

Michele Finerty
Assistant Director for Technical Services
Pacific McGeorge School of Law

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UELMA in California

When Emily Feltren of the [AALL Government Relations Office](#) (GRO) notified me that AALL and the Uniform Law Commission (ULC) were targeting California to enact UELMA, I contacted law librarian colleagues David McFadden (Southwestern School of Law, Los Angeles), Judy Janes (University of California, Davis), and Larry Meyer (Law Library of San Bernardino County) to work with me as a team in getting the initiative started. Each of them is an experienced legislative advocate, and our membership affiliations represented chapters throughout the state, as well as the Council of California County Law Librarians (CCCLL).

Getting Started

We were not certain at first which state official would be the most appropriate to approach. We did not know if there was a sponsor for a bill, whether the bill would be considered in an already contentious California legislative year, and given the state's budget problems, if any cost attached to its enactment would prohibit its going forward.

From the very beginning, Emily Feltren was our guide and the source of valuable information. She put us in contact with an official from the ULC, who arranged for the delivery of informational packets on UELMA, which we distributed to legislative officials and other interested parties. Emily was in contact with us throughout the process, and she frequently participated in our conference calls, giving helpful hints on strategy.

In determining whom to approach, we learned that in 2008, Diane Boyer-Vine, Legislative Counsel of California, was appointed by the Uniform Law Commission (ULC) to its [Study Committee on Authentication of Online State Legal Materials](#). Ms. Boyer-Vine had been a member of the ULC's Drafting Committee for UELMA, and we decided that meeting with her would be a good starting point. Joining us at the meeting was Dragomir Cosanici, supervising librarian for the Legislative Counsel's Office and one of the principle authors of the white paper entitled [Authentication of Primary Legal Materials and Pricing Options](#).

Ms. Boyer-Vine laid out for us the status of UELMA in California. She informed us that:

- The California Senate Committee on Rules was the bill's author.
- It would soon be assigned a bill number
- The bill would establish official electronic versions of the state Constitution, state statutes and the California Codes.
- It left open the possibility of adding further categories of material to the bill through amendment.
- The Legislative Counsel Bureau would be the official publisher
- She believed that there was a high probability of its passage, and the cost to implement and maintain it would be minimal.

Our meeting accomplished several important aspects of successful legislative advocacy. We learned what was already in place and what the next steps would be. Ms. Boyer-Vine learned that law librarians are knowledgeable about the legislative process, and that we were prepared to provide effective support for the enactment of UELMA in California.

Taking Action

As luck would have it, the All-California Joint Institute was scheduled for March 10 2012, in San Diego, which we saw as an opportunity to educate California law librarians about the UELMA initiative. Our program proposal was accepted and Ms. Boyer-Vine agreed to be our guest speaker.

When the bill received a number, [SB 1075](#), and started its journey through Senate and Assembly hearings, our team divided up the work. David, Larry and I spoke on the California All-California Institute program and Judy wrote [an article](#) on UELMA in California for the online version of the *AALL Spectrum*, as well as other legal publications. Judy also agreed to represent the law librarians of California by testifying at committee hearings, if called upon to do so. We posted informational emails about SB 1075 to the three California chapters and to the Council of California County Law Librarians (CCCLL).

On March 19, David, Larry, and I joined the CCCLL members for their annual Legislative Day in Sacramento, where appointments had been made for those participating to meet with legislative members and/or their staff. Each of us joined one of the several small groups, and we talked with the officials about SB1075, as well as other legislative matters. We also took the opportunity to schedule a meeting for that day with Ms. Boyer-Vine for an update on the progress of SB 1075.

David devised a [template](#) of a letter supporting the passage of SB1075, which contained in the letterhead the logos of all three California chapters and CCCLL, as well as the digitized signature of each president. When the bill came up before each legislative committee, he individualized the letter to be addressed to the committee leadership and members. The letters were then faxed or hand-delivered to the appropriate offices at the Capitol in Sacramento. One of our goals was to have the letter delivered in time to be quoted in the respective committee bill analysis.

Successful Outcome

Ms. Boyer-Vine stayed in touch with us throughout, and kept us informed of the bill's status, including pending hearing dates. Judy and I attended a number of hearings with her. Due to her strong leadership in promoting open and reliable access to government information, both nationally and in California, Ms. Boyer-Vine was awarded the 2012 NOCALL Advocacy Award at the chapter's business meeting and luncheon in May of 2012.

On September 13, 2012, Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr., signed SB 1075 into law, making California the 2nd state after Colorado to enact UELMA. After its passage, California Senator Darrell Steinberg, chair of the Senate Committee on Rules, praised the work behind enacting UELMA in California by noting:

California will now become a national leader in state government transparency and accountability through passage of the Uniform Electronic Legal Material Act (UELMA)... With unfettered internet access to those verified records, at any time and from anywhere, the public is better served. UELMA is a necessity in our

digital age and will encourage more citizen participation in the democratic process.”