

# Denver Public Library— A Resource for Legal Professionals

by Frank Wilmot

Although a public library may not be the first place that comes to mind for doing legal research, Denver Public Library (DPL) has a unique collection of basic legal research tools, historical and primary source collections, and government documents that can be extremely valuable to attorneys, paralegals, marketing professionals, and legal researchers. DPL was designated a Federal Depository Library in the late 1800s and has an extensive collection of federal documents. The library's Genealogy and Western History Collections were established in 1910 and 1935, respectively, and have grown into a world-renowned Western History/Genealogy Department. In 1979, DPL was designated a U.S. Patent Depository and continues today as the sole Patent and Trademark Resource Center in Colorado.

This article summarizes materials and services available to the legal community at the Central Library. The focus is primarily on resources in Reference Services (federal government documents, news and finance resources, and patent research); Western History/Genealogy (maps, manuscripts, newspapers, state and local documents); and online (subscription databases and DPL Digital Collections).

## Federal Government Documents

DPL is a member of the Federal Depository Library Program,<sup>1</sup> which was established by Congress to ensure that the American public has access to government information. The Central Library has an extensive federal government documents collection that includes the *Federal Register*, *Code of Federal Regulations*, *United States Code*, *Statutes at Large*, congressional bills and hearings, *Serial Set*, and *Congressional Record*.

Online databases such as Lexis®, Westlaw®, and HeinOnline® have impressive depth and breadth of coverage; however, there will be instances when coverage is lacking or where consulting the print is preferable or even required. The librarians in the DPL Reference Department are available to help navigate the collection in just such instances.

Coverage and scope for the federal documents and other selected sources in print and/or microform are:

➤ Legislative:

- *Journals of the Continental Congress* (1774–1779)
- *Annals of Congress* (1779–1824)
- *Congressional Debates* (1824–1837)
- *Congressional Globe* (1833–1873)
- *Congressional Record* (1873–2009)
- *Serial Set* (1789–2006)
- *Congressional Bills* (1979–2000)
- *Congressional Hearings* (all depository hearings through 2008; some current)
- *Statutes at Large* (1789–2008)
- *United States Code Congressional Service* (1942–1948)
- *United States Code Congressional and Administrative News* (1952–2002).

➤ Administrative:

- *Code of Federal Regulations* (1978–2007)
- *Federal Register* (1936–2000).

## Reference Collection

In addition to the federal documents collections, Reference Services has a large and varied collection, both deep and broad in



### About the Author

Frank Wilmot is Senior Librarian in Reference Services at Denver Public Library—fwilmot@denverlibrary.org. He thanks his colleagues in Reference Services and Western History/Genealogy for their gracious assistance with this article.

This Department, published quarterly, is sponsored by the Colorado Association of Law Librarians (CoALL) to provide helpful information about legal research. Readers are welcome to send research questions to: CoALL, Legal Research Corner, at [www.aallnet.org/chapter/coall](http://www.aallnet.org/chapter/coall). CoALL members will attempt to answer questions individually or as part of this Department.

The information provided in this Department is for educational purposes only and is not intended as legal advice. No endorsement or recommendation is made of any product named in articles. Department coordinators are CoALL members Andrea Hamilton, Madeline Cohen, Theresa (Tracy) Leming, and Esti Shay. For more information about CoALL, visit [www.aallnet.org/chapter/coall](http://www.aallnet.org/chapter/coall).

scope, along with a team of skilled and knowledgeable librarians to help guide users through unfamiliar territory. A small sampling of items in print and/or microform is included below.

- News and finance:
  - SEC corporate annual reports and 10Ks (1978–1995)
  - SEC corporate proxy statements (1978–1982)
  - *Value Line Investment Survey* (1969–2005)
  - *The New York Times* (1851–current)
  - *The Wall Street Journal* (1889–2006)
  - retrospective collections of *Daily Stock Price Record* (OTC, NASDAQ, NYSE, and ASE)
- Other:
  - *IBM Technical Disclosure Bulletins* (1959–1996)
  - *Oil & Gas Journal* (1984–2006)
  - *Oxford English Dictionary*
  - retrospective collections of building trade codes (*e.g.*, *International Building Code*, *Uniform Building Code*, *National Electric Code*)
  - retrospective collections of vehicle appraisal guides (*NADA* and *Kelley Blue Book*)
  - retrospective collections of English-language dictionaries
  - selected dictionaries of idioms, phrases and -isms, word origins, and etymology
  - selected *Nutshell* series titles
  - selected Nolo Press titles.

DPL Reference Services also is home to the Nonprofit Resource Center,<sup>2</sup> which operates a Cooperating Collection of the Foundation Center,<sup>3</sup> providing a core collection of Foundation

Center materials and a variety of supplemental resources in areas useful to grant seekers. To speak with a reference librarian, call (720) 865-1363 or submit a question online.<sup>4</sup>

## Patent and Trademark Resource Center

Denver Public Library entered into a partnership with the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office (USPTO) in 1979, when the Central Library became “headquarters in the Rocky Mountain area for research to acquire patents or trademarks on new ideas.”<sup>5</sup> The mission of the Patent and Trademark Resource Centers (PTRC) program<sup>6</sup> is to “disseminate patent and trademark information” and to “support diverse intellectual property needs of the public.”<sup>7</sup>

As the only PTRC in Colorado,<sup>8</sup> the Central Library provides free access to patent and trademark resources in various formats. The library has a designated workstation that provides access to the USPTO Web-based search systems and the PubWEST database, the public version of the online search tool used by USPTO’s patent examiners for more advanced searching.

In addition to the PubWEST database, the library has a collection of patents and patent-related materials in print and/or microform, including:

- plant patents (1931–current)
- design patents (1842–1999)
- utility patents (1790–1999)
- *Official Gazette of the United States Patent Office: Patents* (1872–2002)
- *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Patents* (1847–1925)
- *Index of Patents Issued From the United States Patent Office* (1926–2002).

To find out more about the library’s patent and trademark collection, call (720) 865-1363. To schedule a one-on-one appointment with a librarian, complete the Patent and Trademark Appointment form.<sup>9</sup>

## Western History/Genealogy

Of particular interest to attorneys are historical materials related to land, water, and civil rights. The Western History/Genealogy<sup>10</sup>

map collection, manuscripts, newspapers, and Western History Subject Index have been used for researching right-of-way, water, and lands claims cases, especially those connected with the land grants of Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico. Legal scholars and historians interested in civil rights cases and history often consult the manuscript collections, newspaper content, and state, local, and regional documents, again using the Subject Index and clippings extensively. Additionally, scholars and editors occasionally consult the Western History/Genealogy collection for published works that are not available elsewhere (for example, the *Oregon Water Law Handbook*).

Of great prominence in Western History/Genealogy is the Western History Subject Index<sup>11</sup> (formerly known as the General Index), a collection of wooden cabinets with more than one million entries on more than 665,000 index cards. This index covers topics from “10th Mountain Division” to “A and A Rag Grading and metal co” to “Zoo mine.” It includes an every-name index to the *Rocky Mountain News* from 1865 to 1885, and a subject and name index to other newspapers (*Denver Times*, *Denver Republican*, and *The Denver Post*), local histories, biographical works, journals, manuscripts, and mining reports from the late 1800s to early 1995. To speak with a librarian in Western History/Genealogy, call (720) 865-1821 or submit a question online.<sup>12</sup>

## Online/Digital Resources

DPL provides access to subscription databases,<sup>13</sup> as well as to its own special collections in digital format. With minor exceptions, subscription databases are available to anyone at any of the library locations, and most are available remotely with a DPL card. The DPL Digital Collections<sup>14</sup> are accessible from anywhere.

There are numerous online/digital resources available for searching news, articles, encyclopedias, legal forms, and legislative and administrative documents, as well for locating company, financial, and industry information. For example:

- Federal legislative and administrative:
  - congressional publications
    - bills and laws (1987–current)

- legislative histories (1969–current)
- *Congressional Record* (1985–current)
- hearings, House and Senate documents, House and Senate reports, committee prints, and miscellaneous publications (1970–current)
- *Code of Federal Regulations* (1981–current)
- *Federal Register* (1980–current).
- News:
  - *America's Newspapers* (newspapers and other forms of news from local, regional, and national sources; Colorado sources, including *The Denver Post* from 1989 and *Rocky Mountain News* from 1990)
  - *The New York Times* (1851–current)
  - *The Wall Street Journal* (1984–current).
- Company and finance:
  - *Business Insights: Essentials* (company fundamentals, investment research reports, and histories; industry rankings, profiles, and market share data)
  - *Mergent Online* (business and financial data about U.S. public companies)
  - *Morningstar* (stocks and mutual funds research)
  - *ReferenceUSA* (directory of 14 million U.S. businesses)
  - *Value Line Investment Survey Plus* (standard and small and mid-cap editions)
- Secondary resources and forms:
  - *Gale Legal Forms* (downloadable, printable litigation and transactional forms for Colorado)

- *Gale Virtual Reference Library* (encyclopedias of crime and justice, the U.S. Constitution, American law, state laws, Supreme Court, and Congress)
  - *Legal Information Reference Center* (consumer-focused legal reference books from Nolo Press; state court and transactional forms included)
  - *LegalTrac* (index to more than 1,400 titles, including major law reviews, legal newspapers, bar association journals, and international legal journals)
  - *Oxford English Dictionary* (a guide to the meaning, history, and pronunciation of words in the English language)
- Digital Collections:
- According to the DPL website:  
This online collection contains a selection of photographs, maps, broadsides, architectural drawings and other documents from the collections of the Western History/Genealogy department chronicling the people, places, and events that shaped the settlement and growth of the Western United States. The work of many outstanding photographers is represented and the collection includes images of Native Americans, pioneers, railroads, mining, Denver and Colorado towns, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, the 10th Mountain Division ski troops and many more.<sup>15</sup>
  - A sampling of collections includes:
    - 10th Mountain Division Name Lookup Index
    - Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Denver (1905)
    - City and Householder Directories (1873–1937)
    - Colorado Directory of Mines (1879)
    - Colorado Marriages (1858–1939)
    - Colorado World War I Selective Service Draft Registration Cards (1917–1918)
    - Denver Assessor Records (1903–1951)
    - Denver Building Permits Index (1906–1914)
    - Mining Index to Henderson, Hollister, and Canfield Mining Histories (1995)
    - Photographs (Native Americans, pioneers, railroads, mining, Denver and Colorado town, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, 10th Mountain Division ski troops, and more)
    - Western History Subject Index
    - World War II Honor List of Dead and Missing; State of Colorado.

## While You're There

One of DPL's greatest strengths is its collection of fiction and nonfiction books, music, and films. Search the online catalog<sup>16</sup> to check the availability of or to place a hold on a book, eBook, audiobook, CD, DVD, or Blu-ray disc.

After reading Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and watching the 1968 film adaptation starring Gregory Peck, consider reading:

- *Anatomy of a Murder*, by Robert Traver
- *Bleak House*, by Charles Dickens

- *The Fifth Witness*, by Michael Connelly
- *Presumed Innocent*, by Scott Turow
- *Trial and Error: An Oxford Anthology of Legal Stories*, edited by Fred R. Shapiro and Jane Garry.

You also might consider watching:

- *12 Angry Men* (1957)
- *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959)
- *Interit the Wind* (1960)
- *My Cousin Vinny* (1992)
- *Witness for the Prosecution* (1957).

## Conclusion

Although there are private, academic, and government law libraries in the Denver metropolitan area and along Colorado's Front Range, legal researchers will find collections and librarians at Denver Public Library that are unique and that will supplement their research resources. Any Colorado resident may obtain a free library card.<sup>17</sup> To learn more about a Group/Business Card, call (720) 865-1325. To speak with a librarian, call (720) 865-1363 (Reference Services) or (720) 865-1851 (Western History/Genealogy). Visit the DPL website at [www.denverlibrary.org](http://www.denverlibrary.org) for information on hours, locations, and services.

## Notes

1. More information about the Federal Depository Library Program is available at [www.gpo.gov/libraries](http://www.gpo.gov/libraries).
2. More information about the Denver Public Library (DPL) Non-profit Resource Center is available at [www.denverlibrary.org/nonprofit-resource-center](http://www.denverlibrary.org/nonprofit-resource-center).
3. More information about The Foundation Center is available at [www.foundationcenter.org](http://www.foundationcenter.org).
4. See [www.denverlibrary.org/content/email-research-question](http://www.denverlibrary.org/content/email-research-question).
5. "Patent Depository Newest Denver Library Feature," *The Denver Post* 29 (Feb. 14, 1979).
6. More information about Patent and Trademark Resource Centers Program is available at [www.uspto.gov/products/library/ptdl](http://www.uspto.gov/products/library/ptdl).
7. U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, [www.uspto.gov/products/library/ptdl/mission.jsp](http://www.uspto.gov/products/library/ptdl/mission.jsp).
8. More information about DPL's Patent and Trademark Resource Center is available at [www.denverlibrary.org/patents](http://www.denverlibrary.org/patents).
9. See [www.denverlibrary.org/patent-and-trademark-appointment-service](http://www.denverlibrary.org/patent-and-trademark-appointment-service).
10. More information about DPL's Western History/Genealogy Department is available at [history.denverlibrary.org](http://history.denverlibrary.org).
11. See [digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/search/collection/p15330coll27](http://digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/search/collection/p15330coll27).
12. See [history.denverlibrary.org/about/contact\\_ref.html](http://history.denverlibrary.org/about/contact_ref.html).
13. See [www.denverlibrary.org/databases-a-z](http://www.denverlibrary.org/databases-a-z).
14. More information about DPL's Digital Collections is available at [digital.denverlibrary.org](http://digital.denverlibrary.org).
15. See [digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/about](http://digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/about).
16. See [catalog.denverlibrary.org](http://catalog.denverlibrary.org).
17. Information about obtaining a DPL library card is available at [denverlibrary.org/content/library-card-policies-resources](http://denverlibrary.org/content/library-card-policies-resources). ■