



Juries

Jury News

Research Services

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What Should a Modern Juror Assembly Room Look Like?

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The new juror assembly room in Maricopa County (Phoenix), Arizona, provides a wonderful model for courts to consider as they remodel or build new juror facilities. The facility on the first floor of the county complex provides seating for 350 prospective jurors. The facility has 5,920 square feet for the assembly area, of which a portion is usually a quiet work area for jurors. The quiet area contains individual carrels and can be used by jurors to complete case-specific prescreening questionnaires or other needs that should be out of the hearing of the other jurors. Two thousand square feet for the staff of 10 persons includes offices, room for automation equipment, storage for records and forms, and a kitchen.

The nicest part of the main area is that the seating areas avoid the use of theater-style seating (see Figure 1). While theater seating provides the greatest density of people per square foot, it is really only needed for the orientation. For the inevitable waiting, theater seating is the least comfortable. In Maricopa County's facility, TV monitors are suspended from the ceiling to provide everyone a view of the video orientation. After orientation, some or all of the monitors can be used for watching television programs. In the back of the seating area is a snack area with vending machines, tables, and chairs. The walls are decorated with professionally prepared presentations of items concerning the court. Several landmark decisions from cases tried in this court, including Gault and Miranda, are presented. Another display includes photographs of the succession of county courthouses from the first one-judge court in 1912 to today's multi-location court. Another display recognizes Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who was a trial judge in the court, and Chief Justice William Rehnquist, who practiced law in Phoenix. The structure and various functions of the court are given on other displays.

Prospective jurors enter the large and light high-ceiling facility, pick up a clipboard and pencil, which are used to complete a juror profile, and a juror handbook. The three-part form (no carbon required) contains information for use in voir dire. A second portion of the form asks for the person's race and ethnicity (see Figure 2). Only a small percentage of prospective jurors do not complete all the requested information. The forms are kept by the prospective jurors. The copies are given to the bailiff, who separates them for voir dire, or they can be separated for each panel in the assembly room. At the completion of the voir dire, the race/ethnic data is tabulated and the forms are destroyed. In this way the privacy of the prospective juror is respected, the attorneys have a great deal of information on which to base any further questioning, and no staff time is needed to input the biographical data. A portion of the original copy of the form is kept by the juror as verification of attendance.

The desk at which the prospective jurors check in (via a bar code on the summons) contains several surface-mounted terminals and contains the audio and video controls and phones necessary to operate the assembly room (see Figure 3). Printers are located in the office area. As the panels are selected, lists are printed for use in the courtrooms. Whenever prospective jurors are present, a staff member is at the desk. The desk also has materials of interest to the juror such as a map of the location of public parking lots, a list of restaurants in the area, maps to local shops and eating areas, and magazines.

New automation provides direct access to juror data via a voice-mail system. With this system prospective jurors can call in and by using a touch-tone phone and their juror ID number determine the status of their request for an excuse from jury service. But more on that in a future issue.

Just outside the assembly room is an escalator that provides easy access to a large cafeteria. Further details are available from jury administrator, Terri Jackson, or assistant jury commissioner, Helen Cauffman at (602) 506-7546 or (602) 506-3325.

Inquiries regarding **Juries** or to obtain copies of any of these resources may be directed to the Research Division Office

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1-800-616-6164

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