

Minutes of Meeting of the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors

Baltimore County Circuit Court

Towson, Maryland

February 23, 2016

Approved May 24, 2016

FINAL

The Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors meeting began at 10:10 am at the Baltimore County Circuit Courthouse in Towson, Maryland. Stephanie Levasseur was our host.

At the meeting were the following attendees: Steve Anderson (State Law Library), Tonya Baroudi (Prince Georges County/Chair), Florence Barnes (Carroll County), Joan Bellistri (Anne Arundel County), Sandy Brewer (Howard County), James Durham (State Law Library), Mary Jo Lazun (Charles County), Kate Martin (Montgomery County/Vice Chair), and Scott Stevens (Baltimore County).

Introduction:

Chair Tonya Baroudi opened the meeting. Stephanie Levasseur introduced Tim Sheridan, the Baltimore County (BC) Circuit Court Administrator.

Mr. Sheridan welcomed attendees to the BC Courthouse. He spoke about the changes he's seen in the Court in the last several years: the potentially groundbreaking advent of MDEC, the increase of self-represented litigants (SRL), the need for more "instant advice" and forms to serve SLRs and the pressure to find better ways to be cost-effective. Family law now accounts for 65% of new cases -- the busiest docket in the courthouse.

Access to Justice (A2J) Updates:

Joan Bellistri reported that the Legal Services Corporation received a grant to develop a curriculum for a legal research course for public librarians.

Joan also described an AALL Government Law Library-SIS access to justice best practices guide project, the upcoming Equal Justice Conference in Chicago and the Maryland A2J Partners for Justice Conference in May.

Joan related new statistics of the Administrative Office of the Judiciary's Self Help Center (SHC). From October to December 2015, calls to the SHC increased by almost 50% while wait time decreased to 2-4 minutes. A prescription form is being developed for walk-in patrons with a referral to the nearest circuit court law library.

CMCLLD members discussed problems SHC patrons experience: Are patrons asking more complicated questions than can be answered by responders? Are they expecting more than the center can provide? Are they confusing district and circuit court jurisdictions? Florence Barnes said she suggests SRLs write down their issues/questions before the call while she stands by to give legal information assistance as needed. She recommended that the SHC develop a class or video on preparing for and making a SHC call.

Report on the Maryland State Court Access and Community Relations Committee, Self-Represented Litigant Subcommittee: Our CMCLLD representative on the subcommittee, Joan Bellistri, described

issues being discussed on the state-wide level – a social media launch, update of "The Journalist's Guide to Maryland's Legal System", and a report from another subcommittee that states tier I and tier II baseline goals for all circuit courts. There is also a new private A2J commission that includes the University of Baltimore, pro bono agencies and advocacy groups.

Updates:

EBook update: Steve Anderson reported on the progress of this state law library initiative. He is working with LexisNexis to develop a way to distribute popular legal treatise ebooks to the state-wide judiciary. Ebook access would be based on the Overdrive system, use Westlaw passwords and books would be "checked out" for a set period of time. They could also be available to the library patrons through public terminals.

Court-wide Maryland law trifold: Kate Martin reported that the CMCLLD received an Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) grant to develop and distribute a "Finding Maryland Law" trifold to Maryland courts and other organizations. She is working on a pilot project in the Montgomery County courthouse to test out its usefulness. The AOC will vet and draw up the final design after the CMCLLD agrees on the content.

Open Forum:

Charles County: Mary Jo Lazun, the county's new law librarian, recounted the improvements she's making to the library and her efforts to get the collection up-to-date. She sponsored a pocket part party with the judges' clerks and offered pizza as a reward. She is doing more family law reference and noted the holes in the library ceiling means that work is getting done!

Carroll County: Florence Barnes said that a new judge was recently appointed who was a former law clerk for the Carroll County Circuit Court, that her West Library Maintenance Agreement is up for renewal and that she's collecting focused statistics on self-represented litigants.

Baltimore County: Stephanie Levasseur has new duties and is developing expanded library programs.

Anne Arundel County: The Pro Bono Recognition lunch hosted and planned by the law library was held in February was attended by Judge Green and Pam Harris. The law library with the FLSHC received a grant for the Judiciary's Access to Justice Department to enlarge and improve the Family Law Self-Help Center with new cubicles and adaptive technologies. She's busier than ever!

Montgomery County: Kate Martin is developing a law day program for her courthouse and working on a new multi-year LexisNexis print contract. As part of a running series, she is also planning a program with Court of Appeals Judge Lynn Battaglia on the history of Maryland women lawyers.

Maryland State Law Library: Steve Anderson talked about staffing issues and interns. The library is working on a special collection set on Indian tribes and is reorganizing the Maryland history stacks.

The People's Law Library (PLL) is going well. The library is hiring more PLL fellows to work on database content and the state library is looking into translation conversion software.

Howard County: Sandy Brewer is giving a presentation on Legal Resources for Public Librarians (on behalf of the Delivery of Legal Services Council for the Maryland State Bar Association) to librarians at

the Maryland/Delaware Joint Library Association annual conference in Ocean City in May 2016. She is also writing an article for the May issue of the Maryland Bar Journal on working with public libraries.

Prince Georges County: Tonya Baroudi has three new replacement judges, Judge Martin is retiring and she has a new boss. She is planning a book drive throughout her courthouse during national library week and distributed sample monthly PGC courthouse newsletters to the group.

Study Report and Addendum discussion:

Steve Anderson asked, "Where are we now?" Should we distribute the report and addendum to the judicial equity committee to start a dialog? How can we be change agents, what should be our future strategies? Various approaches were considered. Tonya volunteered to write a letter to Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera to solicit her input.

CMCLLD Strategic Plan:

Steve Anderson said we should create a plan based on the Maryland judiciary's strategic plan, using their major classifications. He will work on drafting a document to be reviewed by the Conference.

Elevator Speech discussion:

Members gave ideas about developing library marketing that includes a rehearsed, well-thought-out elevator speech. It should be short, pithy and specific. The effort could be used to identify collaborators and increase library advocates.

Next meeting:

Mary Jo Lazun agreed to host the next meeting in Charles County in late May.

Adjournment:

The meeting ended at approximately 2:45 p.m.