When taking requests for information, we used to give the client the option of having something sent through the U.S. mail, Federal Express or U.P.S, or faxed. Now we will digitize a print source and e-mail it to the customer.

Despite this dramatic change in how we do business, we still have an excellent book collection which we are quite proud of. As we are the law library of last resort for the entire State of Montana, we cannot prune it more than we already have. We also must be able to anticipate the research needs of the bench and bar. Our collection now has 170,000 volumes, which is large enough for us to fulfill most requests

The law library staff is stable, and each member excels at his or her job. All are committed to providing the best possible service to the citizens of Montana. We feel the library is the Equalizer—the first rung of the ladder of justice. By offering our resources, we know that the Attorney General's office will have the same quality of information available as the largest law firm in the West. Similarly, a pro se patron who cannot afford paid legal counsel has a place to come, in person or virtually, to begin to understand legal processes and systems. We strive to understand and anticipate what keeps our stakeholders up at night, so that we will be ready to serve them when they contact us.

MONTANA STATE COURTS

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- LAW LIBRARY
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- WORKERS COMPENSATION COURT
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MONTANA COURTS
OVERVIEW