



Maryland State Law Library

Highlights

FY 2011

July 2010 – June 2011

The Library's Mission

The Maryland State Law Library, a court-related agency 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.

Library Highlights

The Maryland State Law Library, established in 1826 as the Maryland State Library, supports the research activities of the Maryland State 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, works on Maryland history and federal government documents.

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

Maryland State Law Library
Robert C. Murphy Courts of Appeal Building
361 Rowe Blvd
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
Reference: 410-260-1430
Fax: 410-260-1572
Email: lawlibrary@mdcourts.gov
Website: www.mdcourts.gov/lawlib

Building and Preserving Collections

Library Maintenance Agreements

The Library extended the “library maintenance agreements” with West Publishing and Lexis/Nexis, covering print subscriptions from both publishers.

Task Force Reports Digitization Project

The Library continued its digitization activities with the completion of Phase III of the scanning project. Several hundred reports from legislative and executive task forces, commissions, and committees, dating back to the early 20th century, have been scanned and uploaded. The digitized Task Force Reports collection is available on the Library’s website, together with the previously-digitized Rules Committee Meeting Minutes. In addition, catalog records for each report now include a link to the digitized version, enabling direct access to the full text of the reports through the Library’s public catalog or through Worldcat.

Katherine Baer, the Library’s Maryland Collections Librarian, participated in an American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) Annual Meeting preconference workshop on digitization to relay to colleagues the Library’s efforts in this area.

Book Storage

The Library continues to shift books in the basement storage area to increase available space to accommodate the first floor’s growing reporter and periodical collections.

Collection Analysis

With the assistance of a University of Maryland Library School student intern, the Library embarked in the Spring on a collection analysis project, comparing the Library’s holdings to the collections in the Library of Congress and other major law libraries. The project is expected to be completed in the next fiscal year.

Self-Help Collection

The Library’s extensive collection of self-help materials, including publications from Nolo Press and Sphinx Publishing, the Maryland State Bar Association, and other texts written directly for the non-lawyer, underwent revision this year. The collection is layperson-friendly, and reorganized to make materials easier to locate.

Database Collection

After reviewing databases for usage, the Library reinstated the BNA Tax Management Portfolios database due to popular request.

Promoting Access

Maryland AskUsNow! Service

The Library has served since 2003 as a follow-up reference provider for the statewide public libraries' AskUsNow chat reference service. This fiscal year, the Library began monitoring the live services four hours per week, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., responding to any law-related inquiries at the point of entry. Usage of the service through the first year increased at a modest but noticeable pace.

People's Law Library Redesign

On December 7, 2010, the State Law Library launched a redesign of the Maryland People's Law Library website (www.peoples-law.org). The launch of the free legal information website came after a yearlong effort to modernize and improve the site design and technology platform. Site migration began in the Spring of 2010, with nearly 1,000 pages of content moved from the old site. In addition, a number of sections were improved and expanded. The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) acknowledged this state-of-the-art site by awarding the Association's "Innovations in Technology Award" for 2011.

Reference Staff Meetings

Reference staff members began meeting weekly for half-hour information and informal training sessions. The meetings give staff a collective opportunity to exchange research tips and recommended sources, as well as to host intra- and extra-Judiciary experts for brief continuing education sessions.

Reference Statistics

The Library saw increased use of "traditional" services (telephone, e-mail and in-person) as well as a significant growth in usage of the People's Law Library website, with a 15% increase in the total number of hits to the site.

Library Hours

Chief Judge Bell signed an Administrative Order on August 4, 2010, which rescinded a much older order regarding the Library's hours of operation. The new order states that the Library's website lists the hours of operation and holiday closures.

Maryland Code Research

To make information in this area more accessible, the Library added to its website a new page specifically on *Maryland Code* research. The page includes links to the list of current and superseded code volumes, to Judge Wilner's article, "Blame It All On Nero: Code Creation and Revision in Maryland", and more.

Mutual Aid Agreements

Agreements between the State Law Library and several Maryland Circuit Court law libraries were signed to allow for assistance in times of disaster. For example, should a hurricane in the Annapolis area take down electrical supply to the Courts of Appeal building, State Law Library staff can request to be positioned temporarily in a Circuit Court library to continue working productively.

Customer Comments

What a productive couple of hours this has been, culminating with "Live" people that gave me real answers! You and [your colleague] deserve to be applauded for your work that probably goes unnoticed. Be assured that I know who the real experts are and will call on you again, if needed.

I would like to take this opportunity to compliment you on the professional manner in which your staff handles inquiries from my office. Without fail, they are knowledgeable, courteous and prompt.

Creating Educational Opportunities

Training for Public Library Staff

Following the representation of Maryland at the 2010 Austin Conference on Public Libraries and Access to Justice, Library staff continued to collaborate with the Maryland delegation on designing and implementing training for public librarians about “access to justice” issues. The group launched a series of hour-long web-based training seminars on legal information with the winter production of two sessions of Part 1 of the series, “Ready Reference Law: Top 10 Tips from Law Librarians”, and Part 2, “E-Government: Tips for Responding Quickly.” Part 1 focused on the most critical, immediate information needed for front desk staff to address a legal reference question, including differentiating between legal information and legal advice; best practices for the reference interview; and top first sources to use when faced with a legal reference question. Part 2 provided a look at government structure, determining appropriate agencies, overviews of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA), and resources for locating e-Gov information.

Presentations on Digital Preservation

Katherine Baer, Maryland Collections Librarian at the State Law Library, who has been very involved with digital state publication issues, presented programs on digital preservation at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference and the Best Practices Exchange 2010 Conference, which focuses on this topic exclusively.

Professional Membership Involvement

Two staff members, Mary Jo Lazun and Jessie Tam, have been leaders in various activities of the American Association of Law Libraries. Jessie serves as the Chair of the Asian-American Law Librarians Caucus; Mary Jo was a panelist for the program, “Federal Depository Library Program for Law Libraries in the 21st Century,” at this year’s AALL Annual Meeting.

Judiciary Trainings

Reference staff members continue to teach regularly scheduled legal research sessions, offered through the Office of Professional Development of the Human Resources Department, and provide orientations to new judicial law clerks and District Court Commissioners. Other informational sessions included:

- Maryland Register of Wills Association Spring Conference, “Finding the Law”
- Maryland Orphans’ Court Judges’ Orientation
- District Court staff, hour-long webinars

State Bar Association Involvement

The State Law Library exhibited at the Maryland State Bar Association’s Solo and Small Firm Conference In November 2010. Library staff members continue to provide news of the latest publications and database offerings for the MSBA’s Electronic Bar Brief.

Additional Presentations

The Library continued to provide a diverse array of educational and training opportunities, including:

- Anne Arundel County Public Library, “Law on the Frontlines: Dealing with Law Questions from Public Patrons”

- Maryland Library Association/Delaware Library Association Annual Meeting, “Demystifying Legal Research: Researching Law Like a Lawyer”, with colleagues from the Law Library Association of Maryland (LLAM)
- Maryland Interlibrary Loan (MAILL) members, tour and program
- Tours for groups from the Baltimore Scholars Program, Stevenson University, Friendly High School, Baltimore City Community College, Queen Anne’s County High Schools, and Maryland Office of the Attorney General summer interns

Staff continues to exhibit the Library’s services at conferences and fairs, including:

- Baltimore County Bar Association’s Technology Fair
- Pro Bono Resource Center, “Partners for Justice” Conference

Staff professional participation has included membership in or meeting attendance at:

- The Maryland Advisory Council on Libraries
- The Anne Arundel Community College Library’s Advisory Board
- The State Library Resource Center, Library Services Advisory Committee

Customer Comments

From an evaluation of a legal research class offered by the Library through the Judiciary’s Office of Professional Development: *It is difficult to improve excellence.*

Library Profile

The State Law Library, Maryland's oldest law library, features one of the State's most extensive collections of legal and government information resources. Staffed by 18 full-time and part-time, professional and paraprofessional employees, the Library stands ready to serve users from all walks of life.

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.

Staff, FY2011

Steve Anderson, Director

Shirley Aronson, State Publications/Research Librarian (Part-time)

Scott Ashlin, Library Clerk

Katherine Baer, Maryland Collections/Research Librarian

Bernice Bernstein, Acquisitions Librarian

Michael Craven, People's Law Library Web Content Coordinator

Maureen Della Barba, Library Clerk

Debra Haines, Library Aide (Part-time)

Ruth Henderson, Administrative Specialist

Deborah Judy, Reference Librarian (Part-time)

Rudi Lamy, Cataloging/Research Librarian

Mary Jo Lazun, Head of Electronic Services

Pam Luby, Reference Librarian (Part-time)

Catherine McGuire, Outreach Services Librarian

Jessie Tam, Head of Technical Services

Cindy Terry, Federal Documents and Systems Associate

Dee Van Nest, Reference Coordinator

Ed Wiesenbaler, Federal Documents Assistant (Part-time)

Library Committee

Hon. Robert M. Bell, Chief Judge, Court of Appeals

Hon. Clayton Greene Jr., Court of Appeals

Hon. Peter B. Krauser, Court of Special Appeals

Hon. Deborah Sweet Eyler, Court of Special Appeals

Frank Broccolina, State Court Administrator

Bessie Decker, Clerk, Court of Appeals

Patricia Ann Logan, Esq., Anne Arundel County Office of Law

Steven Anderson, Esq., Library Director