

## **2023 Annual Meeting - Maryland Court Law Libraries**

November 30, 2023

Maryland Judicial Center

*Notes approved December 27, 2023*

### **Attending**

Julia Viets (Montgomery County; Chair, CMCLLD); Catherine McGuire (State Law Library; Vice-Chair, CMCLLD); Amy Simoni (Harford County); Brittany West (A2J); Florence Barnes (Carroll County); James Durham (State Law Library); Jessica Mundy (State Law Library); Jill Schorr (Montgomery County); Sandy Brewer (Howard County); Joan Bellistri (Anne Arundel County); Joanne Molloy (Harford County); Chief Justice Matthew Fader (Supreme Court of Maryland); Kristin Cravath (A2J); Leland Sampson (State Law Library); Nancy Faulkner (Deputy State Court Administrator); Pamela Ortiz (A2J); Rebecca Littleton (Washington County); Timothy Sheridan (Montgomery County); Tommy Fisher (MCLA); Julee Snyder (Charles County)

### **Opening Remarks**

Julia Viets welcomed the meeting participants.

### **Welcome Addresses**

Chief Justice Fader of the Supreme Court of Maryland, spoke of how advances in technology have changed the way people seek and understand legal information. Access to justice is not possible without access to information and information technology; law librarians play a critical part in this access and in the overall mission of the Judiciary. Chief Justice Fader provided a window into the activities of the Judiciary, describing the bar admission ceremony of Edward Draper; the Supreme Court's recent oral argument held at a high school; the building of a new strategic plan; addressing security needs; and the recent establishment of a task force on generative AI and its impact on our world, legal and otherwise.

Deputy State Court Administrator Nancy Faulkner then addressed the group, speaking of how libraries transform to meet the needs of their communities. She provided as an illustration how libraries continued to provide services during the pandemic, pivoting almost overnight; and rather than simply reverting after the peak had passed, libraries learned from what worked well and continued the incorporation of a wide array of service and operation mechanisms. Within the Judiciary, the library is often the first face people see of the court system. Libraries are therefore the frontline to making justice accessible to all. They act as a bridge between the public and the courts to make justice approachable.

### **People's Law Library of Maryland**

*Leland Sampson, Head of Web Content and Services, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library*

Mr. Sampson provided updates to the People's Law Library website over the course of the 2023 year. These included the hiring of a new library staff member with PLL responsibilities; significant edits and rewrites to 120 articles (25% of the site), including public housing, bankruptcy, immigration, and family law; embedded court videos (111 videos added to 117 PLL articles); and links added to 50 Court Help Topic pages in 353 PLL articles. The site is making the switch to machine translation which will provide translation ability for 36 languages. Site redesign is planned for FY2025.

### **Partnerships: Guided Discussion**

*Pamela Ortiz, Esq., Director, Access to Justice, Administrative Office of the Courts, Maryland Judiciary*

Ms. Ortiz opened discussion by asking what pain-points for the self-represented might participants be seeing. Discussion ranged across many aspects of addressing the needs of the self-represented, including: managing the fear and anxiety that are felt by many who contact help centers, particularly anxiety that their situation will not be accepted for assistance; frustration felt by the self-represented with the complexity of legal processes; and the complexity of the processes themselves.

### **Improving Referrals to Maryland Help Centers**

*Thomas Fisher Jr., Esq., Managing Director, Maryland Center for Legal Assistance LLC (MCLA)*

*Kristin Cravath, Access to Justice, Administrative Office of the Courts, Maryland Judiciary (formerly MCLA)*

Mr. Fisher and Ms. Cravath provided an overview of the structure of the Maryland Court Help Centers, including the kinds of assistance each can provide. They underscored that the Help Centers provide brief advice; they cannot respond to situations that require a deep dive.

Mr. Fisher and Ms. Cravath also described the Court Help Access & Information Center (CHAI). One is open in Washington County; a second one is opening soon in Allegany County. CHAI centers provide a connection point, via computer and video, to the Help Center in Frederick County. Thus, persons who cannot get to Frederick County in person can still receive assistance from that center.

The Maryland Justice Passport project was also described. Passport provides a mechanism for the self-represented to keep notes, referrals, documents, and other critical materials in a single app so that when they arrive at a help center, all materials necessary to provide assistance are available.

Mr. Fisher noted that the Help Centers have helped 162,000 litigants this year so far.

During the discussion, it was noted that Help Center providers had been referring litigants needing child support and alimony calculators (SASI-CALC and Kaufman) to court law libraries. Meeting attendees noted that not all local law libraries have access to these tools. The CMCLLD will collect and relay to Mr. Fisher information on which locations have access so that referrals can be accurate.

### **Updates to Court Help Resources**

*Brittany West, Legal Content Analyst, Access to Justice, Administrative Office of the Courts, Maryland Judiciary*

Ms. West provided an overview of the accomplishments of the A2J Department this year. These have included new videos, a flipbook of resources, and updated Guide and File interviews for divorce and expungement.

### **Managing Your Law Library Collection**

*Joan Bellistri, Law Library Director, Anne Arundel County Public Law Library*

*Jessica Mundy, Head of Collection Management, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library*

*Tonya Baroudi, Director of Library Services, Prince George's County Circuit Court Law Library (not present)*

Ms. Bellistri and Ms. Mundy described the overall management of a law library collection. They broke down into segments the concepts within management critical to the health and helpfulness of a law library collection.

- Determining your library's needs
- Components of Collection Development & Management
  - Selecting materials in all formats
  - Preparing budgets, managing allocations, demonstrating responsible stewardship
  - Reviewing and negotiating contracts
  - Weeding, cancellations, storage, and archival
  - Writing and revising collection development policies (see below)
  - Promoting and marketing resources
  - Establishing and cultivating partnerships
- Collection Development Policies
  - Selection criteria
  - Format
  - Duplication / planned redundancy
  - Languages
  - Gifts/donations
  - Jurisdiction
  - Subject
  - Deaccessioning
  - Inventory control
- Resources
  - American Association of Law Libraries
  - American Library Association
  - Maryland Library Association
  - Thurgood Marshall State Law Library
  - Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors

#### **Co-Located Law Libraries and Help Centers: Discussion Panel**

*Joan Bellistri, Law Library Director, Anne Arundel County Public Law Library*

*Julee Snyder, Help Center & Legal Resource Coordinator, Charles County Circuit Court Legal Resource Center & Public Law Library*

*Rebecca Littleton, Law Librarian/Court Reporter, Washington County Circuit Court Law Library*

*Sandy Brewer, Law Librarian, Law Library & Legal Resource Center, Howard County Circuit Court*

Panelists provided an overview of the structure of each of their locations and addressed both challenges and opportunities in their operations. Observations included:

- Larger number of people now aware of the library and its resources, demonstrated by an increase in user statistics;
- Mutual referral is advantageous to visitors of both services;
- Emotions of help center users run high – frustration, anxiety, stress, all need to be managed by library staff as well as help center staff;
- Help center visitors can be channeled more directly to assistance;
- Misunderstanding of the difference in services provided by help center and by library can sometimes be a challenge;

- Large volume on family clinic days can be disruptive to library and remote hearing possibilities;
- Library computers make it possible for more people to connect to further assistance, via Zoom or chat to alternative help centers or to digital resources of legal information.

Helpful resources for co-located operations:

- Computers for access to resources and alternate help center locations
- Printers
- Copiers
- Scanners
- Access to an MDEC kiosk
- Maryland Justice Passport with staff trained to assist visitors with the app
- Court TV

### **Law on the Frontlines**

*Catherine McGuire, Deputy Director, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library*

Ms. McGuire provided an overview of the Law on the Frontlines project and updates of accomplishments for the 2023 year. Accomplishments included:

- Fourteen (14) sessions with just over 100 attendees;
- More formal organization of a workgroup that includes a wider collection of partners, including librarians and A2J staff;
- Subgroups (committees) in charge of specified tasks; these include course content review; new course construction; website content review; instruction & tech support; marketing & publications; and videos.
- In November 2023, and in large part due to the success of *Frontlines* and related efforts working with Maryland's public libraries, Ms. McGuire was awarded the William L. Marbury Outstanding Advocate Award by the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC).

### **Closing Remarks**

Julia Viets thanked everyone for their attendance. Conference members were informed that a 2024 schedule of meetings will be constructed soon.

**The meeting adjourned at 3pm.**