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Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors

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Annual Meeting
December 8, 2016

Judicial College Education and Conference Center, Annapolis, MD

The Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors (CMCLLD) meeting began at 10:03 a.m.

The following people attended: Steve Anderson (Maryland State Law Library), Flossie Barnes (Carroll County), Tonya Baroudi (Prince George's County), Joan Bellistri (Ann Arundel County), Sandy Brewer (Howard County), James Durham (Maryland State Law Library), Mary Jo Lazun (Charles County), Stephanie Levasseur (Baltimore County), Judy Loman (Frederick County), Wendy Maines (Thomson Reuters), Kate Martin (Montgomery County), Catherine McGuire (Maryland State Law Library), Dave Pantzer (People's Law Library), Reena Shah (Maryland Access to Justice Commission), Scott Stevens (Baltimore County) and Lonni Summers (Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts/Access to Justice Department (A2JD)).

Welcome: Tonya Baroudi, CMCLLD Chair, welcomed attendees to the meeting. All attendees introduced themselves and their institutions and gave their staff size.

Lonnie Summers: The A2JD started as an independent commission and is now a department of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). She spoke about current developments and initiatives at the A2JD. They are working to:

- Develop tools and programs for a fair and efficient justice system
- Streamline court processes
- Utilize metrics to analyze and improve court services
- Expand translation and language portals and the use of interpreters
- Make accommodations, such as listening devices, signage and physical court access, more available to court users
- Support self-represented litigants with informative webinars, videos, tip sheets and help centers
- Improve public access to pro bono and limited legal services
- Connect the public with court resources with well-defined links, online materials and YouTube channels

Future projects include developing more forms assembly, investigating how the public interacts with the courts, distributing information on limited scope representation and developing Self-Help Centers in Western Maryland.

Mary Jo Lazun updated the group on her work on the Court Equity Subcommittee under the Court Operations Committee. As a subcommittee member, Mary Jo provided detailed information on access and equity issues in public law libraries to the Subcommittee.

Based on that information, the Equity Subcommittee thought the topic of law libraries would be better served by inclusion on the Court Access and Community Relations Committee. In early December, Mary Jo briefed the Court Operations Committee who voted to transfer the topic of law libraries to the Court Access and Community Relations Committee.

She also spoke about issues of tier 1 (without staff) versus tier 2 (with staff) law libraries and the concerns of state-wide law library equity. Three counties have no public law library.

The good news is that this committee is developing policies and parameters to get legal and judicial information out to the public, which is a core CMCLLD charge.

Joanie Bellistri briefed members on the work of the Maryland Self Represented Litigant (SLR) Subcommittee of the Maryland Access and Community Relations Committee:

- A new newsletter
- A social media plan that includes Twitter
- A redesigned portal with digital content and information on how to find a public law library

Steve Anderson brought up other SRL initiatives: developing support for tier 1 libraries, such as information kiosks for tier 1 libraries to expand legal research resources across the state. He also championed the development of forms to assist SRLs.

How can CMCLLD members help? A general discussion followed. How do we let people know where they can find legal information? Can we use Joanie Bellistri and the Ann Arundel library as a model for getting the word out? Should we have greater interaction with the Self Help Call Center staff to let them know about CMCLLD library resources? How can we highlight our resources to small firm/solo practitioners? Court libraries also compete with other court initiatives like MDEC for funding, so how does the Conference deal with these issues?

Dave Pantzer spoke on People's Law Library (PLL) improvements. The two biggest issues for the PLL are family law and self-represented litigants. To meet these needs, the PLL is developing a self-help workbook on child custody issues.

- It will help SRLs understand the judicial process in a very basic way -- how a family law trial works, what they'll need to know to proceed.
- It also will collect and organize all paperwork so that it can be used more effectively by the litigant and/or that person's attorney.
- The workbook walks the litigant through the progression of a trial and helps the SRL to gather information, and then develop checklists, calendars, explanations and possible scenarios.
- The workbook will allow SRLs to acquire and understand relevant knowledge by themselves or with a limited representation attorney.

The PLL is also partnering with the Maryland State Bar Association to present "Family Law for the People," an in-person public seminar at various statewide courthouses.

Reena Shah of the Maryland Access to Justice Commission (A2JC) provided context on the Commission. The Commission started a year ago and incubated at the University of Baltimore. It continues the mission of the original A2JC which was spun off as A2JD of the AOC. The Commission's sphere is law reform, innovation and raising public awareness of A2J issues.

The Commission membership consists of six legal service providers, the Maryland law school deans, Pamela Ortiz of the A2JD and several other interested parties. They hope to assess Maryland citizens' legal needs and form a consortium to help supply them, starting with collecting data through a needs survey, monitoring changes in the law and developing partnerships with like-minded groups. Ultimately, the Commission hopes to coordinate a state-wide plan to bring legal service providers together and broaden legal assistance to underserved populations in Maryland.

Reena and the Commission are planning a conference in June 2017 to explore the issue of how people get legal representation – What is civil legal aid, how does it work, what are its component parts and who are the shareholders and beneficiaries?

Reena was then asked if a law librarian could be added to the Commission and she agreed to check this out and get back to the group.

Wendy Maines of Thomson Reuters led a mindfulness program with relaxation and breathing exercises.

Lunch break

Joanie Bellistri presented the Commission's usage statistics for the first quarter of FY2017. Conference libraries fielded over 66,000 questions from the general public, local attorneys and courthouse staff. Over half of the questions were from the public and a third were on family law issues. Almost one million hits were recorded from library websites, blogs, wikis, etc. and there were over 100,000 collective library catalog searches.

Kate Martin led a brainstorming session on the CMCLLD strategic plan and how to mine its elements to develop relevant projects for the Conference. Proposed projects include:

- Complete and distribute the list of core recommended law library materials
- Investigate the possibility of a state-wide catalog of all circuit court library resources
- Develop a consistent marketing/branding plan to expand the outreach of CMCLLD libraries to help underserved populations
- Collaborate with other like-minded groups, such as the A2JC, to encourage synergy and get our stories out to the public
- Develop a model program for a correctional facilities librarian training session
- Work with public librarians to expand legal resources across the state
- Target community colleges to let their librarians know about our valuable legal resources
- Outreach to legal aid, pro bono and other legal services to formulate pertinent training programs
- Reach out to solo practitioners and young lawyers with training programs on cost-effective legal research
- Develop a publicly-accessible database of Maryland legislative bill files
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Catherine McGuire directed a lively discussion on core recommended law library materials lists. Should there be one list or two lists, based on: suggested or required, Maryland or federal, primary or secondary sources?

- Are the lists prescriptive or descriptive?
- Do the lists only include print or also digital sources?
- Who, exactly, is the intended user?
- Several conference members said they use the lists in budget talks to justify library purchases.

- Should the list include out-of-print books?
- Should cost be a factor? Some of the multivolume loose-leaf sets are thousands of dollars.
- How much would it cost to purchase and maintain every book on the list?

The group agreed to a single list, concentrating on Maryland legal materials, available in print or digitally.

Tonya Baroudi ended the meeting by announcing the next CMCLLD meeting on January 30, 2017 at the Howard County Circuit Court. Sandy Brewer will be the host.

Adjournment was at 3:55 p.m.