



AACPLL

*access to justice
through
access to legal information*

Report of the

Anne Arundel
County Public
Law Library

FISCAL YEAR
2022

Contents

Vision	3
Mission	3
Introduction.....	3
Use Statistics FY2022	4
Law Library Space	10
Cataloging Project.....	10
Library Services	10
Access to Justice Initiatives	13
Staff	14
Law Library Financial Report FY2022.....	16
Strategic Plan: Status Report.....	19
Goals / Conclusion	25

Anne Arundel County Public Law Library

Anne Arundel County Circuit Court

July 2021 – June 2022

Vision access to justice through access to legal information

Mission The Anne Arundel County Public Law Library serves the needs of Anne Arundel County's court, attorneys, government and citizens by providing access to legal information resources; promoting access to these resources; creating educational opportunities that enhance the understanding of legal information; and providing access to programs providing legal advice to the public.

Introduction

The law library kept to its vision providing access to justice through access to legal information while facing the continuing challenges of the COVID health emergency.

This report provides a picture of library use, programs, resources, services, staff and finances. The strategic plan with goals and actions taken is included.

Use Statistics FY2022



2214 visitors



2421 questions



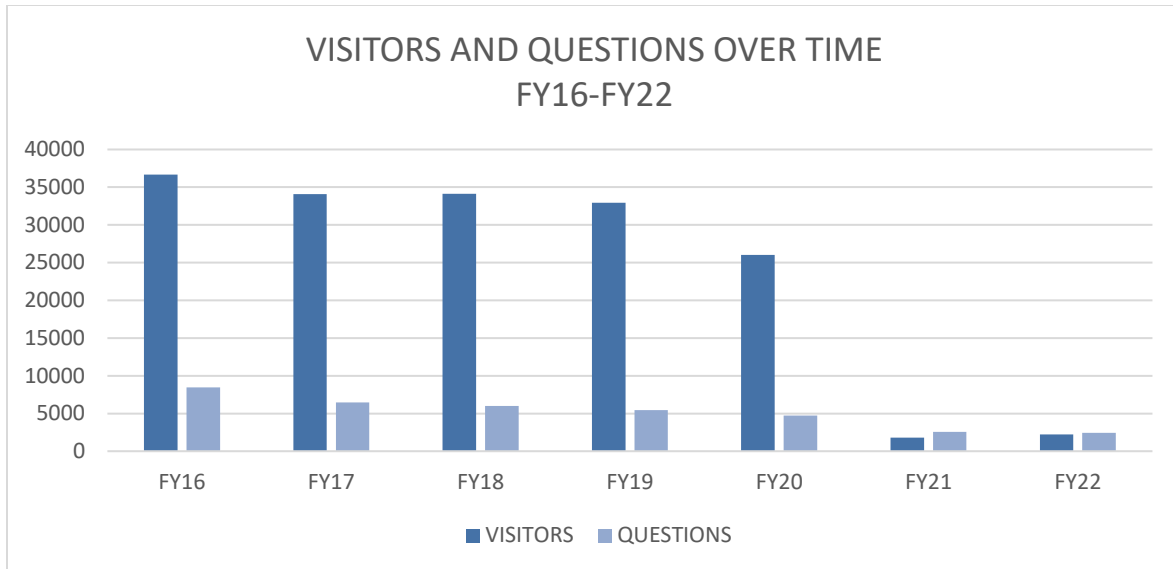
30,773 web hits



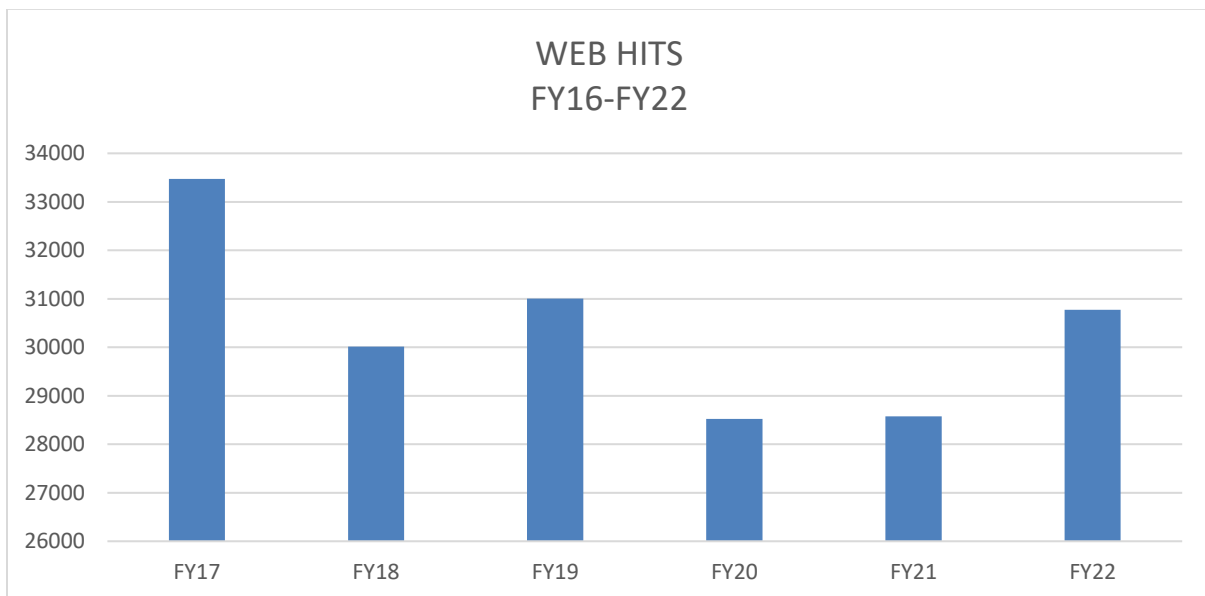
159 served by law library
limited legal advice programs

FY2022 statistics still reflect changes brought about by the COVID emergency in the law library's use statistics especially in terms of in-person visitors and number of overall transactions.

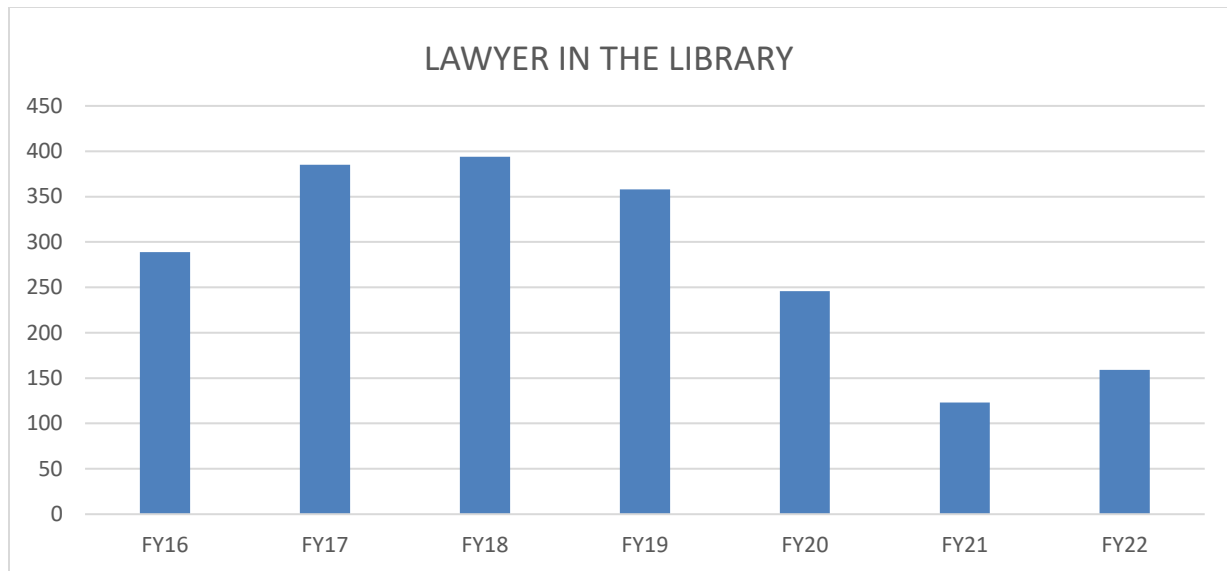
Many attorneys and other library users were often just returning to the courthouse in-person for the first time since COVID limited access to the building. The law library's temporary relocation without close proximity to the Family Court Help Center (FCHC) has affected the number of visitors and transactions. FCHC traffic accounted for a large number of library visitors and transactions. When the FCHC was co-located in the law library, librarians were able to provide reference and referrals and technology assistance to the Center's clients. The distance between the FCHC and law library made those encounters less frequent.



The number of questions was about the same as last year and the number of visitors increased by 20%. However, the numbers are still well below pre-COVID numbers.

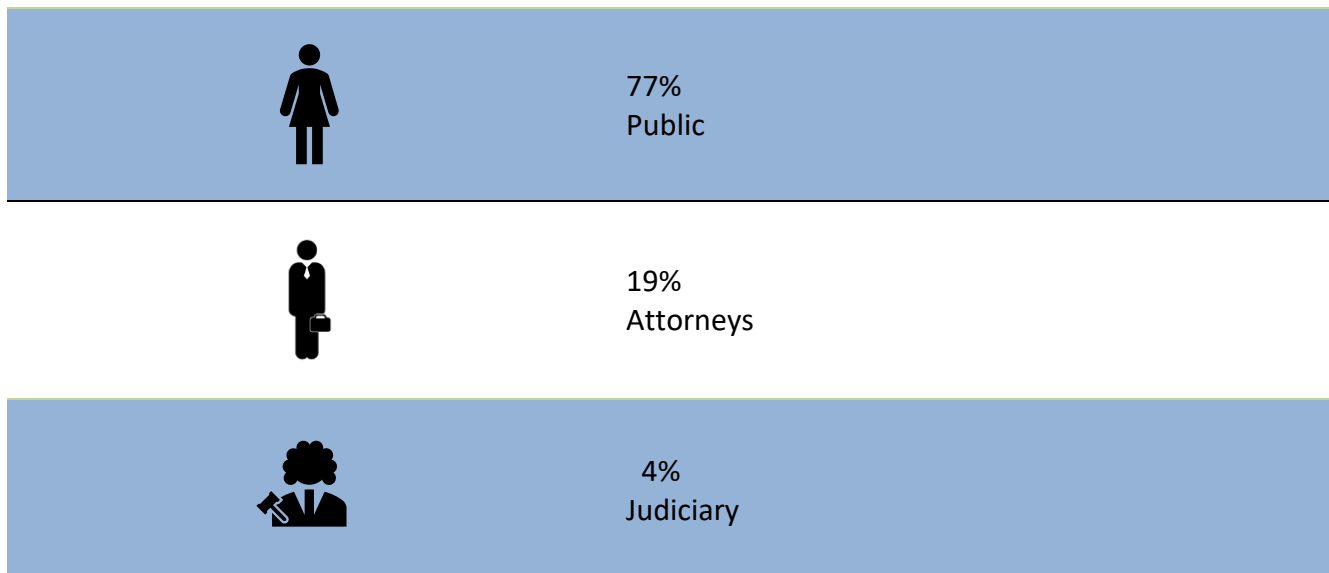


Online access remained steady with an increase in library related web hits.



The Lawyer in the Library program assisted 29% more people than last year. The number of people served is still 55% lower when compared to pre-COVID numbers. The program is still remote only.

FY2022 - Who



The breakdown of library users showed a slight increase in the percentage of attorney use since FY2021 and a corresponding drop in public use.

FY 2022 - How



66%
In Person

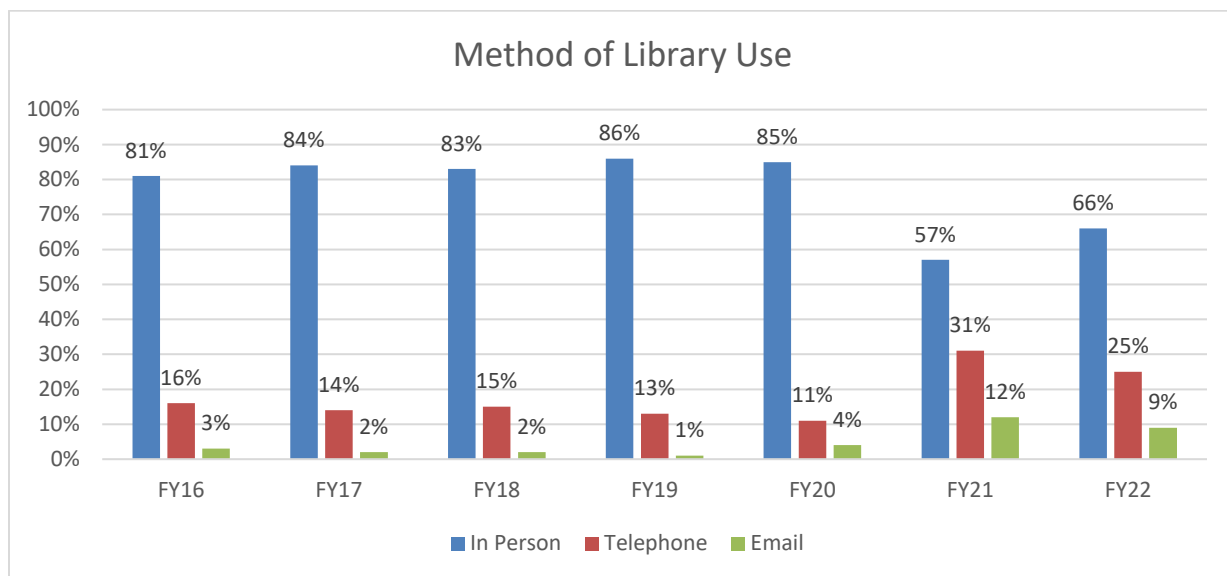


25%
Phone

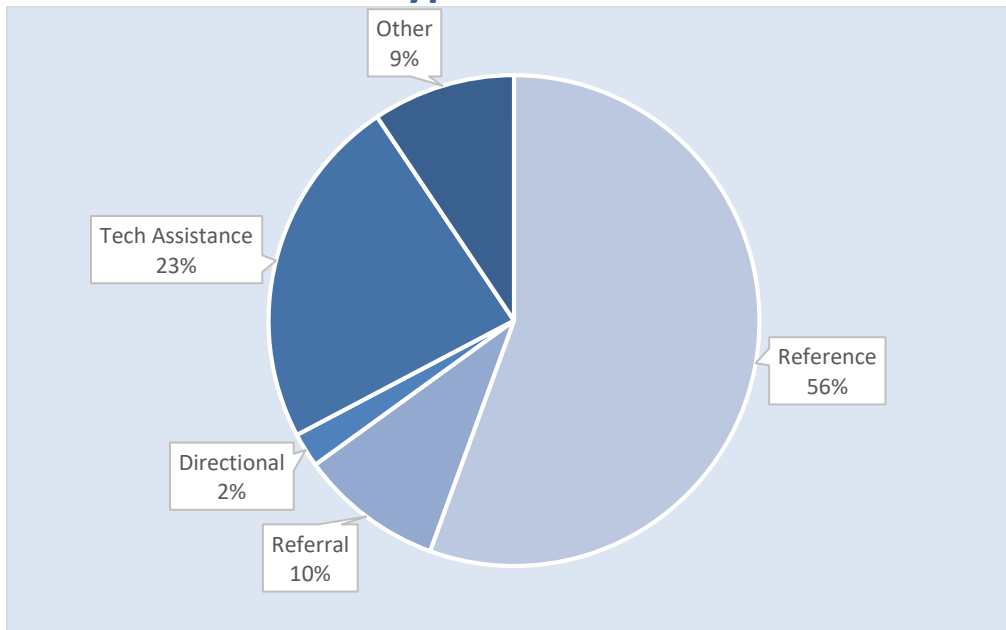


9%
Email

In-person use has increased to 66% from last year's 57%. This is still a much smaller percentage when compared to previous years.



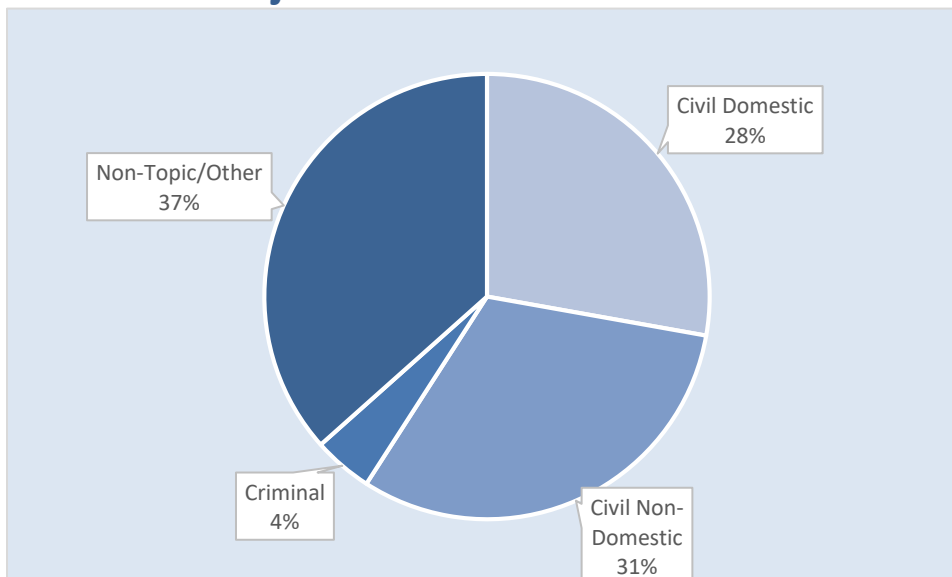
FY2022 - Question Type



66% OF QUESTIONS INVOLVE REFERENCE & REFERRALS

The percentage of the types of questions remained close to the percentages of previous years.

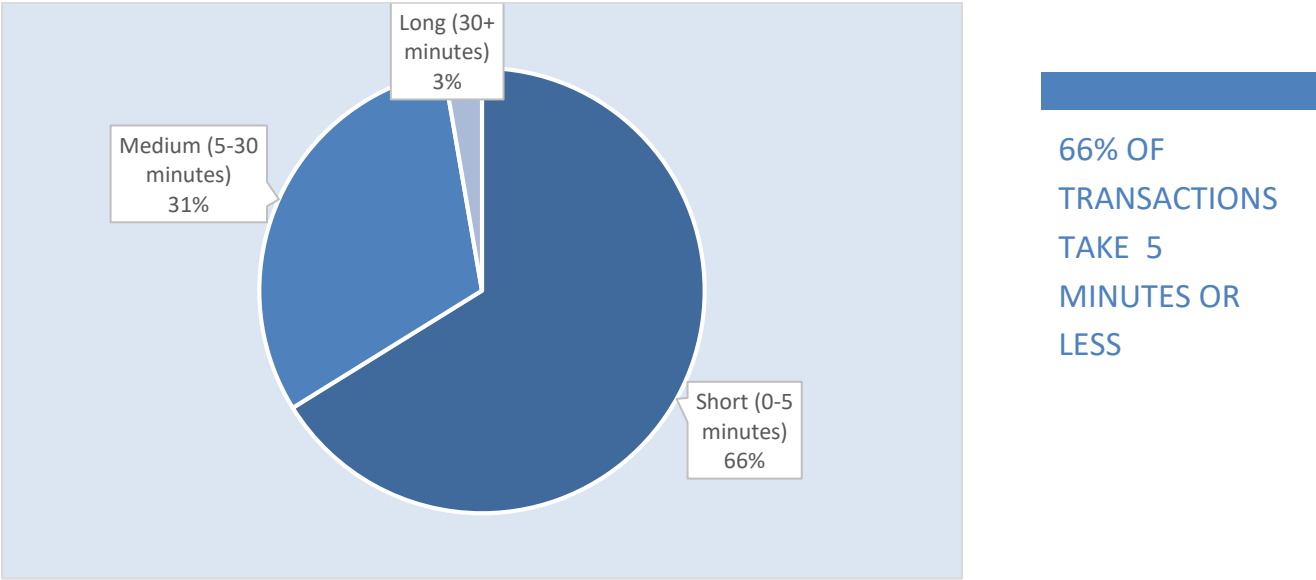
FY2022 – Subject Matter



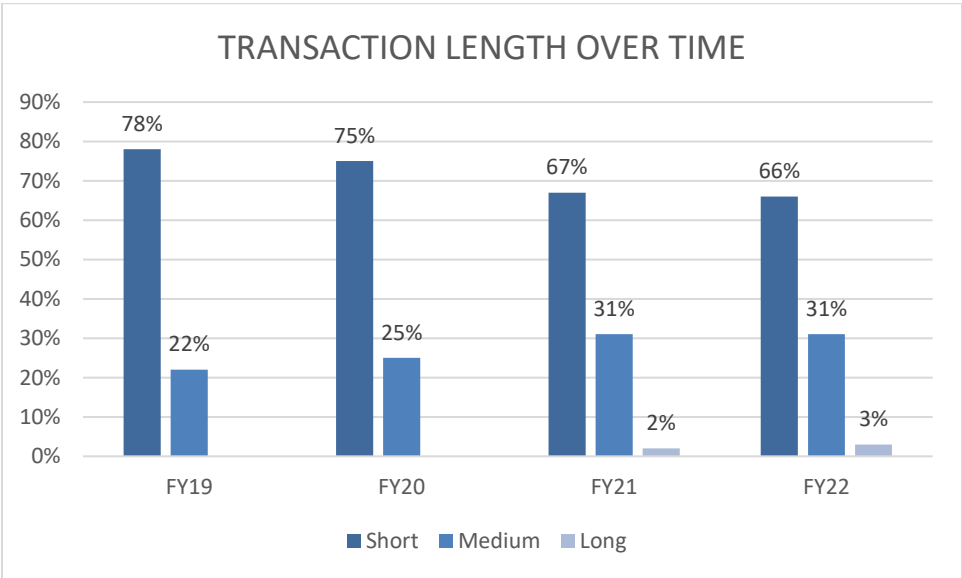
59% OF QUESTIONS ARE CIVIL

The percentage of civil questions is lower than the 71% in FY2021. There is an increase in other types of reference subject matter.

FY2022 - Transaction Length



The percentage of short transactions is still lower than what it was in previous years. The percentage was 78% in FY2019.



Remote assistance did not provide the opportunity for many short interactions such as how to access a PC or sign-in to the FCHC. The number of long interactions, those taking 30 minutes or more, is a 450% increase when compared with FY2019 going from just 12 in FY2019 to 66 in FY2022. Remote reference

transactions take longer due to the inability for a simultaneous interactive conversation. It is more difficult to demonstrate resources remotely as well.

The law library continued to deliver the same level of quality information services but to fewer people. Access to legal information is an essential service needed by those negotiating critical legal issues involving housing, employment, and family matters.

To increase awareness of library programs and services, the law library has developed a marketing plan that has been sent to court administration for review. The plan includes traditional methods and social media. Even as in-person use increases, it is still important to increase awareness of alternative service options that extend service with remote access to those in need of legal information and referrals.

Statistics Reports for previous years can be found here: <https://aacpll.org/annual-reports/>

Law Library Space

The law library remained in the temporary space in the historic courthouse. Looking to a new space in the future, the law library devised a plan for a library that will meet the needs of all library users.

Cataloging Project

Sarah Green continues to add electronic resources and to add records for all primary sources, current and historic to the [library online catalog](#) so that all library resources are discoverable.

Library Services

When the court limited access to the building in March 2020, the law library provided remote service via phone and email. Remote services continue to be available to those who do not need or want to visit the court in-person. Copies of requested information can be sent via email using Westlaw and Lexis. Online research sessions using screen sharing allows users to search databases with librarian assistance in real time remotely.

The law library maintains a [Virtual Reference Desk](#) for easy access to remote library services. Library space is limited making remote service a good option even with the court fully open.

The legal information needs of the law library's diverse user groups are varied.

The law library serves the court with:

- Research assistance
- Management of chambers resources
- Maintenance of information resource SharePoint site
- Westlaw password and Lexis E-book access
- Maintenance of the chambers reserve collection
- Circulation of legal texts and treatises
- Law clerk orientation

Thank you so much, this is super helpful!

The law library serves the bar with:

- Research assistance
- Legal research training and instruction
- Online query formulation
- Westlaw password distribution
- Research co-browsing
- Document delivery
- Technology and MDEC assistance
- Pro bono coordination
- Circulation of legal texts and treatises

Perfect! That was exactly what I was looking for. Thank goodness there are still some law libraries – and librarians – around. You're the best.

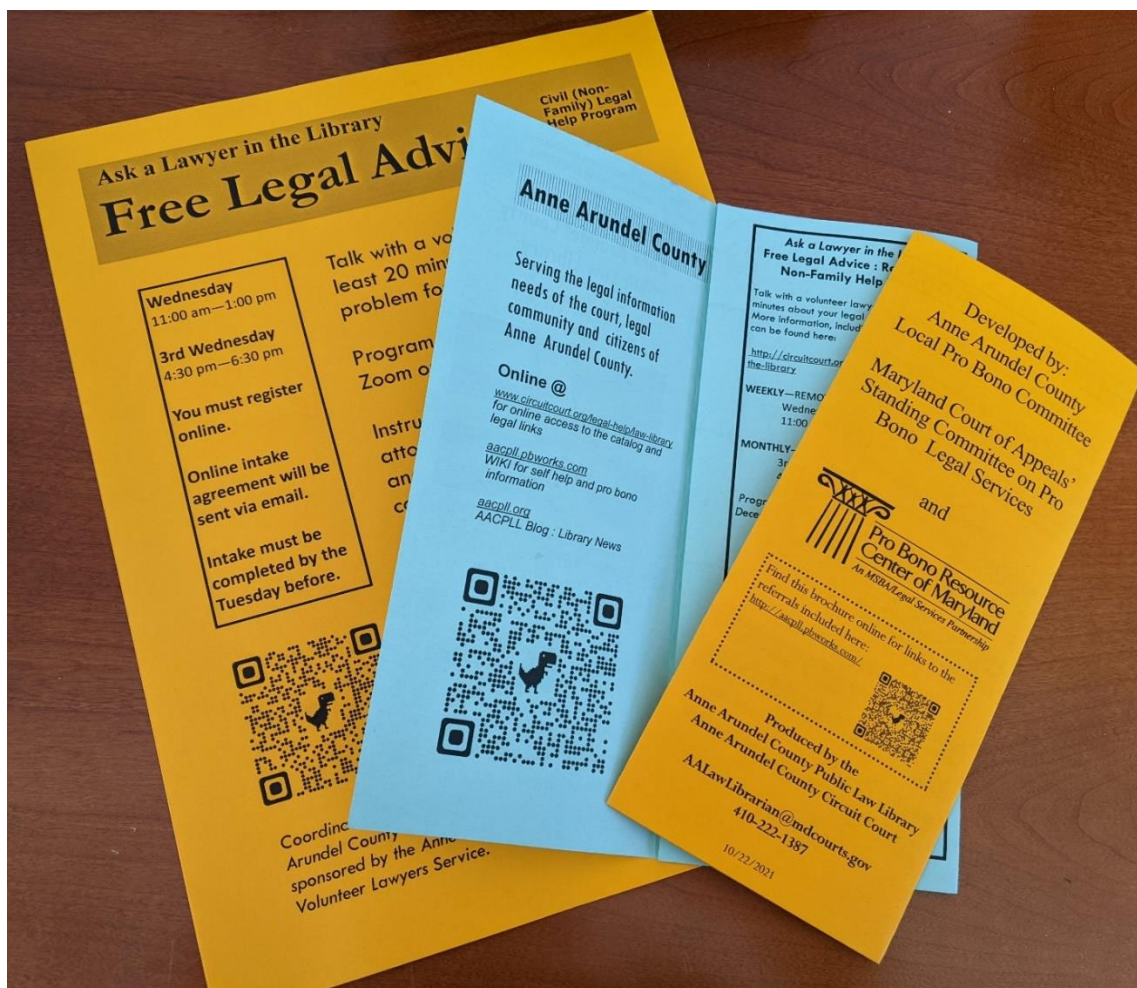
This is my last day in the library. I am picking up my children tomorrow. Thank you so much. I could not have done it without you.

The law library serves the public with:

- Research assistance
- Legal research training and instruction
- Legal services referrals
- Technology and MDEC assistance
- Access to self-help resources
- Curated online information
- Legal advice programs
- Access to the MCHC (Maryland Court Help Center)
- FAQ Templates

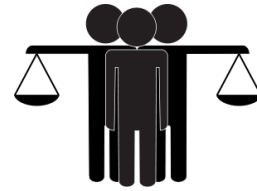
The law library uses email FAQ templates for family law and civil issues to more efficiently respond to the remote requests of self-represented litigants. The templates provide links to the Wiki FAQs as well as legal assistance referrals. The templates can also be used to provide contactless access to information to in-person library users.

[Wiki FAQs](#) contain links to the law, online articles, forms and videos, as well as lists of resources in the library pertaining to topics that are most often asked by the public. The FAQs are a part of the [AACPLL Self Help and Pro Bono WIKI](#).



QR codes were added to brochures and flyers to allow online access to more information about law library programs and referrals.

Access to Justice Initiatives



Brief Legal Advice Services

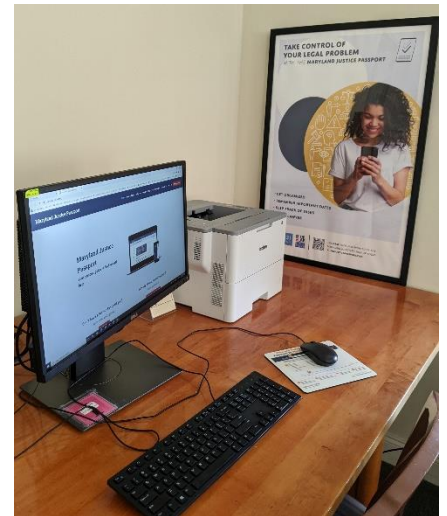
[Lawyer in the Library](#) provides the opportunity to consult with a volunteer lawyer for at least 20 minutes about civil, non-family legal issues for free. The program continues to be offered remotely, every Wednesday from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. and on the third Wednesday from 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

When I came here for help years ago and spoke with the attorney – I saved my house

The Lawyer in the Library program began remote service with SKYPE and then transitioned to TEAMS. Now through a partnership with Anne Arundel Public Library branches the program is offered via Zoom.

Maryland Justice Passport

The Maryland Justice Passport is a project of the Maryland Judiciary, Civil Justice and A2J Tech to facilitate creation of Maryland Justice Passports. A passport is a digital portfolio of information to assist Marylanders seeking legal help. The law library partnered with the Maryland Justice Passport to assist in creating passports. The law library can provide the technology, access to computers and scanners, for passport creation.



AABA President's Pro Bono Award

The Anne Arundel Bar Association reinstituted the President's Pro Bono Award at the request of the Local Pro Bono Committee in 2016. The law librarian creates an online nomination form used for the award. Award recipients are listed [here](#).

Anne Arundel Pro Bono Committee

The law library supports the work of the Pro Bono Committee by maintaining information pages on the [AACPLL Self Help and Pro Bono WIKI](#). Information there includes meeting minutes and reports.

Staff

Law library staff consisted of the Law Library Director and one full time contractual position. (With the retirement of Nancy Wallace in 2011, the law library lost its permanent assistant law librarian position. The law library was then allotted one contractual FTE position.) The contractual position is shared by Denise Wolf and Sarah Green.

There have been thirteen different people in the assistant law librarian position in the ten years since the permanent position became contractual. Ever-changing staff requires extensive and ongoing training requirements. These training periods adversely affect law library productivity and service as do periods without any support staff. The law library worked most efficiently with two full-time positions and the one part-time position that was funded by the now discontinued Maryland State Law Library Grant program. There were no backlogs and most always at least two staff members were available in the law library. Reinstatement of the Assistant Librarian position would improve library productivity and service.

Staff Highlights

Joan Bellistri continued to work with Catherine McGuire, Deputy Director of the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library, and Reena Shah, Executive Director of the Maryland Access to Justice Commission, to provide legal reference training to public librarians with presentations of “Law on the Frontlines: Resources for Public Library Reference.” Trainings included basic and advanced topics. In November, Joan Bellistri was a presenter for the Anne Arundel and Prince George’s County public libraries Entrepreneur Academy Webinar providing information on legal resources to members of the public.

Anne Arundel Community College Paralegal Intern

The law library hosted an AACC Paralegal program intern. The project involved comparing the pre-move shelflist (inventory) with the post-move shelflist and verifying that titles were available online.

Professional Participation, Presentations, and Publications

Memberships – Joan Bellistri

- Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors, member 2007 – present (Chair, 2007-2009)

- Anne Arundel County Local Pro Bono Committee, member, (Chair, 7/2011 – 6/2015)
- Maryland Judicial Council Court Access and Community Relations Committee, Self-Represented Litigant Subcommittee (2015 - present)
- Maryland Court of Appeals Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Service, Public Member, 05/12/2010 - present
 - Liaison to Anne Arundel County Local Pro Bono Committee
- Pro Bono Coordinating Council, member, 2013 - present
- LLAM (Law Library Association of Maryland) Member, 1982- present
 - GRC\Vendor Relations, Chair, 2006 - present
- Maryland Library Association, Member
 - LLAM Representative on the Legislative Panel, 2005 – present
- GLL (Government Law Libraries, American Association of Law Libraries Special Interest Section) Member, 1980- present (Chair, 2018-2019)
 - Best Access to Justice Practices, 2021-2022
- LISP (Legal Information Services to the Public, American Association of Law Libraries Special Interest Section) Member, 1996-present
- Self-Represented Litigation Network, Member, December 2008 -present
 - Law Librarians Working Group, Member, 2008- present (Chair, 2012-2013)
- Entrepreneur Academy Community Partners with Anne Arundel County Public Library and Prince George's Memorial Library, member 4/2021 – 11/2021
- Access to Justice Commission Public Library Training Workgroup, 2016 - present

Presentations – Joan Bellistri

- “Law on the Frontlines: Resources for Public Library Reference,” Online Webinar, Spring 2022
- Entrepreneur Academy Webinar, Presenter, November 2021
- “Law on the Frontlines: Resources for Public Library Reference,” Speaker, Maryland Library Association/Delaware Library Association Conference, May 2022

Memberships – Sarah Green

- Special Library Association – Maryland Community, Member, 2014 – present, President Elect (1/1/2021 – 8/31/2021)
- LLAM (Law Library Association of Maryland) Member, 2020- present

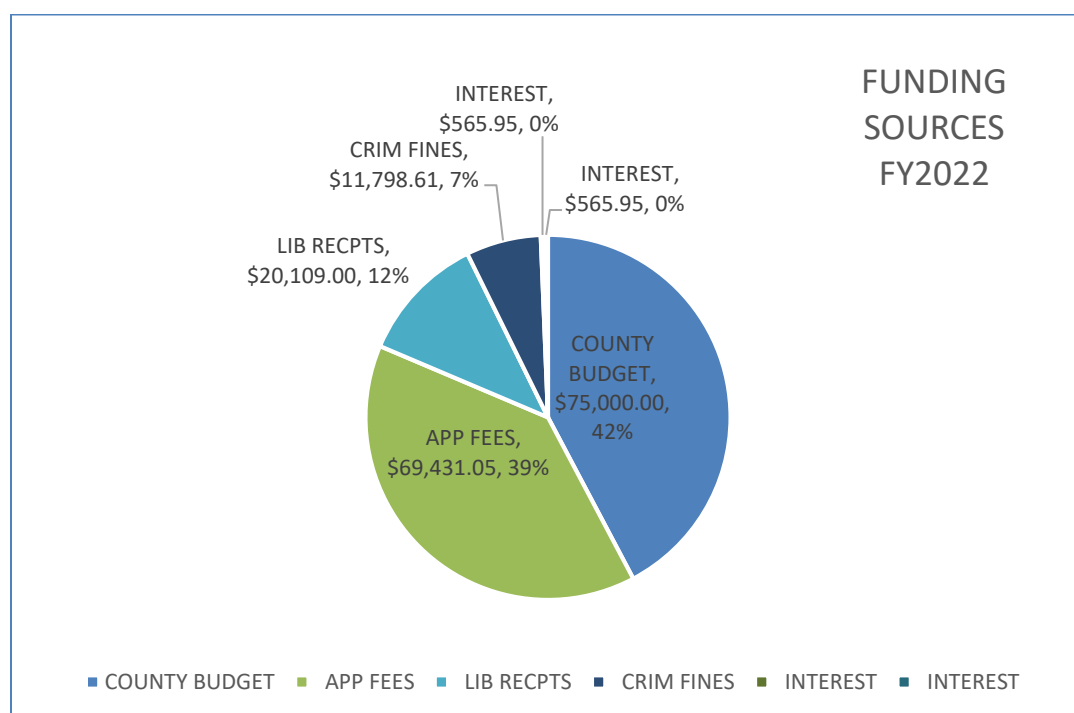
Presentations – Sarah Green

- “Neurodiversity in the workplace: Understanding the Neurodiverse Mind in Order to Build More Equitable, Inclusive and Diverse Workforce.” Online workshop, 2/24/2022

Law Library Financial Report FY2022

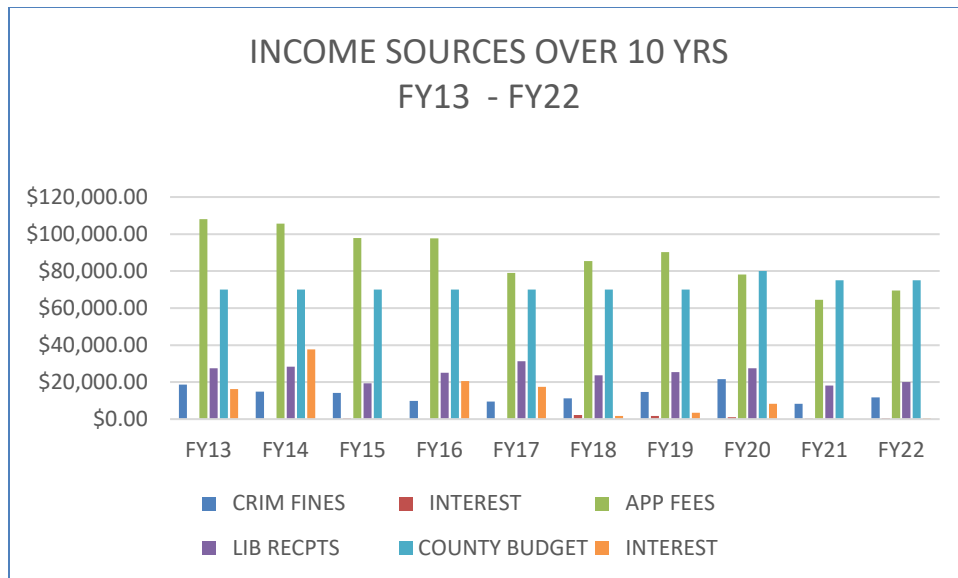
Funding

The law library is funded by a budget appropriation, appearance fees, criminal fines, bond forfeitures held beyond ten years and miscellaneous library receipts that include copies, print, faxes, used book sales, and court reporter charges for CDs. Many of the library's funding sources are unpredictable.

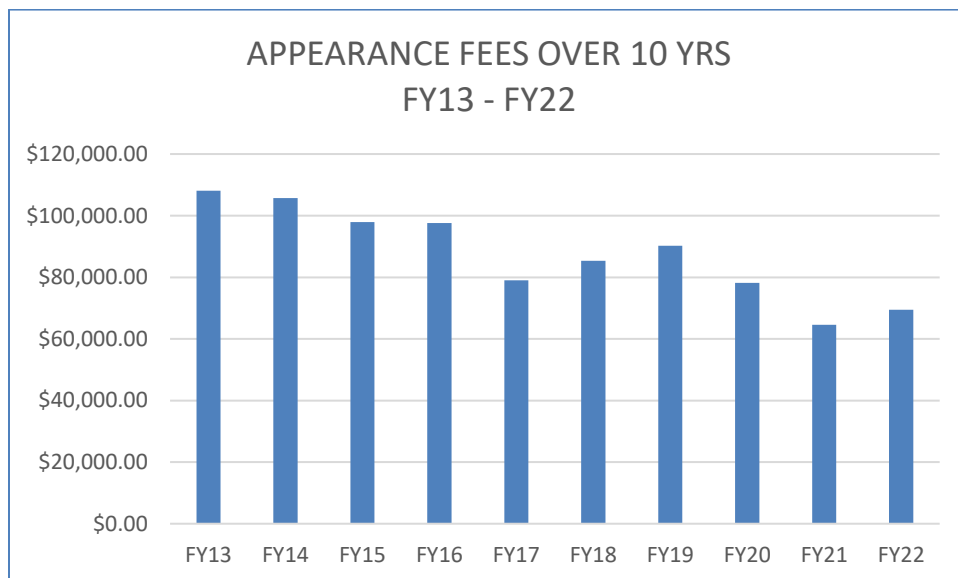


Income

Law library income has perhaps settled into a new normal. Overall income increased by 7%. Although income did increase this year, it is still 36% lower than it was ten years ago in FY13.

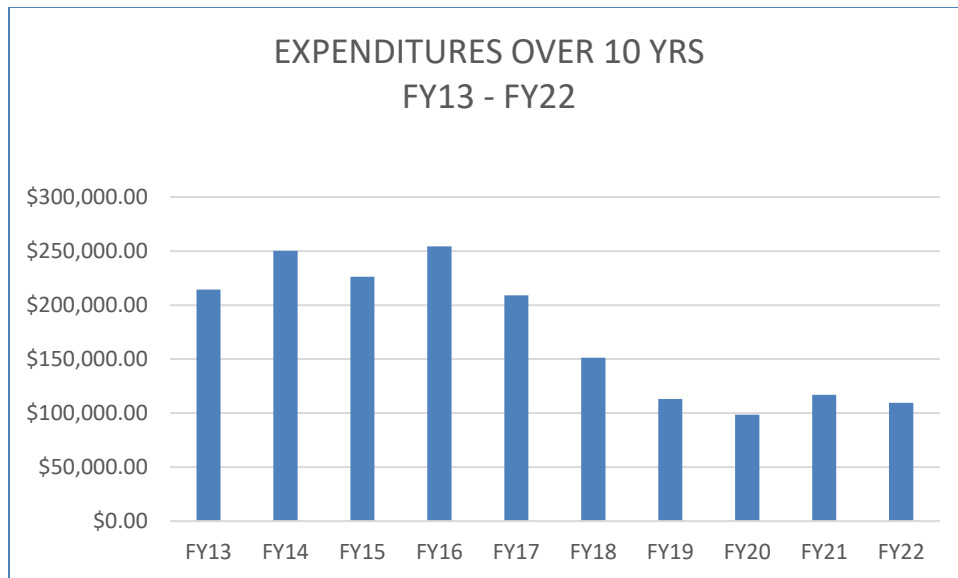


Until COVID, appearance fees were the law library's largest source of income. Although appearance fees did increase by 8% this year, like overall income, appearance fees are 36% lower than they were in FY13.



Expenditures

Law library expenditures decreased by 6% when compared to last year. If compared with ten years ago in FY13, expenditures decreased by 49%.



The law library's spending plan now relies more on digital resources with much of the print titles no longer updated. This allows for a robust collection with lower costs.

Additional expenses are expected next year to cover move related expenses for the law library and other court departments.

Return on Investment (ROI) – database costs

The library has converted most of the general U.S. titles from print to online using Westlaw and Lexis. The costs of these databases comprise 47% of library expenditures. These expenditures provide a \$5.50 return on investment for each dollar spent.

Strategic Plan: Status Report

The law library developed a strategic plan to make the best use of resources and to provide the highest quality of service to all who use the law library. The plan with goals and actions taken over the last year follows. Actions may address more than one goal as indicated by the numbers following each action.

GOALS

1. Provide access to justice

“The Maryland Judiciary ensures equal access to justice. The courts develop services and programs that facilitate access to and understanding of court processes.” To meet this GOAL, the Anne Arundel Public Law Library will:

- Provide cost-effective and equal access to legal information resources in multiple formats.
- Identify and respond to information needs of the judiciary and attorneys.
- Identify and respond to areas where self-represented litigants request assistance to legal information.
- Remove barriers that may prevent access to legal information and services.
- Ensure that people who come to our courts without a lawyer know that legal resources are available to them through the law library.
- Strengthen public awareness and understanding of the Judiciary through library resources and programs.
- Expand self-help programs and resources.
- Continue outreach through partnerships for such programs as the Lawyer in the Library program.

2. Be responsive and adaptable to changing community needs

“The Maryland Judiciary provides responsive leadership, ensures a respectful forum for justice, and proactively addresses the changing needs of its constituents

and employees. With the aim of helping families and our communities and, in particular, our most vulnerable citizens, children and seniors.” The AACPLL will:

- Retain a sufficient amount of print-based legal information to meet the needs of those with limited computer skills who access the courts.
- Wisely experiment with newer technologies, such as e-books, “discovery” tools (online catalog) and expanded databases.
- Provide access to resources to assist the non-attorney and self-represented litigant.
- Promote and use language access resources.

3. Communicate effectively with stakeholders

“The Maryland Judiciary communicates effectively to inform and educate the public, the bar, justice partners and staff.” The law library will:

- Provide legal research training to Judiciary staff, as needed.
- Provide programs for courthouse staff on legal resources available to the public.
- Provide training to the Anne Arundel County Public Law Library staff on legal research, reference, and referrals.
- Create and develop talks, open to the public and courthouse staff, on topics relating to “Everyday Law.”
- Provide information about library resources and referrals to local government departments and elected officials.
- Continue to partner with the local bar association, legal service providers and public libraries to provide “Lawyer in the Library” programs.
- Keep current and distribute law library information brochures.
- Create, update and distribute local legal referral information.
- Continue to work with the Anne Arundel County Local Pro Bono Committee to promote pro bono service by Anne Arundel attorneys.
- Promote library resources of interest to the court and bar through the use of varied communication methods.
- Create and maintain online information sources for the general public.

4. Improve systems and processes

“The Maryland Judiciary is forward-thinking and focused on continuous improvements to systems and processes, helping the courts to better serve the people and provide for prompt, efficient and just resolution of cases.” To achieve this GOAL, the law library will:

- Maintain Mutual Aid Agreements with other Maryland Law Libraries as part of the Court’s Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).
- Provide access to computers and programs needed for document creation and e-filing.
- Review and revise law library procedures as needed to meet the information needs of users.
- Coordinate with court IT so that technology needed to provide the services needed by all is available.

5. Be accountable

“The Maryland Judiciary holds itself to the highest standards of excellence and administers justice with diligence and integrity.” The action plan to reach this GOAL includes:

- Adhering to CMCLLD standards for library operation and resources.
- Providing reports to court administration on library operations.

6. Assure the highest level of service

Because a dedicated and professional workforce is essential to providing quality service to all, the Maryland Judiciary trains, develops and supports a professional and skilled workforce. Our action plans include:

- Providing the training needed for professional development of court library staff.
- Participating in continuing education.
- Participating in professional library and legal services organizations.
- Providing access to the information to meet the needs of all user communities.

7. Build partnerships

The Maryland Judiciary works collaboratively with its justice partners and the public to fulfill its mission. This action plan includes:

- Collaborating with the Anne Arundel Bar Association to promote pro bono in Anne Arundel County.
- Supporting the work of other court departments to ensure they have the information needed for the work of the department and those they serve.
- Collaborating with the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors in matters relating to the operation, management and leadership of the court libraries.
- Coordinating with the Judiciary's Access to Justice Department to enhance library programs and resources.
- Participating in the work of the Judicial Council Community Access and Community Relations Committee SRL Sub-Committee to provide the perspective of court law libraries.
- Communicating with the Maryland Access to Justice Commission to ensure awareness of law library programs and resources.
- Working with the Anne Arundel County Public Library to expand law library services and programs.
- Developing and continuing partnerships with Maryland legal service providers to provide services to those of low and middle income.
- Collaborating with Maryland Center for Legal Assistance (MCLA) to coordinate legal information resources needed to support the Family Law Help Center.
- Participating in the work of the American Association of Law Libraries and its Special Interest Sections; the Self Represented Litigation Network Law Librarians Working Group; the Law Library Association of Maryland; and the Maryland Library Association.
- Collaborating with Civil Justice, Inc. to provide access to Maryland Justice Passports.

8. Use resources wisely

The Maryland Judiciary uses public funds wisely to assure sufficient resources for personnel, facilities, programs, equipment and technology, all with the aim of

efficiently administering justice and providing exceptional public service. This action plan includes:

- Providing transparent budgeting processes.
- Leveraging additional assistance through the use of library interns and volunteers.
- Sharing resources through inter-library loan and document delivery.
- Assessing resources for relevancy to the needs of all user groups.
- Working with vendors to maximize library material/resource dollars.

ACTIONS

- The law library provides online family law form packets to support the work of the Family Court Help Center. The packets include links to online forms as listed in results of the [mdcourts.gov](#) forms finder as well as links to online articles and listings of resources in the law library. [\(1, 2, 6, 7\)](#)
- The law library continues to offer the Lawyer in the Library Program remotely in partnership with the Anne Arundel County Public Library. The program is held every Wednesday from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. and on the third Wednesday from 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. [\(1, 2, 6, 7\)](#)
- The law library maintains a Virtual Reference Desk to better serve library users remotely. [\(1, 2, 6\)](#)
- The law library creates the online nomination form and compiles results for the AABA President’s Pro Bono Award, a project of the Anne Arundel County Local Pro Bono Committee. [\(1, 7\)](#)
- Joan Bellistri with CMCLLD members in conjunction with the Maryland Access to Justice Commission continued to virtually present “Law on the Frontlines: Resources for Public Library Reference” and in-person at the Maryland Library Association/Delaware Library Association Conference in May 2022. [\(1, 2, 3, 7\)](#)

- Joan Bellistri was a presenter for the Anne Arundel and Prince George's County public libraries Entrepreneur Academy Webinar providing information on legal resources to members of the public. ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [7](#))
- A JIS networked computer is available in the law library for access to MDEC and Thurgood Marshall State Law Library resources. ([2](#), [4](#), [8](#))
- Law library maintains a SharePoint site providing information on resources available to the court. ([3](#), [6](#))
- Continued to maintain and distribute the Pro Bono Services Directory and the law library brochure to the court information desk and online. QR codes were added. ([3](#), [6](#))
- Law library maintained legal information [FAQ pages](#) on the [AACPLL Self Help and Pro Bono Wiki](#) and published [Law Library News](#) via the blog. ([3](#), [6](#))
- The online catalog is being updated with the addition of records for all primary sources, current and historic to the [library online catalog](#) so that all library resources are discoverable. ([1](#), [2](#), [5](#), [6](#), [8](#))
- Financial reports provided quarterly to court administration. ([5](#))
- Joan Bellistri as a member of the Partners for Justice program planning committee coordinated and moderated a program for the 2022 Conference. ([6](#), [7](#))
- Joan Bellistri and Sarah Green maintained membership in professional organizations including the American Association of Law Libraries, the Law Library Association of Maryland, the Maryland Library Association, the Special Library Association and the Self Represented Litigation Network. ([6](#))
- Pro bono hours incurred by Lawyer in the Library volunteers are compiled and sent to the lawyers in time for their annual reporting. ([4](#), [7](#))

- Joan Bellistri is a member of the Judicial Council Court Access and Community Relations Committee SRL Sub-committee. She is also the public member of the Court of Appeals Standing Committee on Pro Bono. ([7](#))
- Worked with vendors and county purchasing to negotiate a new contract for Lexis. ([8](#))
- The law library partnered with the Maryland Justice Passport to assist in creating passports. ([1](#), [7](#))
- Law library participated in the court's new law clerk orientation by providing information on resources available to chambers. ([3](#), [6](#))
- The law library hosted an Anne Arundel County Community College paralegal program intern. ([7](#), [8](#))

Goals / Conclusion

The law library continued to provide quality service to all library users. As the court returns to normal operations, the law library has not seen the traffic it once enjoyed pre-COVID.

In response, the law library seeks to increase awareness of its services through the implementation of the law library's Marketing and Outreach Plan. Increased outreach using traditional methods and social media seeks to increase library use both in-person and remotely.

It is hoped that the law library will relocate to a more accessible space that includes the Family Court Help Center to better provide the information and referrals needed.

The law library will update and revise the strategic plan to guide the law library in the coming years to make the best use of resources and to provide the highest quality of service to all who use the law library.