

FY2021 Highlights

Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library

Maryland's First Legal Resource

Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library

Robert C. Murphy Courts of Appeal Building
361 Rowe Boulevard
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Reference: 410.260.1430

Email: lawlibrary@mdcourts.gov

Website: www.mdcourts.gov/lawlib

Hours of Operation

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Thursday 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Saturday 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Profile

The State Law Library, Maryland's oldest law library, supports the research activities of the Maryland Judiciary. The Library offers its services and collections to other government entities, the legal community, and the public. In addition to a significant number of legal materials, the Library's collections include Maryland state agency publications, Maryland history, and federal government documents. Staffed by 17 full-time and part-time, professional and paraprofessional employees, the Library stands ready to serve users from all walks of life.

Mission

The Thurgood Marshall State Law Library, a unit of the Maryland Judiciary, serves the needs of Maryland's government and citizens by building and preserving collections of legal information resources, promoting access to these collections and creating educational opportunities that enhance the understanding of legal information.

Highlights

These Library Highlights provide updates on State Law Library collections, staffing, initiatives, and accomplishments throughout the year.

Library Staff

Steven P. Anderson, Director
Scott Ashlin, Technical Services Assistant
Maureen Della Barba, Reference Assistant
James G. Durham, Deputy Director
Debra Haines, Library Aide
Leigh Johnson, Library Acquisitions Specialist
Deborah Judy, Maryland Collections Librarian (retired 2021)
Bruce Lord, Maryland Collections Librarian (joined 2021)
Catherine McGuire, Head of Reference and Outreach
Jessica Mundy, Head of Collection Management
Julia Roberts, Digital Collections Librarian
C. Leland Sampson, Head of Web Content and Services
Elizabeth Simmons, Research Librarian (part-time)
Chi Song, Web Services Librarian
Jessie Tam, Head of Technical Services

Cindy Terry, Collection Management Specialist
Maria Truskey, Research and Instructional Librarian (departed April 2021)
Ed Wisenbaler, Federal Documents Assistant (part-time)

Library Committee

Hon. Joseph M. Getty, Court of Appeals
Hon. Matthew J. Fader, Court of Special Appeals
Suzanne C. Johnson, Clerk of the Court of Appeals
Pamela Harris, State Court Administrator
Susan Zuhowski, Esq.
Steven P. Anderson, Director, Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library

Library Volunteers

J. Jeffrey Ross

Building and Preserving Collections

The Library is charged with managing permanent access to legal materials, especially those pertaining to Maryland law. Such materials include traditional collections of print and microform materials, as well as a significant collection of digital content. The Library works independently and in partnership with Legal Information Archive (LIA) to collect and digitally preserve state government publications.

The Library expanded online subscriptions to include access to *Michie's Annotated Code of Maryland* through the Lexis-Nexis Digital Library, and also the Wolters Kluwer Cheetah database. We continue to add materials to our [Scanned Collections](#), including uncopyrighted historic *Maryland Rules*. The scanning process for this project was completed in FY2021 and will be added as a new Scanned Collection in FY2022.

The Library updated or reviewed several procedures. In coordination with the Judiciary's Fixed Assets Department, the Library developed D. 4. *Thurgood Marshall State Law Library Donation & Bailment Procedures and Processes* of the [Maryland Judiciary Fixed Asset Inventory Policy Manual](#). In addition, there is now a clear procedure and tracking system for fine arts or historic artifacts that are to be transferred temporarily out of the Library. Reasons for transfers might include digitization, preservation, or framing. Library staff worked with Judicial Information Systems (JIS) to review the Library's database resources for potential security risks.

Promoting Access

The Library continues to connect patrons of the Library to its collections. Efforts include providing information services, expanding access to digital materials, and enhancing web-based information resources and tools. These efforts increase the Library's efficiency and make Maryland legal information and history readily accessible and available to researchers.

Reference Activity

The Library provides reference and research assistance to a wide range of patrons, most from Maryland or with questions about Maryland law. Assistance is provided through email, telephone calls, in-person visits, and regular mail.

The Library managed more than 13,600 interactions through the fiscal year, a 28% rise from FY2020, and a 38% rise since FY2010. The public accounted for 81% of the total, and responses were provided by email 72% of the time. A more detailed look at reference activity is available in the FY2021 Reference Report on the Library's website.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided challenges to the Library staff as they continued to provide reference services and access to legal materials during the emergency. While many patrons were unable or hesitant to visit the library in person, the staff continued to provide high quality services through e-mail, phone, and mail. Thomson Reuters provided temporary passwords so that patrons could continue to access the Westlaw database remotely during this period.

Reference Management System

As a result of rising reference interaction statistics and a concurrent increase in the complexity of reference inquiries, the Library staff explored options for more efficient work flows. After a bidding process, the Library contracted with Altarama for a reference management system called RefTracker.

This system combines many of the work processes previously handled by multiple applications into a single database. The system provides detailed and flexible interaction tracking, streamlined data collection, and simpler remote access for staff. The system was implemented during the summer of 2021.

People’s Law Library

The People's Law Library (PLL) is a legal information and self-help website maintained by the Library. PLL provides information on Maryland and some federal law related to Marylanders and their families in several topics, including housing, family law, domestic violence, consumer law, and state and federal benefit programs. PLL connects Marylanders who need legal advice or assistance to service providers through a directory of legal service organizations and a calendar of events for the general public. The site has become a vital resource for state residents.

Continuing a three-year trend, PLL saw sizeable growth in users and pageviews. The number of users increased by 23%, topping 2 million for the first time. Pageviews grew by 27% to 3.9 million views. Two-thirds of users accessed the site via a mobile phone.

To respond to Marylanders’ evolving legal information needs, PLL prioritizes content frequently handled by self-represented litigants in the Maryland Courts, as well as by individuals seeking solutions to legal matters outside the courts. The “How do I...?” court procedure articles were entirely reviewed, reorganized, edited, and republished. These procedure articles address a wide range of topics, including starting and responding to case, preparing for court, discovery, evidence, legal research instruction, and getting legal assistance.

PLL published seven new articles, with the help of our contributors and partners, including:

- [Spousal Elective Share](#)
- [Baltimore City Rental Dwelling License Law](#)
- [Unemployment Insurance Benefit Series](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions about Utilities for Landlords and Tenants](#)
- [Contesting a Will \(Caveat Proceeding\)](#)
- [Parenting Coordination](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions – Deeds](#)

PLL strives to meet the needs of all users. Accessibility is an essential part of PLL’s goal to meet the needs of all users. As part of a technology upgrade, users with screen readers can now more easily view PLL content. In addition, a feature to dynamically adjust text size improves the user’s reading and navigation experience, which is particularly helpful on mobile phones.

Language access is also vitally important. PLL supports English, Spanish, French, Korean, and Chinese (Mandarin/Simplified). Of the 600+ English language resources, 44% are available in Spanish. The site’s top 20 pages and domestic violence articles are available in all supported languages.

Continuing Education of Library Staff

In order to provide the highest level of access and service possible, Library staff participate in continuing professional education opportunities in a broad spectrum of related applications and areas. The year included participation in trainings to enhance skills in many critical areas.

This year, Leigh Johnson, Library Acquisitions Specialist, earned her NIGP-CPP (Certified Procurement Professional) certification from NIGP, the Institute for Public Procurement.

Several staff attended regular annual meetings and conferences, including the Federal Depository Library Conference, the Judiciary's Annual Leadership Conference, and the American Association of Law Libraries Meeting & Conference. Some staff attended virtual sessions during the AALL Annual Conference such as *Updating Your Emergency Plans: From Pandemics to Acts of Violence to Extreme Weather*; *Legal Ethics in the Use of Artificial Intelligence*; *Change the Subject: How a Cataloging Term Became a Flashpoint in the Immigration Debate*; *Bringing Legal Research to Rural Communities*; and *Law Library Neutrality in a Time of Political Upheaval*.

To stay abreast of developments in technology, staff attended continuing education sessions that included *Introduction to XML*; *Using MarcEdit*; *Metadata and Description of Digital Special Collections*; and information sessions on Sierra, FAST, eMMA, RDA, Preservica, Knowvation, OCLC, and BIBFRAME.

To stay abreast of developments in resources and information services, staff attended continuing education training sessions that included ThomsonReuters (Westlaw); LexisNexis Digital Library; Wolters Kluwer (Cheetah); Pacer; COVID-19 emergency response and resources; and Instructional Design.

Equipment

The Library purchased a new microfilm machine to increase patron access to microform material. The machine, connected to a computer, is capable of printing, saving electronically, and emailing scanned documents. It incorporates features from traditional microfilm machines, thus allowing easier usage transition for our patrons.

Creating Educational Opportunities

Enhancing understanding of law and legal information is a powerful component of the Library's mission. To that end, the Library develops educational materials, programs and events, and exhibits, both independently and in partnership with allied organizations, for the Judiciary, the bar, the public, and specialized groups within the Library's community.

Frontlines: Legal Reference for Public Libraries

A partnership between the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors (CMCLLD) and the Maryland Access to Justice Commission continued with a new twist. The education program, *Law on the Frontlines*, moved to web presentation format, and shorter topical sessions were offered to address special interest in the COVID-19 world. Through Fall 2020, one-hour sessions providing brief overviews and topic-specific resources and referrals were held on family law, landlord-tenant, life & health planning, abuse law, consumer law, and public benefits. Sessions were well-attended by public library staff across the state. In Spring 2021, the website content for the project was revised and reformatted to streamline review of the materials by interested self-paced learners.

People's Law Library Outreach

PLL relies on a diverse group of volunteers, including attorneys and students. Attorney volunteers review articles for accuracy and detail, and draft new articles. Students translate material into non-English languages to enhance accessibility. Throughout the year, 29 volunteers generously contributed their time.

Skills Training for the Judiciary

The Library began developing and offering a course list for Judiciary staff through the Judicial College. FY2021 included:

- *Online Legal Research*, including an introduction to several key Library databases and a review of helpful Westlaw tools
- *Resources for Self-Represented Litigants*, including an overview of People's Law Library as well as an introduction to additional easily-accessible resources court staff can use to assist SRLs

The Library staff provided instruction for the Court Supervisor / Manager Certificate Program in FY2021. Over three days, the staff provided the following sessions:

- Government Structure
- Secondary Sources
- Maryland Code and Rules
- Legal Concepts and Case Law
- Helping the Public: The People's Law Library and More.

In addition, Westlaw Edge training was offered to staff of all Maryland law libraries.

Skills Training Outside of the Judiciary

The Library staff provided skills training for non-Judiciary colleagues, partners, and stakeholders, as well:

- *Technology in the Courts: MDEC*, for the Technology in the Practice of Law class, University of Maryland, Francis King Carey School of Law
- *A Maryland State Law Librarian in Action*, podcast for the Advanced Legal Research class, University of Maryland, Francis King Carey School of Law
- *MLA Conversations, Episode 35 (Services Offered by TMSLL and PLL)*, Maryland Library Association
- *Maryland Legislative & Administrative History Research*, Office of Public Defender Appellate Division
- *50 Tech Tips for Legal Services and Beyond!*, Partners for Justice Conference
- *Introduction to Legal Reference*, Maryland Library Association/Delaware Library Association (October 2020)
- *Law on the Frontlines: Family and Landlord-Tenant Law*, Maryland Library Association/Delaware Library Association (October 2020)
- *Law on the Frontlines: Legal Reference for Public Libraries* (see above)
- *COVID-19 and the Changing Law: Pivoting the Information Landscape for Public Access*, North American Virtual Reference Online Conference (NAVROC) (February 2021)
- *Master Your Virtual Presence: Communication Skills for the Teaching Librarian*, AALL Teaching the Teachers Conference (December 2020)

Tours

Library staff regularly provide tours of the Library collections and facility for new judges, law clerks, and other judicial staff. More formal tours are usually scheduled and provided for students at law schools, undergraduate programs, and community college legal studies and paralegal programs. In FY2021, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, most in-person tours were limited to new judges, law clerks, and other Judiciary staff.

Professional Activities

Library staff are members of several professional associations, which provide opportunities for skills enhancement and leadership.

The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) is comprised of special interest sections (SIS) and chapters, in which our staff participate as leaders and members:

Government Law Libraries (GLL-SIS)

- James Durham, Chair
- Steve Anderson, Strategic Planning Committee
- Chi Song, Awards Committee
- Catherine McGuire, Education Committee
- Jessie Tam, member

Legal Information Services to the Public (LISP-SIS)

- Catherine McGuire, Past Chair Board Member
- Julia Roberts, member

Technical Services (TS-SIS)

- Jessie Tam, member

Library System & Resource Discovery (LSRD-SIS)

- Jessie Tam, Chair, Joint LSRD/TS-SIS Funding Research Opportunities Grant Committee

Research Instruction and Patron Services (RIPS-SIS)

- Catherine McGuire, member

Digitization & Educational Technology (DET-SIS)

- James Durham, member

Asian American Law Librarians Caucus (AALLc)

- Jessie Tam, Nominations Committee
- Chi Song, member

Council of Chapter Presidents

- Chi Song, member

Committee on Relations with Information Vendors (CRIV)

- Steve Anderson, member

Law Library Association of Maryland (LLAM)

- Chi Song, President
- Julia Roberts, Board Member
- Jessica Mundy, Chair, Placement Committee
- Steve Anderson, James Durham, Catherine McGuire, Elizabeth Simmons, members

NIGP The Institute for Public Procurement

- Leigh Johnson, member

Maryland Public Purchasing Association

- Leigh Johnson, member

Maryland Attorney General's COVID 19 Access to Justice Task Force

- Leland Sampson, member
Maryland Pro Bono Coordinating Council (PBCC)
- Leland Sampson, Steering Committee

Comments from Library Patrons

Staff received many expressions of gratitude from library patrons. A sampling underscores the positive impact of the Library's services.

- Thank you very much for providing me with the online access information and direct link to the ... I just need it for cite-checking purposes at the moment, so the online version should be fine.
- Thank you very much for pulling the book and scanning that particular section in both the 2000 version and the 2019 supplement. I truly appreciate all of your help with this; you really went above and beyond to do that for me, especially at the end of the day.
- Dear Librarians, Thank you so much for your continuous support and assistance. I am ever so grateful to you all for always helping me with my case matters. You have helped me accomplish and work through so many... legal hurdles.
- Thank you, again, so much for your prompt response to my request - I'm pretty certain this is exactly the document I need to move this process forward... Your attention and assistance have made a difficult passage more palatable - Thank you so much for that!
- Thanks so much, whoever you are – as there is no name on the email, I will attribute this helpful response to the entire library staff. This is exactly the document I was looking for, although I remembered it as a 15-20 pp. memo from when I saw it on the microfilm at the Office some years ago and obviously it is much longer. Thanks also for the bonus links to the reports, which I was not otherwise aware of. Thanks again for your prompt response. Thanks so much for the quick turn around, you guys are always so helpful! This is for important pro bono work in Maryland courts, so really appreciate it!
- Thanks so much! This article is great - very detailed for what Judge... needs. Perfect!
- These resources are super helpful, thank you so much for taking the time to reply! I'll pass all of this along to my client.
- Thank you so much for your outstanding help! I really appreciate how quickly you were willing and able to assist, and your colleagues were extremely kind on the phone. I would have never found these without you, and feel very lucky that even during the pandemic it was possible to obtain virtual copies of hard copy documents, within an hour.
- This assistance was tremendously helpful. Judge... and I are grateful. It has now been too many months since I have felt free to roam the stacks of a library, and I am thankful for access to you and your team!
- Wow, that answered all of my questions thoroughly and was BEYOND useful! I so much appreciate you taking the time to help conduct a little research. I'm thankful for people like you with the resources that you were able to find. Take care!
- Thank you, I think this information will get me to the results I am seeking. Your time involved in providing this information is highly appreciated.
- Thank you very much for this thorough response. I continue to hold the State Law Library in high esteem.