

Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors (CMCLLD)

Advancing Access to Justice through
Access to Legal Information

Annual
Report
FY2024

Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors (CMCLLD)

FY2024 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024) Annual Report

Advancing Access to Justice through Access to Legal Information.

Mission

Maryland's network of Court Law Libraries serves the needs of Maryland's citizens, courts, attorneys, and government 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.

Since its founding in 2008, the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors has provided a forum for policy discussion, information exchange, and professional development for the state's court law library community. The Conference supports the mission of the Maryland Judiciary by providing advice and support to all Judiciary bodies in matters affecting court law libraries. Conference support addresses court law libraries standards, retention and disposal of court library resources, court library funding, service to the public, and access to justice through education and the provision of legal information.

Information about the Conference is provided at: <https://mdcourts.gov/lawlib/about-us/CMCLLD>.

Participation

Florence J. Barnes, Librarian, (Chair) Carroll County Circuit Court Law Library
Tonya Baroudi, Director of Library Services, Prince George's County Circuit Court Law Library
Joan Bellistri, Director, (Vice-Chair) Anne Arundel County Public Law Library
Joseph W. Bennett, Head Librarian, Library Company of the Baltimore Bar
Sandy Brewer, Law Librarian, Circuit Court for Howard County Law Library & Resource Center
James G. Durham, Director, Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library
Rebecca Littleton, followed by Zachary Gunther, Law Librarian/Court Reporter, Washington County Law Library
Catherine McGuire, Deputy Director, Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library
Pamela Ortiz (ex officio), Director, Department of Access to Justice, Maryland Judiciary
Julee Snyder, Help Center & Legal Resource Coordinator, Charles County Circuit Court Legal Resource Center & Public Law Library
Scott Stevens, Director, Baltimore County Circuit Court Law Library
Julia Viets, Director, Montgomery County Circuit Court Law Library

Meetings

The Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors (CMCLLD) brings together directors of all Maryland staffed circuit court libraries and the Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library to discuss advancing access to justice through education and the provision of legal information to the public. CMCLLD members meet regularly to exchange ideas on law library operations and programming.

The Conference met three times throughout the 2024 fiscal year.

- September 18, 2023, at the Charles County Circuit Court Legal Resource Center & Public Law Library.

Agenda included: Library Zoom room addition for remote hearing attendance; law clerk orientations; Anne Arundel County's new space co-located with family help; A2J video series updates and redesign of Court Help webpages; updates to Guide & File; digital library to bridge needs. The meeting concluded with a tour of the Charles County Public Law Library.

- November 30, 2023, at the Maryland Judicial Center in Annapolis for the Statewide annual meeting of Maryland Court Law Libraries hosted by the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors.

Agenda included: People's Law Library updates; partnerships with Access to Justice; improving Self Help Center referrals; Court Help resource updates; law library collection management; co-location of law libraries and help centers; member updates; Law on the Frontlines overview.

- April 23, 2024, at the Anne Arundel County Public Law Library.

Agenda included: Overview of Court Help Centers and the Maryland Justice Passport program; election of new conference leadership for 2024-2026; court library security; conference protocol revisions. The meeting included a tour of the Anne Arundel County Public Law Library's new space.

Detailed summaries of all meetings are provided on the [Conference webpage](#).

Additional general discussion at the Conference meetings throughout the year addressed topics of importance to court libraries, including:

- Chambers collections
- Outreach activities
- Customer surveys
- Statistics
- Co-located facilities

Conference members participated in the:

- Access to Justice Self-Help Provider Conference
- American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) Annual Meeting
- Law on the Frontlines ongoing project
- Partners for Justice Conference

Conference Projects

Frontlines Project

The Conference partners with the State Law Library, the Maryland Access to Justice Commission, and the Maryland Judiciary's Access to Justice Department, to provide training to public library staff in the provision of legal reference. The project, Law on the Frontlines: Legal Reference for Public Libraries (aka Frontlines Project), began in 2016. In FY2024, its seventh year of training classes, project participants provided eleven webinars, including special topic sessions on Family Law, Consumer Law, Legal Forms, Life & Health Planning, and Public Benefits. The Fall Session offered labs as separate sessions providing an opportunity for learners to work collaboratively with law librarians to investigate real-world resources on the topics of Family Law, Consumer Law, and Legal Forms.

Conference Protocols

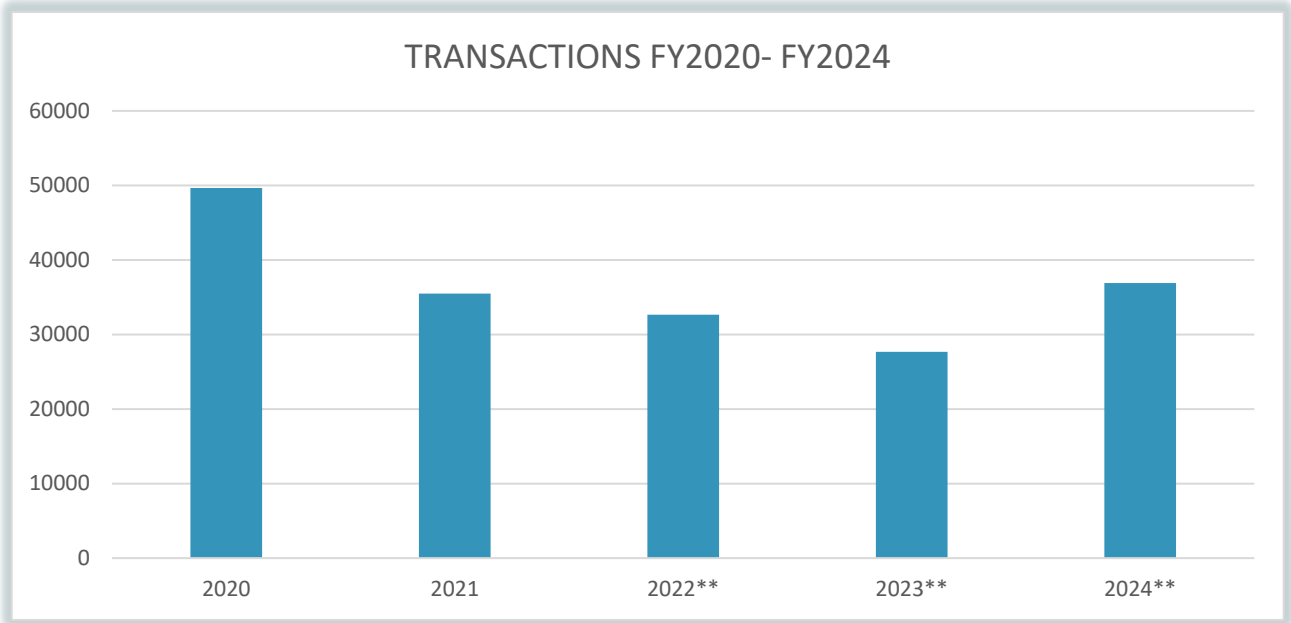
Conference protocols were reviewed and revised in June of 2024 and are posted at:

<https://www.mdcourts.gov/sites/default/files/import/lawlib/audiences/courtlibs/conference/CMCLLD%20Protocols%20rev2024.pdf>

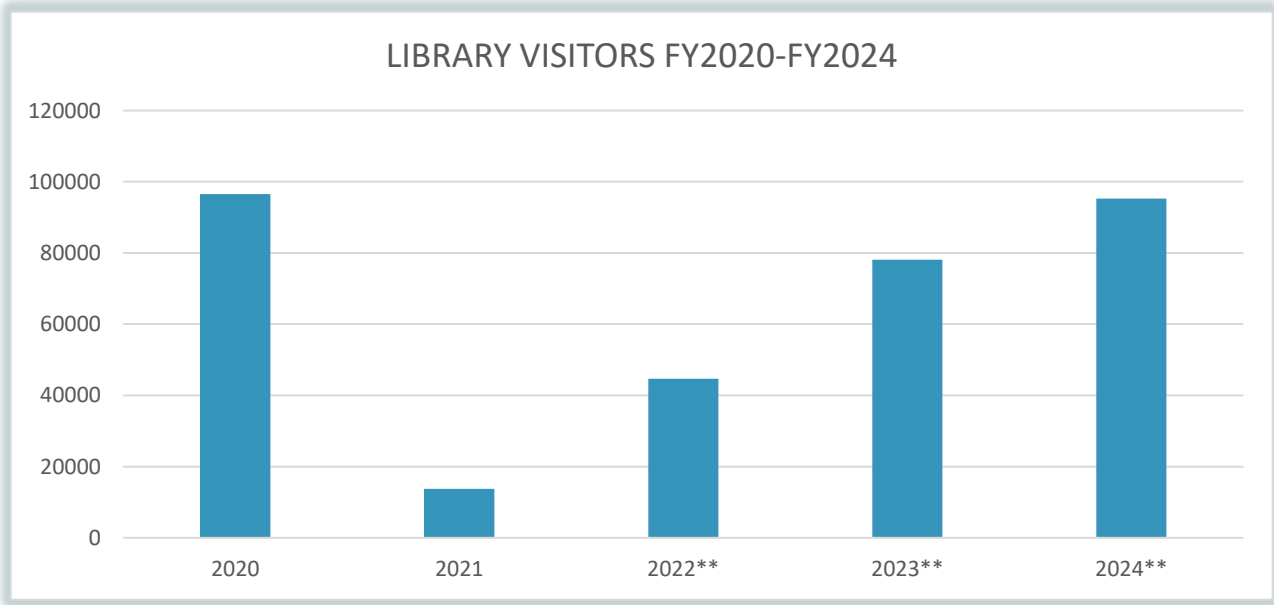
Conference Statistics

Conference libraries collect statistics in a standardized manner to demonstrate workload across the state. Maryland's court law libraries assist the Judiciary, law practitioners, and the public. Assistance includes traditional legal reference and research guidance, referrals to legal assistance and social service organizations, technology navigation support, and more. Several law libraries are co-located with the local Help Center or Family Law Clinic (Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Charles, Howard, and Washington counties).

In fiscal year 2024, Maryland court law libraries provided close to 37,000 instances of service. This number does not include statistics from Baltimore City or Baltimore County law libraries. Charles County reported statistics through March and Washington County began reporting in April. Even with fewer libraries reporting, this is still a 33% increase from FY2023. In FY2022 the Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library changed its statistical methods with the implementation of RefTracker; thus, all numbers prior to FY2022 were done very differently.



The number of people who visited court law libraries increased by 22% in fiscal year 2024, from 78,378 to 95,283.



**This number does not include statistics from Baltimore County since 2022. Charles County reported statistics through March and Washington County began reporting in April. There are no statistics from Baltimore City.

Who We Serve



76%
Public



16%
Attorneys



8%
Judiciary

How We Serve



67%
In Person



14%
Phone



19%
Email



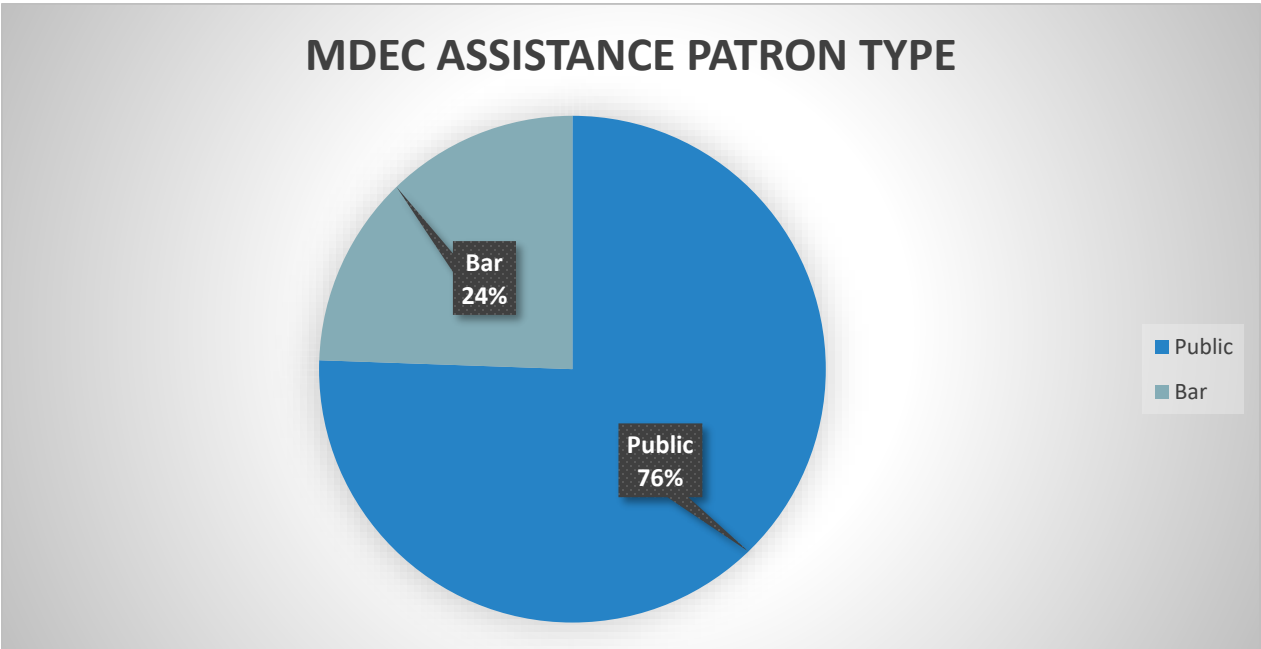
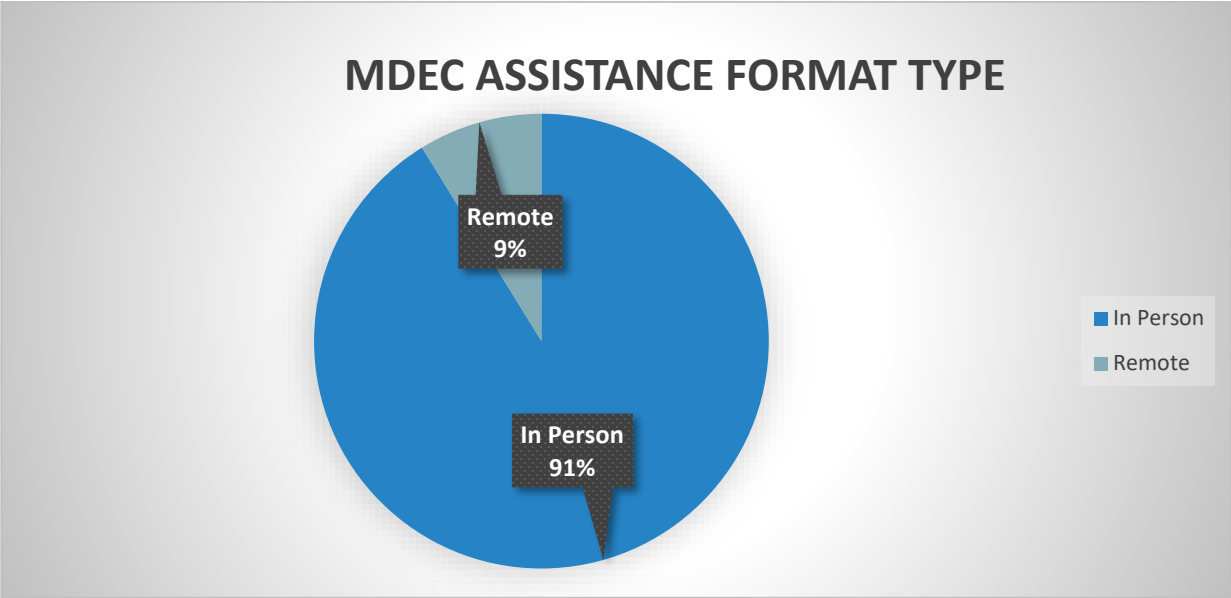
FIGURE 1 MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT LAW LIBRARY



FIGURE 2 CARROLL COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT LAW LIBRARY

MDEC Assistance

Law libraries provide support for court e-filing. All Conference libraries have MDEC kiosks on site for the use of attorneys and the public to view and print case filings. Conference libraries also have public computer stations that can be used for e-filing. Library staff assist with e-filing and the access and use of the MDEC kiosks.



With the adoption of MDEC, law library staff have increasingly assisted the bar and public with performing electronic filings and accessing electronic case documents. All law libraries contain computers with MDEC File and Serve and Public Kiosk portals. Law library staff are trained to assist attorneys and the public with basic MDEC needs. More self-represented litigants than before have asked for assistance with registering to e-file. In fiscal year 2024, library staff assisted library patrons with 977 instances of MDEC-related assistance, a 50% increase over the last fiscal year and 76% of those were self-represented litigants. Most instances of MDEC assistance were in person.

Maryland Court Law Library Highlights *

Legal Reference

Law library staff use their expertise to connect the Judiciary, attorneys, and the public with legal information. This information includes web-based informational resources, such as the People's Law Library; legal database access; digital materials; and traditional print materials. Library staff guide patrons to the materials that work best for their legal research needs and level of comfort with legal materials.

Law libraries provide equitable access to materials unavailable to the public and small/solo legal practitioners due to paywalls or subscription fees. These resources include databases like Westlaw, LexisNexis, HeinOnline, PACER, and SASI-CALC, as well as expensive legal treatises and sample form books, annotated laws, and more. This also includes legal texts for non-lawyers, such as Nolo Press publications. These resources provide the public with valuable information on unique subject areas, including family law, business law, traffic, wills, trusts, and estates.

In fiscal year 2024, law librarians continue to enhance their legal resource collections in various ways.

Washington County Law Library is performing an inventory using a digital shelf diagram, rearranging texts, recycling obsolete volumes, and reassessing materials they carry.

The **Carroll County Circuit Court Law Library** evaluated their Core Collection using the "Recommended Titles for the Core Collection: A Guide for Md Court Law Libraries" to assess that they are continuing to strive to meet core collection guidelines.

The **Montgomery County Circuit Court Law Library** completed a large-scale book-shifting project in the library's main reading room to create 3-5 years of space for collection growth. They also customized legal research trainings on specific topics for individual court departments and chambers.

The **Charles County Circuit Court Legal Resource Center & Public Law Library** reviewed and updated their general treatises section as the budget allowed.

The **Anne Arundel County Public Law Library** continued the historic collection organization, move, and cataloging project.

The **Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library** has undertaken a comprehensive evaluation of its holdings to pinpoint areas requiring expansion, eliminate outdated materials, and ensure proper organization of resources within designated sections.

Furthermore, the **Prince George's County Circuit Court Law Library** continued its regular assessments of all patron-facing materials, including research guides and online weblinks to research materials and general legal information for the Prince George's County community.

Legal Referrals

When litigants need legal advice, law library staff make informed referrals to court programs and services, including all Maryland Court Help Centers. When litigants need assistance that goes beyond legal advice, law library staff also make referrals to appropriate legal service providers, community services and government agencies. In fiscal year 2024, law library staff provided 2,779 legal referrals, an increase of 45% since fiscal year 2023.

Guides and Educational Programs

Law Librarians craft guides that provide information to help attorneys and self-represented litigants navigate their libraries and courthouses.

The **Montgomery County Circuit Court Law Library** revised their guides display and library maps within the library and embarked on an internal guides revision project and customized legal resource trainings on specific topics for individual court departments and Chambers.

The **Law Library at the Carroll County Circuit Court** created laminated bookmarks with the Law Library's contact information. The bookmarks were handed out to the Family Law Administration as well as to Circuit and District Court offices to provide Law Library information at a glance if they need to contact and/or refer anyone to the Law Librarian.

Anne Arundel County Public Law Library moved into a new space and is again co-located with the Family Court Help Center. A display of family law packets was created for FCHC use. The packets provide links to forms and online family law information as found on the People's Law Library of Maryland and the Judiciary's webpages.

The Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library introduced sitewide support for the most commonly spoken non-English languages in Maryland on the People's Law Library: Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, French, Tagalog (Filipino), Russian, Amharic, Yoruba, Urdu, Persian, French Creole, Arabic, Gujarati.



FIGURE 3 ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY PUBLIC LAW LIBRARY FAMILY COURT HELP CENTER

Partnerships

All court law libraries provide access to the Maryland Court Help Center via phone and/or library computers for chat. Multiple law libraries host recurring self-help programs such as legal clinics and Lawyer in the Law Library programs in-person and/or virtually. Some are co-located with court help centers to provide seamless access to legal information and advice.

The **Montgomery County Circuit Court Law Library** created library service guides for pro bono attorneys and Help Center attorneys who refer litigants to them.

The **Prince George's County Circuit Court Law Library** partnered with the Prince George's County Circuit Court administrative office to develop programs and tasks to enhance the work experience of summer interns. Activities for FY24 included assisting with the yearly shelf reading project, working with the Law Library Assistant on administrative tasks, and observing basic reference interactions with patrons.

The **Howard County Circuit Court Law Library & Legal Resource Center** provides two free legal advice programs – the Civil Law Center and Family Law Assistance Program. Both services are offered in the Law Library space. The Law Librarian will continue to manage all aspects of the two Programs. In addition, the Family Law Assistance Program is offered two evenings a month at an off-site location - the East Columbia 50+ Center. In 2024, their free legal advice programs assisted 760 litigants in person.



FIGURE 4 HOWARD COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT LAW LIBRARY & LEGAL RESEARCH CENTER

The **Law Library at the Carroll County Circuit Court** continues to partner with their Family Law Administration on civil docket days in the Historic Courthouse. The law library provides conference rooms, computers/printers, SASI-Calc/Alimony calculators and copier services for same day ADR and mediation of family law cases for self-represented litigants and attorneys.

The **Washington County Law Library** offers a free Family Law Legal Clinic on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The law library offers virtual legal consultation services with the Maryland Court Help Center every day of the week.

The **Charles County Circuit Court Legal Resource Center and Public Law Library** offers free limited legal advice for family matters with a full-time family law self-help center. The Legal Resource Center and Public Law Library shares a space with the Maryland Court Help Center which offers free limited legal advice for all civil matters in the Circuit and District Courts.

The **Anne Arundel County Public Law Library** continues to coordinate the weekly, remote Lawyer in the Library program with the Anne Arundel County Public Library. In addition, the law librarian helped with the coordination of brief legal advice clinics including the Tangled Title Clinic in October 2023 and the Family Law Day held at the Chrysalis House in January 2024. As chair of the American Association of Law Libraries Government Law Libraries Best Practices for Access to Justice Committee, Joan Bellistri worked with the Self-Represented Litigation Network's (SRLN) Law Librarians Working Group to create a national Survey of Law Library Services to the SRL that updates the 2019 survey and collected information on the effects of the pandemic on law library service to the SRL. The survey results are now available as a Story Map, [Open to the Public – 2024 How Law Libraries are Serving Self-Represented Litigants Across the Country](#). Survey results and background information can be found at the [SRLN webpage](#).

In collaboration with the Maryland State Archives, the **Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library** has launched a preservation initiative for its Special Collections. Staff members are assessing items to determine which require restoration, archival storage boxers, or protective mylar enclosures.

Technology Assistance

In addition to assisting with legal research, law libraries use technology to connect people to legal information and provide technical assistance to those who need it. Law library staff provide technical assistance in-person as well as remotely via phone, email, and Zoom. Technical assistance includes helping litigants navigate websites and legal databases, using child support calculators, uploading and downloading documents, scanning and printing documents, and operating microfilm and microfiche readers.



FIGURE 5 PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
CIRCUIT COURT LAW LIBRARY

The **Prince George's County Circuit Court Law Library** through close communication with vendors and the Prince George's County Circuit Court IT Department, responded rapidly to unforeseen technological issues and identified cost-effective alternatives to select legal services to minimize disruptions to patron services.

The **Washington County Law Library** offers public computers and Zoom calls with attorneys.



FIGURE 6 MDEC ACCESS AT THE PRINCE
GEORGE'S COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT LAW LIBRARY

The **Howard County Circuit Court Law Library Legal Research Center** offers a video chat service with the Maryland Judiciary's Help Center on one of their law library computers. They also provided temporary space for a Maryland Judiciary pilot project – an information and wayfinding public use kiosk. Staff from all courthouse departments visited the law library over several months to ask questions to the kiosk's avatar, Chloe, in an effort to help perfect the project before moving the kiosk to its permanent location – the Courthouse Lobby.

The **Anne Arundel County Public Law Library** provides access to all library resources including computers with access to family Law information and forms packets, print materials and online databases to those who use the Family Court Help Center. The law library conference room is available

for Maryland Court Help Center access and has videoconferencing capability.

The **Carroll County Circuit Court Law Library** added an unnetworked County stand-alone laptop and printer that allows self-represented litigants to access/print out their email, create or edit

their own legal documents, and save or retrieve documents on or off their own personal flash drives.

Montgomery County Circuit Court Law Library improved their technology offerings for the public by adding a third Zoom room to the library for remote hearing attendance.

Awards and Recognition



Julee Snyder, now Court Administrator, formerly the Self-Help & Legal Resource Coordinator at the Charles County Circuit Court Legal Resource Center & Public Law Library, received the Liberty Bell Award from the Charles County Bar Association. The Liberty Bell Award acknowledges outstanding community service and is presented to someone who has promoted better understanding of the rule of law, encouraged greater respect for law and the courts, stimulated a sense of civic responsibility, or contributed to good government in the community.



Florence Barnes, Librarian, Carroll County Circuit Court Law Library, was recognized for 45 years of service.

Catherine McGuire, Deputy Director of the Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library, received the William L. Marbury Advocate Award which is presented to someone who is not an attorney and has demonstrated outstanding service representing the civil legal needs of low-income Marylanders or expanding access to justice. The Honorable Matthew J. Fader, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Maryland, and Debra Thomas, Chair, Board of Directors, Maryland Legal Services Corporation presented the award.



MEMBER PROFILE

VANTAGE POINT

TONYA E. BAROUDI

- DIRECTOR OF LIBRARY SERVICES
- PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT LAW LIBRARY
- UPPER MARLBORO, MD

FAVORITE THING ABOUT YOUR JOB?
The environment. I love the hustle and bustle of the courthouse, and the tranquility of the library. It is the best of both worlds. I work in one of the busiest jurisdictions in Maryland, therefore, my day is never dull. Within the Law Library, I am surrounded by the splendors of legal resources, and I have the privilege of working with a great team who share my passion to achieve our desired goals in the most effective and efficient way.

ADVICE TO YOUR 20-YEAR-OLD SELF?
If I could advise my 20-year-old self, I would suggest embracing new experiences, aspiring for ambitious dreams, and practicing self-compassion. Recognize that making mistakes is natural, and through them, you will discover valuable opportunities for personal growth.

IF YOU COULD HAVE DINNER WITH ONE HISTORICAL FIGURE, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?
Dining with Nelson Mandela would have been truly fascinating. Listening to the narrative of his "long walk to freedom" would undoubtedly be an enlightening experience. His remarkable fortitude, composure, and humility make him a historical figure I greatly admire.

WHAT MADE YOU FOLLOW THE CAREER PATH YOU ARE ON?
Maria Behrens, a librarian at the law firm of Silverstein and Mullens, was someone I admired. She was a mentor who convinced me that the profession needed more diversity, and that young minority children would benefit from seeing a positive role model in a profession that provided numerous opportunities for personal and professional growth. During library school, my commitment to the type of librarianship I wanted to pursue never wavered. Although not many legal classes were offered during that time, I was always intrigued with the law. Upon graduation, I worked in several law firms where I learned to appreciate and respect the invaluable work of those in our profession. When I moved to government, these learned trails allowed me the opportunity to branch out and serve on a variety of committees and boards.

FAVORITE TRAVEL DESTINATION?
My favorite travel destination thus far is Santorini, Greece, especially the village of Oia. Santorini is simply breathtaking. The distinctive architecture of Santorini's white-washed buildings and blue domes make every view remarkable. Each sunset is majestic, the blue Aegean Sea is stunning, and each landscape is incredible.

MARCH/APRIL 2024 | AALL SPECTRUM 9

Tonya Baroudi, Director, Prince George's County Circuit Court Law Library, was featured in the March/April 2024 issue of the American Association of Law Libraries publication, Spectrum.

Julia Viets, Law Library Director, Montgomery County Circuit Court Law Library served as Chair of the Legal Information Services to the Public SIS of the American Association of Law Libraries.



Conference Goals & Objectives

Continue to:

- Provide access to justice by providing access to legal information
- Be responsive and adaptable to changing community needs
- Communicate effectively with stakeholders
- Improve systems and processes
- Be accountable
- Assure the highest level of service
- Build partnerships
- Use resources wisely

Testimonials

“Thank you for your service to the community. We are on day two of a 5-day trial and appreciate having the space to spread out, make copies and prepare.”

“I really appreciate your help and kindness!”

“You rock! I so much appreciate your help with this request and the rapid turnaround.”

“Thank you. This information is very helpful. You’re always so consistent.”

“Thank you with all your help with our kiosk! We wouldn’t be able to see half the people that sign-in without you being there to help them.”

“The Librarian has been **helpful and insightful** both times I visited. It is a blessing to have a public law library and legal librarian.”

“I just want to say **how much I appreciate** the help you gave me last time – has really helped with this case.”

“Thank you very much. You’ve shared a wealth of information and contacts. I will be much better prepared for my inquiries with the overview you have provided.”

“You greatly facilitate **judicial efficiency.**”

**THE CONFERENCE OF MARYLAND COURT LAW LIBRARY DIRECTORS IS
LOOKING FORWARD TO ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR OF SERVICE TO ALL
WHO CAN MAKE USE OF OUR LAW LIBRARIES.**

***Find out more about Maryland Court Law Libraries:**

[Anne Arundel County Public Law Library](#)

Annual Reports: <https://www.circuitcourt.org/legal-help/law-library>

Library Company of the Baltimore Bar

<http://www.barlib.org/index.html>

Baltimore County Law Library

<https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/departments/circuit/library>

Carroll County Circuit Court Law Library

<https://circuitcourt.carrollcountymd.gov/libNew.aspx>

Charles County Legal Resource Center & Public Law Library

<https://www.charlescountymd.gov/government/circuit-court/law-library>

Howard County Law Library and Legal Resource Center

<https://www.mdcourts.gov/circuit/howard/lawlibrary>

Montgomery County Circuit Court Public Law Library

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cct/law-library.html>

[Prince George's County Circuit Court Law Library](#)

Annual Highlights <https://princegeorgescourts.org/436/Annual-Highlights>

[Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library](#)

Annual Highlights: <https://www.mdcourts.gov/lawlib/about-us/news-and-reports>