Self-Help Resources for the Self-Represented Litigant

By Deborah Showalter-Johnson
Kansas City, MO Branch Librarian
&
Laura Headrick
Lincoln, NE Library Assistant

April 2010
Self-Help Resources for the Self-Represented Litigant

The Latin terms, *pro se* (meaning ‘for self’) and *pro per* (meaning ‘for one's own person’), are used in the legal profession to identify people who represent themselves in court proceedings. However, it is generally recommended that, other than in small claims courts, it is best to have a lawyer.

In a 2005 *AALL* panel presentation, the Honorable Chief Judge Edward Toussaint, Jr., Minnesota Court of Appeals, noted that there are two major elements important in litigation: first, knowledge about procedural issues and, second, persuasion techniques. Failure in these two areas will translate into poor results for the litigant. A misunderstanding of procedure may even make an appeal impossible to grant. (Toussaint, 2005)*

That said, libraries are aware that a lawyer is not always an option for a litigant. For that reason the following sites are being provided to assist self-represented litigants.

I. General Sites and Federal Law Resources

**FEDERAL COURT SITES:**

- U.S. Supreme Court [Website](http://www.supremecourt.gov)
- U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Missouri: click on [Self-Help Tools](http://www.m)d in the top menu
- U.S. District Court
- Federal Rules of Court: [Federal Rulemaking](http://www.m)d; [Local Federal Rules of Court](http://www.m)d
- U.S. Courts Library Fifth Circuit [Internet Site](http://www.m)d
- U.S. Courts Northern District of California [Handbook](http://www.m)d
- [U.S. Bankruptcy Courts and Resources](http://www.m)d

**NON-COURT SITES:**

- AJS (American Judicature Society) [Pro Se Forum](http://www.m)d
- Pine Tree Legal Assistance [Pro Se Links](http://www.m)d
- LSC Resource Library [Pro Se Page](http://www.m)d
- National Federation of Paralegal Associations
- The Jailhouse Lawyer's [Pro Se Self-Help and Legal Research Center](http://www.m)d
- [Selfhelpsupport.org](http://www.m)d (Self-help Support)
- [Name Change Center](http://www.m)d (choose your state)
- [Name Change Information](http://www.m)d
- Findlaw.com
- ABA [FindLegalHelp.com](http://www.m)d
- ABA [Pro Se Law Center](http://www.m)d
- ABA [Public Information Website](http://www.m)d
- Legalhelp.org Pro-se Legal Resources
- Legal Information Institute [LII](http://www.m)d
- LII Categories (WEX) [List](http://www.m)d
- [Law Help](http://www.m)d
DOCUMENT RESOURCES:

U.S. Constitution
U.S. Code
Congressional Legislative Information: Thomas
Code of Federal Regulations
List of CFR Sections Affected
Federal Register
Library of Congress
Federal Citizen Consumer Information Center
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
Federal Bulletin Board

II. State Law Resources (Eighth Circuit States)

Minnesota Judiciary
LawMoose Legal Reference Library Pro Bono and Pro Se
Minnesota State Library Internet Legal Resources
Minnesota Statutes
Minnesota Court Rules
Minnesota Rules (Administrative Code)
Pro Se Guidebook and the Prisoner Resources

North Dakota Judiciary
N. Dakota Constitution and Code
N. Dakota Court Rules
N. Dakota Administrative Code

South Dakota Judiciary
S. Dakota Codified Laws
S. Dakota Court Rules
S. Dakota Administrative Rules
A Guide to Representing Yourself, 3rd Circuit Court, S. Dakota

Nebraska Judiciary
Nebraska Laws
Nebraska Local Court Rules
Nebraska Supreme Court
Nebraska Supreme Court Rules
Nebraska Supreme Court Opinions
Nebraska Rules and Regulations
Nebraska Self Help

Iowa Judiciary
Iowa Code
Iowa Court Rules
Iowa Administrative Code
III. Materials: Publishers, Publications and Book Resources

Be sure to check out your local public library.

**Nolo.com** (Self described provider of do-it-yourself legal solutions) Publishers of:

- *Represent Yourself in Court: How to Prepare and Try a Winning Case* 2008
- *Nolo's Pocket Guide to Family Law* 4th 1996 available through **Amazon**

Specific Issues

- Nolo's Bankruptcy page (articles, glossary, directories)
- *Nolo’s Chapter 7* 16th 2009
- *Nolo’s Chapter 13* 9th 2008

*How to Research a Legal Problem: A Guide for Non-Lawyers* from **AALL**

Oceana’s *Law for the Layperson: Self-Help Legal Almanac Series: listing*

ABA’s *Guide to Wills and Estates* 2nd, *(ABA)* 2004 (search “Wills and Estates”)

**Patents Guides** by U.S. Dept. of Commerce

United States Patent and Trademark Office


(Updated for 2006 – Audio & Data CD's included) by John Ferrell, Esq.

**Baywater Publishing** (available from **Amazon**)

*Family Lawyer* software from Parsons Technology. Available from **Broderbund**

**Practical Divorce Solutions** by Ed Sherman, Esq. **Nolo Press Occidental** 1994 available through **Amazon.com**

**Best Practices in Court-Based Self Help Programs for the Self Represented: Concepts, Attributes and Issues for Exploration** (National Center for State Courts, 2006);


IV. Miscellaneous

Equal Access Project: a California state program to assist self-represented litigants.

http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/equalaccess/


*May It Please the Court: Strategies for Discovering SRL Services Judges Crave,* Program A3, Sunday, July 17, 2005, 10a.m. - 11:30 a.m., a panel with the Hon. Thomas T. C. Campbell; the Honorable Dan R. Price II; the Honorable Edward Toussaint, Jr.; D. Jason Raymond, Moderator. AALL Conference, San Antonio, Texas.