

Manual for Complex Litigation,
Fourth

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Preface

This fourth edition of the *Manual for Complex Litigation* stands on the shoulders of the three previous editions and in the debt of the following: Judge William W. Schwarzer, director of the Federal Judicial Center from 1990 to 1995, and primarily responsible for the third edition (1995); Judge Sam C. Pointer, who chaired the Board of Editors for the second edition (1985); Judge Alfred P. Murrah, the Center director who was the driving force behind the inaugural edition; Judge Thomas J. Clary, the chair of the initial Board of Editors; and the members of that Board.

The fourth edition of the *Manual* is adapted to new conditions and demands of federal litigation and reflects the work, experience, and insight of its Board of Editors. The Chief Justice, as chairman of the Board of the Federal Judicial Center, appointed the Board of Editors in 1999. He asked Judge Stanley Marcus, then a member of the Center's Board, to chair the Board of Editors. Judge Marcus has continued to oversee the *Manual's* completion even though his term as a Center Board member ended in 2002. His insight and experience as a federal district judge and now as a member of the court of appeals are reflected on every page of the *Manual*. So, too, does this edition reflect the many hours dedicated to the project by individual members of the Board of Editors. A complete list of individuals who worked on the *Manual* can be found at Acknowledgments, page xix.

This *Manual* is one of the flagship services of the Federal Judicial Center. It has been my pleasure, as director of the Center, to have worked with Judge Marcus and the Board of Editors, and with the staff of the Center and others, to bring this fourth edition into being.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fern M. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "F" and "M".

Fern M. Smith
Director, Federal Judicial Center 1999–2003

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Introduction

The impetus for this fourth edition of the *Manual for Complex Litigation* was, as with the previous editions, significant change in the landscape of federal litigation and the increasing responsibilities of federal trial judges. A recommendation of the Mass Tort Working Group, appointed by the Chief Justice, served as a catalyst for this project.¹ Major changes include, but are hardly limited to, the growth in class action and mass tort litigation, and the trial judge's heightened role imposed by *Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals*² and cases following it, and by *Markman v. Westview Instruments, Inc.*³ The *Manual's* orientation, however, differs little from the first incarnation. It “contains neither a simplified outline for the easy disposition of complex litigation nor an inflexible formula or mold into which all trial or pretrial procedure must be cast.”⁴

Users should keep in mind several things about this edition. First, it is not, and should not be cited as, authoritative legal or administrative policy. As noted at page iii, it contains analyses and recommendations of the Board of Editors, but each member of the Board does not necessarily subscribe to all parts of the *Manual*. It was produced under the auspices of the Federal Judicial Center, but the Center has no authority to prescribe practices for federal judges. The *Manual's* recommendations and suggestions are merely that. As always, the management of any matter is within the discretion of the trial judge.

Second, although federal trial judges are the *Manual's* primary audience, the techniques and procedures discussed may be useful in state courts as well, particularly in view of the convergence that is occurring in related litigation pending in both state and federal court systems. Reference to the *Manual* may assist in the coordination of such litigation. The *Manual* will also assist lawyers, who share with judges the responsibility for managing complex litigation in which they are involved.

Third, as with the previous editions, this edition's “organization . . . belies the fact that its subject matter is not neatly divisible into distinct topics.”⁵ Nor is the term “complex litigation” susceptible to any bright-line definition. Part I

1. Mass Tort Working Group, Report on Mass Tort Litigation, 187 F.R.D. 293, 324 (1999).
2. 509 U.S. 579 (1993).
3. 517 U.S. 370 (1996).
4. Handbook of Recommended Procedures for the Trial of Protracted Cases, 25 F.R.D. 351, 355 (1960) (quoted in *Manual for Complex Litigation*, Second, § 10 (1985)).
5. *Manual for Complex Litigation*, Third, § 10.2 (1995).

treats generic topics in complex (and other) litigation, such as pretrial and trial procedures and attorney fees. Part II analyzes special problems in complex litigation, such as class actions and expert scientific evidence. Part III has separate sections on complex litigation in various subject areas, such as antitrust and intellectual property. Part IV includes sample orders and forms. As the *Manual for Complex Litigation, Third* said, however, “[a] topic, such as settlement or class actions, will be relevant to the discussion at different points.”⁶ Thus, this edition too contains extensive cross-references. This fourth edition contains much new and revised material and has a somewhat different format and numbering system than that of the *MCL 3d*. However, because civil and criminal case management differ significantly, and in order to keep this volume to a manageable size, this edition deals only with civil litigation.

Finally, it could go without saying that changes in statutes, case law, regulations, and technology will quickly date some specific references in the *Manual*, and users need to exercise standard research practices when using the *Manual*. For example, prospective legislative changes in class action rules remained pending as the *Manual* went to press, and the precise changes could not be forecast. Before this edition went to press, significant changes in Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 23 and 53 were approved by the Supreme Court⁷ and were before Congress pursuant to the Rules Enabling Act.⁸ Because congressional acceptance of the amendments seemed likely, and the amended rules differed significantly from those in effect prior to December 1, 2003, the *Manual*, when treating class actions, uses the amended rules and the committee notes about those amendments.

In offering an array of litigation management techniques and procedures, the *Manual* does not recommend that every complex litigation necessarily employ any such procedures or follow a standard pattern. Choices will depend on the needs of the litigation and many other considerations. What the *Manual* does urge is that choices be made, and that they be made starting early in the litigation. While those decisions are largely the responsibility of the court, the judge should not take the case from the lawyers, but rather provide guidance and direction, setting limits and applying controls as needed. Additional Center publications on litigation management can be found at <http://www.fjc.gov>.

Complex litigation should not be viewed as monolithic. In some areas of law, such as antitrust and securities litigation, substantive and procedural rules

6. *Id.*

7. See letters of the Chief Justice to the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate, March 27, 2003, and amendments adopted by the Supreme Court, in “2002 Term Court Orders,” at <http://www.supremecourtus.gov> (last visited Nov. 10, 2003).

8. 28 U.S.C. § 2074 (2000).

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are relatively well settled, as are management techniques. In others, such as environmental, civil rights, and mass tort litigation, rules are still emerging or undergoing change. While all complex litigation challenges courts, the unsettled areas present the greatest challenges.

Much complex litigation, therefore, will take the judge and counsel into sparsely charted terrain with little guidance on how to respond to pressing needs for effective management. Practices and principles that served in the past may not be adequate, their adaptation may be difficult and controversial, and novel and innovative ways may have to be found. While this *Manual for Complex Litigation, Fourth* should be helpful within the limits of its mission, it should be viewed as open-ended, and judges are encouraged to be innovative and creative to meet the needs of their cases while remaining mindful of the bounds of existing law and any variations within their own circuits.

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