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**LOS ANGELES SUPERIOR COURT ELECTRONIC FILING:
INCREASING PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE COURTS**

The Internet has enabled people to access information that once took time and much paperwork. People had to either send in a written request or telephone the court in order to get what information was needed to accomplish their goal. The Superior Court of Los Angeles is trying to increase the public's access to the courts as people still have to call or write the court in order to get information on their case. The unification of the court system in Los Angeles County has given rise to increasing public access to the court. This is a very important topic within the court system due to the fact that the outlying branch courts are using different policies and procedures that disenfranchises the public. Increasing public access to the courts will not only enhance the court's image, it will also decrease the overwhelming feeling most people have when entering a courthouse.

The goals and objectives of this project are to show that the court system needs to improve its accessibility to the public through the use of electronic filings. One of the major goals is to review other systems in place in other courts throughout the country and determine if their practical use can be implemented in Los Angeles County. There will be a comparison of electronic filing systems to see how the public access has improved the court's image. Another goal is see how the implementation of electronic court filings can improve the speed and accuracy of the workload. This will be measured by the way a court uses electronic filings as opposed to paper documents. This, in turn, will lead to a reduction in the need for storage space. As anyone in the court system knows, there is an increase in the number of case filings every year. Yet court facilities are still

working with the same limited workspace. The research methodology used is two-fold in its scope. The first type of methodology is that of comparative analysis. This will entail the use of different court locations that use electronic filings and make a comparison as to how they have increased public access to the courts. The analysis will include user friendliness, enhancement of the accuracy, management and security of the court records. Also analyzed will be the reduction of delays in the flow of information and the cost savings for the judiciary, the bar and the litigants. The secondary module of research is a questionnaire. This questionnaire was distributed to attorneys and small claims multiple filers within the court's jurisdiction. Questions examined if electronic filings would be beneficial and cost saving. Other inquiries concerned decreasing the amount of paperwork and the accessibility of the information by bench officers and the public.

Electronic filings in the Los Angeles Court system is being used as a pilot program in one branch court. This used is limited to small claims filing by the City of Long Beach in the Long Beach courthouse. The filings are done through a system called Webcourt.ⁱ The future of this operation is unknown at this time only because there has been no official word to either expand the use or shut it down completely. The expansion of this system within the county of Los Angeles is needed to improve the court's image.

The overall recommendation is that the Superior Court of Los Angeles should expand and implement a courtwide electronic filing system. There are issues that need to be addressed, but the overall impact would greatly enhance the court's image and make public access to the courts a reality. The main conclusion of the survey is that the implementation of such a system would save money, increase productivity and decrease the dependency on paper filings.

This [research paper](#) is available in its entirety in portable document format. To access, you must first obtain and install the Adobe Acrobat Reader.



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