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## OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

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# REPORT

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To The Honorable Mayor And City Council

Rev. 10/16/91

DATE: September 23, 1991

REPORT NO: 90-10

SUBJECT: Application for grant funding from the Copley Press  
Foundation

### SUMMARY

Issue: Should the City Council authorize the City Clerk to submit grant proposals to Federal and Private Funding sources which would allow for the funding of the equipment needed to implement the public access to computerized city records program?

City Clerk's Recommendation: The City Council should authorize the Clerk to seek grant funding for establishing the direct public access system. Grant funds for the same purpose will also be sent to private sources. The applications will be sent sequentially.

Fiscal Impact: Minimal fiscal impact for the installation of equipment. The request is for the provision of hardware only. The necessary labor will be absorbed in the existing budget with City Clerk staff providing the training and technical support to the individual user. The funding is therefore requested on the basis of matching participation.

### BACKGROUND

With a growing demand for legislative action from the burgeoning San Diego population, the inevitable paperwork burden and record searching accompanying it is increasing enormously. At the same time, City decision makers, staff, and the public must be able to research information quickly and efficiently. The Clerk's office fills requests by quickly locating records using a full text

retrieval system (LEGIS). All information on LEGIS is public and the information is already available to the public, via a terminal, in the Clerk's office. LEGIS is a collection of databases which contain the complete text of San Diego City policies, laws, and legislative actions. Using the LEGIS system, the Clerk's office serves as the central clearing house for the City's official documents, and information can be searched about policies, procedures, laws, resolutions, permits and other important data.

It is estimated that one minute on such a well organized database is equivalent to up to two hours of manual research. The databases form a network through which an issue can be traced through the legislative process. For example, in seconds one can follow an issue from Committee, to Council, to Ordinance, to Municipal Code. The technology and equipment is available which would enable the City to provide the public with the same availability and accessibility of needed information. There is an established demand for this resource not only by individuals but by various organizations, i.e. historical societies, planners, realtors, developers, Bar Association, newspaper organizations, etc.

#### DISCUSSION

This proposal is to solicit monies which will cover the costs of the acquisition and installation of the various types of equipment needed to facilitate direct public access to LEGIS. This system will enhance an existing state of the art records retrieval system by enabling the general public to have ready access, via individual personal computers and telephone modems, to any record or document on file in the City's computerized information databases. Charges to the user would be for hookup/access and not for the information obtained. Once the system is installed, users' subscription fees and/or monthly user fees would finance the training documentation and computer costs, with support functions provided by existing Clerk's office personnel.

Legal ramifications, policy considerations and security precautions regarding a public access system have been addressed in the City of San Diego Manager's Report No. 85-45, document No. RR-262533, referring to City Clerk Report No. CC-84-06, Rules Committee Agenda of December 10, 1984. Safeguards have been built into the access system so that only public information would be able to be retrieved.

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ALTERNATIVE

Do not authorize the Clerk to seek grant monies for the creation of a system which will provide direct public access to City records.



Charles G. Abdelnour  
City Clerk

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