How to Find Local Law:  
A California Paradigm

Marc A. Levin
Institute of Governmental Studies
University of California, Berkeley

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A CALIFORNIA PARADIGM

BY

MARC A. LEVIN

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This article provides guidance for legal research in American municipal and county law, with particular emphasis on California. Included is information on the local lawmaking process, an overview of local legal publishing, availability of local laws, and a review of suggested secondary sources, both print and on-line. Applications of the Internet and other developing technologies are discussed as emerging avenues for the delivery of local legal materials to remote based researchers.
HOW TO FIND LOCAL LAW: A CALIFORNIA PARADIGM

by Marc A. Levin

Institute of Governmental Studies

University of California, Berkeley

INTRODUCTION

Local government law has been characterized as the "caboose" at the end of the line in American legal research, an afterthought or footnote appended to the traditional law school curriculum. Commonly viewed as too arcane for mainstream legal education, local legal research skills are relegated to the domain of specialized litigators practicing as municipal attorneys or county counsels. However, the demand for local legal materials seem inevitable since so many legal problems and issues are governed not only by federal and state purview, but by the laws, rulemaking, regulations, oversight, or policies enacted by a myriad of public entities such as counties, cities, towns, villages, special purpose districts, or regional bodies. The decentralized nature of American governance delegates power and authority to local jurisdictions over vast areas of everyday life and economic activity. Since local governments are granted broad control over property, zoning, and local matters, it seems unavoidable that legal issues and court challenges will arise. Attorneys, law students, citizens, law librarians, and legal researchers need access to municipal and county legislation to solve problems of local practice and inquiry.

This article intends to shed light upon an obscure area of neglected legal research involving local government law (e.g., cities and counties), with particular emphasis upon
California, leading to a conceptual and practical framework for creating an effective research strategy. To achieve this objective, a two part approach ensues, focusing first on a general overview of the problems associated with finding local laws, then, followed by a bibliographic discussion of suggested sources, both print and electronic.

THE LOCAL MILIEU

Local laws are a form of delegated legislation based on powers, duties, and authorities granted by a state legislature. Thus, local agencies possess limited self-governance and exist as "creatures", or agents, of the state. Housing, transportation, social welfare, education, health, sanitation services (e.g., garbage collection and recycling), zoning and land use planning, environmental safety and protection, and tax collection (e.g., sales and property taxes, user charges, and administrative fees) fall under the bailiwick of local home rule. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, writing in a 1932 court opinion (285 U.S. 311), coined the famous phrase "laboratories of democracy" to describe the historic role of American state and local governments. Brandeis and other social theorists, envisioned sub-national governments as laboratories for experimentation seeking new solutions to pressing public social and economic problems. Theoretically, local solutions that worked could be applied nationally; those that failed could be discarded. Today, this concept is still valid and continues to spawn innovative and contentious solutions to local problems, thus sustaining legal community interest in local affairs.

What are the myriad of problems associated with local legal research? First, there is a problem with sheer complexity. According to the 1992 Census of Governments, there are 86,692 units of local government operating in the United States. Each of these local entities promulgate laws, policies and regulations that have the potential to further complicate the legal research
process. Essentially, all local governments are in the legal publishing business. This leads to the second problem associated with access and availability regarding local legislation. Local law is inadequately published, not widely disseminated, often untimely, and poorly indexed. To add to this quagmire, local laws are unavailable from standard law books and, most critically, no online access currently exists. Westlaw and Lexis, for example, do not provide full-text access to local legal materials. These problems hamper even superior law libraries from widely collecting local laws beyond the boundaries of their own communities.

There are three identifiable types of local documents. First, legislative documents comprise the "records of local democracy" consisting of ordinances, codes, charters, resolutions, minutes, meeting agenda, proceedings, opinions, and policy or special reports issued by elected local bodies (e.g., city council, city attorney, etc.). Local ordinances are analogous to slip laws and usually pertain to a single subject or enactment. Local codes are subject arrangements of the local ordinances in force. Resolutions are generally not legislative in nature, but rather are the means by which a local body accomplishes particular actions. Second, administrative documents comprise the "records of the public's daily business" and consist of budgets, financial reports, agency annual reports, planning documents, administrative manuals, community surveys, and special studies issued by appointed local officials or bureaucrats (e.g., city manager, department heads, etc.). Third, judicial documents comprise the "records of trial courts" consisting of lower court opinions, rulings and decisions stemming from the activities of the municipal or superior court system, or issued by civil grand juries.

Unlike the federal and state sectors, researching local legislative intent can be a vexing challenge since publication of public hearings, official transcripts or proceedings, legislative
voting records, and annotated local codes are non-existent for municipal or county governance. The structure of local government mildly varies from state to state, depending on local historical traditions, political customs and cultures, and prevailing intergovernmental relations. The need to understand the structural elements associated with state-local relations become imperative since local entities depend on authority granted by the state. Therefore, a crucial initial step in the research process is to consult state law to determine what specified powers and duties are granted local governments under current constitutional or statutory provision.

LOCAL LAWMAKING, CALIFORNIA STYLE

The California State Legislature grants broad discretionary powers to its 58 counties and 468 cities, permitting them to adopt internal structure, operations, programs, and services suited to local conditions. California state law stipulates three official forms of local incorporation for its cities and counties consisting of general law, charter law, and consolidated city and county arrangement. The terms of California local incorporation, attainable through local referenda, dictate how a locality can organize and select a governing body, the level of responsibility for providing public services, jurisdictional powers to legislate and regulate over local affairs, and the degree of autonomy from state control.

General law status, as the most prevalent form of local incorporation, provides limited autonomy for cities and counties as specified in the California Government Code sections that regulate general law opting public agencies. Local charters, common to larger, urbanized places (e.g., Berkeley, San Diego County), serve as an organic law, similar in purpose to a federal or state constitution and amended by local referenda. In 1992, there were 83 cities and 12 counties operating under a charter form of incorporation in California. Charter governments possess the
maximum degree of local discretion and home rule permissible under California law. Consolidated form of local governance merge all authorized city and county functions into one local entity. Currently, only the City and County of San Francisco operates as a consolidated form of local government. Lastly, unincorporated places fall under the legal jurisdiction of the surrounding county government. Thus, establishing the incorporation status of a community reveals important clues regarding the relevant need to consult a local code or charter, the state statutes, or a appropriate county document for determining legal authority.

**LOCAL LEGAL PUBLISHING**

Each time an official local governing body convenes, local laws are drafted, resolutions proclaimed, and ordinances adopted. An ordinance is a single measure passed by an elected body to regulate a local matter, and is the equivalent of a federal or state statute. Conventional practice in California is for localities to collect ordinances into a codification that subject classifies current law into a looseleaf service format. The resulting compilation is usually published in one or two looseleaf volumes, provided with a table of contents and a broad subject index. Such publications have a typical code format: subject arrangement by chapter, article, and section.

It is the duty of the designated city or county clerk to file, codify, index and publish local ordinances upon adoption. Depending on prevailing practices, clerks commonly publish new ordinances in the sanctioned local newspaper soon after enactment to satisfy the public's right to know. California, like most states, displays faith in the power of the press to inform and notify. While such requirements may serve the purpose of formal legal notice, this act is useless to the researcher for whom the back issues of obscure local newspapers are apt to be as elusive as the text of the laws they may contain. The codification process can be slow and code revisions vary
in frequency depending on the staffing conditions within the clerk's office and the legislative calendar confronting the issuing elective body.

The physical format of an ordinance code varies greatly and might include the following special features: charter, zoning code and maps, ordinance conversion/disposal tables, administrative code, list of resolutions enacted, etc. The city or county may publish its own code, or contract out this responsibility to a specialized legal publisher (e.g., Book Publishing Company, Coded Systems Corporation, Municipal Code Corporation, etc.). Local charters may be separately published or included as the first section of a jurisdiction's looseleaf ordinance code service. Charters are amended through the local referendum process and filed for certification with the California Secretary of State upon approval. The text of voter approved changes to local charters are published in the following three places: in the last annual volumes of the official California state statutes for that year, in the voter's handbook issued by the county Registrar of Voters and mailed to eligible voters, and as supplements or revisions to published charters.

LOCAL CODE AVAILABILITY

Availability of a local ordinance code for inspection or consultation is commonly limited to the following three public sites: the issuing clerk's office, the local county or municipal law library, or main branch of the local public library system. In such cases, a depository status is based on an informal or oral agreement with local officials or as an administrative procedure established by local ordinance or resolution. Statewide local depository laws are rare, however, such statutes do exist in New York State and California. In New York State, under section 27 of the Municipal Home Rule Law, copies of new local ordinances must be filed with the New
York State Department of State as the central state agency assigned the task of compiling and publishing local acts. Unfortunately, the New York State budget crisis of the early 1970s resulted in the discontinuation of publishing local acts as a supplement to its session laws. The Department, however, does continue to receive and archive local laws for public inspection in Albany.

The California approach to providing public access to local law is a variant improvement to the New York State model. The California state Government Code (Section 50110, enacted in 1949) established a unique and progressive local government depository system that requires all incorporated cities and counties to deposit free copies of their local publications (e.g., ordinance codes, annual reports, budget, etc.) with three designated statewide public service units: Institute of Governmental Studies Library (University of California, Berkeley); Public Affairs Service (University of California, Los Angeles); and the California State Library (Sacramento). The original legislative intent of this depository statute was to provide the public with reasonable access to elusive local materials housed in a network of geographically dispersed state supported research collections. This system would build on the strength and capacity of state research institutions, such as the University of California, that already specialized in urban affairs and organized research. It was assumed that the three designated public institutions possessed the professional talent and sustaining interest in collecting local information to make the local depository arrangement functional. The California local depository system relied on decentralization to insure availability of local laws beyond the borders of an issuing community. Unlike the New York State model, the California system did not rely on one state agency, but opted to delegate this function to several redundant public organizations.
Historically, enforcement and compliance with the California local government depository law has been problematic since local agency participation is voluntary and viewed by local officials as another burdensome unfunded state mandate. To bolster local agency compliance, in September 1982 the City Clerks Association of California officially endorsed the policy statement affirming their support of the state's program and strongly urged all city clerks to fully cooperate. Similar to the case of New York State, however, the California fiscal crisis of the early 1990s eroded the ability of state supported institutions to aggressively collect local laws under the established depository program. During this era of retrenchment, both UCLA and the California State Library reluctantly decided to reduce or eliminate their local code collections. At present, UC Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) is the only remaining agency that still maintains an active local code depository collection, owning 74% of the cities and 77% of the counties statewide. As a public service, the IGS Library operates a modest fee-based code lending service to San Francisco Bay Area private law firms. This informal resource sharing program generates minimal revenue to help cover costs associated with maintenance and preservation of California's last remaining intact local law collection.

Local clerk's offices customarily provide limited public assistance in locating copies of single ordinances for a small administrative fee (intended to recover reproduction and mailing costs), and, might offer to sell the entire code for an extravagant purchase price (ranging from $300 to $500 for the base set, supplemented by an annual subscription fee for revisions). The purchase offer is most appealing to larger private law offices engaged in frequent litigation involving a local agency, thus justifying such an investment of a firm's meager law library resources. Consulting a good local government directory, such as the Municipal/County Executive...
Directory Annual (Carroll Publishing Company), will provide the appropriate address and phone number nationwide of clerk offices as an initial point of contact for locating local laws. In California, for example, the Northern California Association of Law Libraries (NOCALL) has compiled the California Municipal County Charters, Codes and Ordinances: A Directory of Availability (2nd edition, 1989) as a directory source for locating public availability to local laws issued throughout the state.

SUGGESTED SECONDARY SOURCES

Aside from locating the text of local laws, the savvy legal investigator might consider consulting various other sources to enrich and inform the local legal research process. The following sources are suggested as "handmaidens", assisting the researcher through the maze of caselaw and legal information supplemental to interpreting principles of law and practice in the local arena.

NIMLO:

The National Institute of Municipal Law Officers (NIMLO) is the leading professional association representing the interest of city attorneys nationwide. NIMLO publishes the following specialized sources that concentrate on ordinance drafting, court decisions, and current developments appealing to local legal practitioners:

NIMLO Model Ordinance Service (edited by Charles S. Rhyne): A unique looseleaf service, begun in 1952, patterned after standard municipal code arrangement, by title and section, provides model local laws on common municipal topics (e.g., regulating bawdy houses, window-peeping, begging, vagrancy, etc.) that claim to be constitutionally sound.

NIMLO Municipal Ordinance Review: Monthly newsletter reporting on newly adopted
ordinances from across the country of potential significance, intended to survey recent developments in local law drafting.

**NIMLO Municipal Law Court Decisions:** Monthly newsletter analyzing recent caselaw and judicial decisions pertaining to ordinances challenged in court. Summarizes court decisions and provides case citations.

**NIMLO Municipal Law Docket:** Monthly newsletter highlighting federal regulations, administrative procedures, state legislation, municipal attorney decisions and book reviews of current interest to local litigators.

**Municipal Attorney:** Official monthly journal focusing on law review articles pertaining to an array of local legal issues (e.g., how to draft a noise abatement ordinance, techniques for collecting user fees, etc.).

**LOOSE-LEAF SERVICES:**

**Municipal Corporations:** Written by E.C. Yokley and published by Book Publishing Co.; This four volume set draws from the caselaw of all 50 states and federal courts designed to tap into other jurisdictions' local laws without the need to consult the digest system. Does an excellent job of interpreting constitutional and criminal law from the municipal perspective.

**Municipal Ordinances, Text and Forms:** Written by Byron Matthews and published by Clark Boardman Callaghan; This four volume edition specializes in guiding the user on how to draft and model local ordinances. Contains an extensive subject index and useful "words and phrases" display as applied to the legal construction of local law.

**Municipal Corporation Law:** Written by Chester J. Antieau and published by Matthew Bender; Arranged by subject, this four volume work has extensive annotated citations to caselaw,
state code sections, and law review articles pertaining to municipal legal questions.

The Law of Municipal Corporations: Written by Eugene McQuillin and published by Callaghan & Co.; This twenty volume compendium specializes in intergovernmental aspects of the laws governing the relations between public entities.

Williams' American Land Planning Law: Written by Norman Williams, Jr. and John M. Taylor and published by Clark Boardman Callaghan; A six volume concise guide to judicial decisionmaking in local zoning affairs.

Land Use and Zoning Digest: Published by the American Planning Association; A monthly service digesting judicial decisions and caselaw issued by federal and state appellate courts and new federal and state legislation concerning land use planning and zoning matters.

SHEPARD'S:

There are two reasonable methods for shepardizing local ordinances, as follows:

Ordinance Law Annotations: A Comprehensive Digest of American Cases that Interpret or Apply City & County Ordinances; A thirteen volume set that nationally digests court decisions involving local laws. Provides brief abstracts of decisions under broad subject and narrow subtopics. Two volumes are reserved for cases arranged by state and localities and gives citations to pertinent law review articles that discuss or cite local ordinances.

Shepard's State Citation Services: In the last volume of each individual state shepard's set is the section heading "Index to Ordinances". This section is arranged by broad topic and by geography.

At the present time, on-line access to local ordinance case citation services are not available.
HORNBOOKS & HANDBOOKS:


Urban Planning and Land Development Law: Written by Donald G. Hagman and Julian C. Juergensmeyer and published by West Publishing Co.; Excellent primer for caselaw focusing on city and regional planning and land use planning.

Land Use in a Nutshell: Written by the co-authors Robert and Susan Wright and published by West Publishing Co.; Concise treatment of land use planning law.

Municipal law handbooks do exist specific to individual states. For example, the California Municipal Law Handbook, published by the League of California Cities, is a compilation of caselaw, commentary and practice guidance for California municipal law.

CASEBOOKS & TREATISES:

The following sources are suggested casebooks and treatises that provide a solid foundation for researching local law:


Case and Materials on Land Use: Written by David Callies and published by West Publishing Co.; Provides good review of emerging land use legal themes (e.g., growth controls).


MISCELLANEOUS MONOGRAPHS:

Various reference sources abound that cover local governments. For researching California local laws, however, the following two sources are excellent:

The California Planners' Book of Lists: Annually published by the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research, this source surveys local governments to uncover various planning ordinances adopted throughout the state. The final chapter lists which cities and counties have adopted innovative local initiatives (e.g., impact fee ordinances, condominium conversion ordinances, rent control ordinances, growth management ordinances, etc.) well suited for comparative local analysis.

Paper Trails: A Guide to Public Records in California: Written by Barbara T. Newcombe and published in 1990 by the California Newspaper Publishers Association, this concise handbook guides the user through the maze of local public records (e.g., trial court case files, court minutes, divorce records, probate files, etc.) maintained by a multitude of local agencies.

INDEXING & ABSTRACTING SERVICES:

There are several notable interdisciplinary, specialized indexing and abstracting services that cover local government, both print and online. Several of these services are unique cooperative ventures marketed directly to local governments and provided as an exclusive membership service. Others are more traditional legal research finding guides that focus on journal literature catering to urban practitioners. The following services are recommended for
researching local legal topics:

**Legal Resource Index (LRI) & Index to Legal Periodicals (ILP):** Both are excellent competing sources for finding law review articles, legal periodical and newspaper articles pertaining to a vast array of general and narrow local legal issues. Both services, updated monthly and available in paper or electronic formats, provide detailed subject and geographic access to local legal topics. *LegalTrac*, distributed by Information Access Corporation (IAC), is the CD-ROM version of the LRI covering 1980 to the present. The LRI is also available on-line via WESTLAW in two formats: Texts & Periodicals (T&P) under the database identifier LRI or via DIALOG on WESTLAW under the database identifier LRI-D. The LRI is also available directly from DIALOG as File 150. The ILP, covering 1981 to the present, is available via Mead Data Central's Lexis/Nexis Research Service in the LAWREV or LEXREF libraries under the file name ILP. The ILP is also available directly from the publisher via WilsonLine Information System or as their CD-ROM product.

**Index to Current Urban Documents & Urban Documents Microfiche Collection (UDMC):** An ambitious service, published by a division of Greenwood Publishing Group (Westport, CT), provides access to reports and localized publications issued by over major 300 cities and urban counties throughout United States and Canada. Adopted budgets, financial and management audits, annual reports, planning documents, code sections, legislative analyses, and special studies are among the documents included in this service. This indexing and micro-publishing service consists of the paper index, issued quarterly with annual cumulations, offering both geographic and subject access to locating the actual documents contained within the Collection on microfiche. By consulting under the subject term "Ordinances, codes", for example, it is plausible
to find the text of local codes for such cities as Boston, New York, Denver, Honolulu, San Diego, Memphis, Seattle, etc. As a cooperative national publishing venture, local governments submit their publications for inclusion into the index in exchange for microform copies of their submissions. Greenwood Publishing, in turn, markets the microfiche version of these local documents, and the index, to interested research libraries and public agencies.

Urban Affairs Abstracts (UAA): Issued monthly with annual cumulations in cooperation with the National League of Cities, this publication is a printed indexing and abstracting service designed for urban decision-makers and researchers. The UAA abstracts all major journal literature relevant to urbanism. Consulting under the subject term "Law & Legislation" will uncover an extensive listing of articles about local law, written by local legal practitioners, on such topics as antitrust, arbitration and mediation, civil rights, caselaw, legislation, and legal challenges to local ordinances.

ONLINE SERVICES:

Aside from the above noted printed sources, there are two nationwide on-line information services that cover local legal information geared for local practitioners worth noting. The first, called "Local Exchange", jointly produced by the International City Management Association (ICMA) and the National League of Cities (NLC), covers key legislative and regulatory actions of interest to local officials who belong to either of these two prominent local special interest groups. The second, called LOGIN (Local Government Information Network), produced by Control Data Corporation, contains over 20,000 shared-descriptions of innovative and efficient ways to carry out all aspects of local government programs and services, including emerging legal issues. Both LOGIN and Local Exchange are interactive databases that encourage users to
query the system via an electronic bulletin board and serves as a gateway to related bibliographic and referral databases of interest to local officials.

Relatedly, state-based municipal leagues operate membership-restricted specialized on-line services. For example, the League of California Cities offers "CITYLINK", via the vendor State Net, which permits city attorneys throughout the state to share electronic information about new local legal developments and state and federal legislative and caselaw reporting. CITYLINK is the gateway to the League's Legal Services System (LSS) which offers full text to city attorney documents, opinions and decisions and to "Legal-link", a bulletin board for information sharing among California municipal attorneys.

**SPECIALIZED LAW JOURNALS:**

Legal topics pertaining to local law may appear in almost any legal periodical. Thus, using the various indexing and abstracting sources described earlier, and consulting the appropriate Shepard's volumes, should uncover pertinent citations from an impressive array of legal publications. However, the following seven recommended periodicals, along with each title's publisher, intensively focus on municipal caselaw and report on emerging local legal trends:

- **Current Municipal Problems** (Callaghan & Co.)
- **Municipal Yearbook** (International City Management Association)
- **Proceedings of the Institute on Planning, Zoning & Eminent Domain** (Southwest Legal Foundation)
- **University of Detroit Mercy Law Review** (Joe Christensen, Inc.)
- **Urban Lawyer** (American Bar Association, Section of Local Government Law)
- **Washington University Journal of Urban and Contemporary Law** (Washington University
State-based municipal and county leagues publish specialized journals that often include good coverage of new federal or state legislation or current caselaw pertaining to local services. In California, for example, the statewide League of California Cities publishes monthly *Western City* as the official voice of organized city practitioners. The League's journal features a regular column called "Legal Notes" that digests relevant caselaw and attorney general opinions of high interest to city officials. Likewise, the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) publishes a similar magazine, entitled *California County*, that serves the needs of county officials.

**INTERNET & LOCAL LAW**

The dearth of full-text electronic access to local law hampers expeditious local legal inquiry, especially by remote-based researchers. This regrettable state of affairs runs counter to our democratic principles of widening citizen participation in the process of local lawmaking. It can be argued that providing greater remote access to local legal materials could foster a better informed public, thereby, enhancing citizen involvement in local affairs. At present, the savvy researchers, or interested citizen, is offered little choice but to negotiate through the maze of overburden local bureaucracy, simply to locate the text of proposed or prevailing local law. A solution to this dire situation rests with the wise application of emerging technology, community-based networking, and software innovations.

A novel panacea is appearing on the horizon that is leading to greater remote full-text electronic access to local law, namely, the emerging global information highway, or Internet. There is strong evidence that the builders of these vast telecommunication networks will include
access to local materials, in part motivated by the compelling need to satisfy public demand. To illustrate this phenomenon, below are several prime examples that indicate the rapid spread of this trend toward community-based networking as an initial step in creating regional systems for the delivery of local information services.

New Mexico's Technet Network, the statewide electronic link between research and educational institutions, government agencies, businesses and public-interest groups connects anyone with a personal computer, modem, and telephone line. One of the many public databases available on the statewide network connects to local public records, including the city of Albuquerque code and administrative regulations, and, the code and property-tax records of the surrounding Bernalillo County.  

The Silicon Valley-Public Access Link (SV-PAL), located in Santa Clara County (Calif.), allows any subscriber easy and equitable access to the Internet for a modest annual fee ($20.00) from home or office. A major objective of the SV-PAL is to provide broader access to local information such as city council agendas issued by Silicon Valley area communities. Thus far, the SV-PAL community-based network provides direct links to the cities of San Jose and Sunnyvale providing subscribers with direct access to municipal data, records, and information. Area public libraries allow patrons free access to these networks to broaden community connectivity. Relatedly, just north of Silicon Valley, San Mateo County (Calif.) is planning to be the first American county to have a public gopher on the Internet. Slated to begin during Spring 1994, the San Mateo County network will connect the public directly into the county lawmaking process via the office of the County Clerk.

Since May 1993, Cornell University's Local Government Program has operated an
Internet discussion forum via a list\textsuperscript{erv} called "Municipal Information Exchange" (MUNEX-L). MUNEX-L is a multi-faceted electronic network created for local governments in New York State, but open to anyone interested in local affairs. The network utilizes all the Internet-based avenues of information exchange: e-mail, gopher, World Wide Web, WAIS, ftp, as a community centered information exchange in local governments. Infrastructure connectivity, such as MUNEX-L, is the perfect avenue for wide participation of localities in the delivery of remote public information services. News, information, idea sharing, problem-solving, research trends, for example, can be posted on these network and delivered directly to a any linked personal computer. Listservs are well suited to launch the era of remote access to local based information.

Ambitious public-private network developments are fast underway in Seattle, New York City, Los Angeles, and Palo Alto (Calif.) aiming to link every household citywide with local agencies. Many cities already operate bulletin board systems (e.g., Oakland, Santa Monica) that permit remote users to tap into municipal databases. It would be a logical next step to use the civic network as a gateway connecting the community at large to local legal materials.

Lastly, advancements in new software development bring fresh thinking to this arena. For example, Book Publishing Company, the Seattle-based national specialized legal publisher, has developed "CodeMaster" as a powerful software application for WordPerfect to manage, archive and retrieve municipal code texts. Taken a step further, this format would lend itself well to file transfer protocol (FTP) via a gopher service that could permit any Internet user access to participating local codes as a technique for remote text searching and retrieving.

CONCLUSION:

American local lawmaking has been institutionalized in thousands of compacts, charters,
special acts, statutes, constitutional provisions, resolutions, ordinances, administrative rulings, and court decisions. Each time a local official body convenes, new local laws are enacted. The plethora of local legal output complicates the task confronting the legal researcher. The objective of this article is to assist the researcher navigate the nuances associated with finding local law and related legal materials.

The mere existence of state-mandated local government depository statutes, such as in the case of California, contributes to ensuring the availability of local materials in a central repository. States that do not already have such a statute should consider adopting the "California model" as a component public policy solution to the public's right to know about local matters. The application of new technologies encourage hope that a solution to electronic full-text access to local law is just around the bend. The legal research community should display leadership in both of these areas by promoting statewide local depository legislation where it might not exist, and, by applying pressure on electronic network developers to include local legal materials. The advancement of this agenda will contribute to making local legal materials more widely available, thus serving the dual best interest of an better informed citizenry and bolster the information needs of the legal community at large.


