



CASE STUDY

Alameda County Law Library

“Almost everyone that goes to a public law library are stressed about something. Whether you’re learning how to start a business or change the deed on a property that your great aunt gave you, you are stressed. That changes your ability to process new technology. The Scannx Book ScanCenter has done a really good job of meeting the needs of our patrons... And now they can have materials in their own language.”

– Mark Estes, former library director

Book ScanCenter Provides Access to Justice

For the Alameda County Law Library, installing a Scannx Book ScanCenter with its revolutionary self-service document translation tool was about more than cool new technology. It was about justice.

“The fact that we have it as something that people can use is comforting, and helps the law library further access to justice,” said Mark Estes, who served as Library Director for ten years. Installing the Scannx Book ScanCenter with the scan-to-translate features was one of his final contributions to the law library before retiring at the end of 2018.

Estes said he learned about the new feature right after talking with the legislature and publishers about the need for resources in languages other than English. “That made me think, if Scannx could translate, then we could translate documents into Spanish, Mandarin, or Tagalog, and patrons could translate pages in self-help books into languages they need.”



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Estes had been eyeing the self-service scan-to-cloud technology from Scannx since he watched a demonstration at an AALL annual meeting. “Seeing the product, it was immediately clear how cool it is, and how useful it could be in a law library to scan things to USB or email. It just made so much sense. It would make life easier for lawyers and non-lawyers who want to fax, email, and scan documents. It was so compelling for public use, easy to use, and cost effective.”

Unfortunately, the county law library didn’t have the cash to buy new equipment. Instead, Scannx offered a revenue-sharing agreement under which patrons pay for scans, with 70% of proceeds going to Scannx and 30% to the law library. For Estes, that was a game-changer.

“The public library coin box and card reader are supplied by Scannx, and we’re not out any money – we’re actually making money with the system. We’re only out a little space, a little electricity, and staff time. And it has added functionality we didn’t have. Now we charge a nickel a scan – we started out charging a dime, then dropped it to a nickel and it didn’t hurt us.”

The intuitive touch screen interface of the Scannx Book ScanCenter guides the user through the scan process from choosing file formats, to scan quality, color depth, file naming, and destinations, has also freed up staff time. “It’s been particularly popular with paralegals and process servers because they have to have proof that they actually served or filed with the court,” said Estes. “With our email or fax service they can do that themselves. I liked that as director, because library staff didn’t have to do it. Patrons love it because it was cheaper, and they could do it



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themselves. Previously, we had to do it with staff, and we charged \$2.50 page to fax. Now it's \$1 per page to fax with Scannx.”

Most importantly, the Book ScanCenter has added self-service translation to the law library's services, thanks to the integration with easy-to-use document scanning and delivery software, Microsoft Translator, which supports 65 languages, and Google Translate, which offers translation capabilities for 103 languages. Now patrons can scan documents or books and get both an English version and a translated version in just seconds, then email the scans or save them to USB or to cloud-based destinations such as Dropbox or Google Drive.

“We have a lot of non-English speakers come into library, so we have a language line service that allows us to talk to them and a translator at the same time,” said Estes. “That helps the librarian understand what the patron is looking for, and the librarian is able to help them find it. We can get them a self-help book that explains this topic, but the book is in English. If they are a Russian, Spanish or Tagalog speaker, that's not going to help. But we can put that book on the scanner and translate it and give them a copy in English and their own language and email it to them, both as Word documents. Now, they can understand it in their own language. And with revenue sharing it doesn't cost us to offer it. That's a no-brainer.”

While electronic translation isn't perfect, said Estes, “it meets the needs of our patrons. I had a Spanish speaker review a document we translated, and she was impressed. There were a couple jargon words she didn't like the use of, but the meaning was there. And with the original and a translation, our patrons can take it to anyone who speaks either or both languages. Having the machine translation



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speeds up the process. The translator doesn't have to spend time translating the document, they just have to confirm that the translation is accurate.”

The new tool from Scannx also tracks usage statistics—for example, how many pages were translated from one language to another. Going forward that will be useful information. “The more that libraries can understand their users, the better they can plan services for their users,” said Estes. “Knowing someone needs documents in a Nigerian dialect or Russian allows librarians to think about what we can do to serve our population. Because more often or not these are the populations that are underserved and helping them get what they need is important to help them survive and thrive in our society.”