AACPLL

access to justice through access to legal information Report of the

Anne Arundel County Public Law Library

FISCAL YEAR 2023

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Anne Arundel County Public Law Library Anne Arundel County Circuit Court July 2022 – June 2023

Vision access to justice through access to legal information

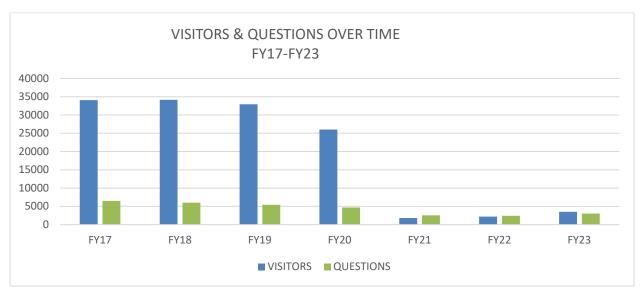
Mission The Anne Arundel County Public Law Library serves the needs of Anne Arundel County's court, attorneys, government, and citizens by providing access to legal information resources; promoting access to these resources; creating educational opportunities that enhance the understanding of legal information;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

Introduction

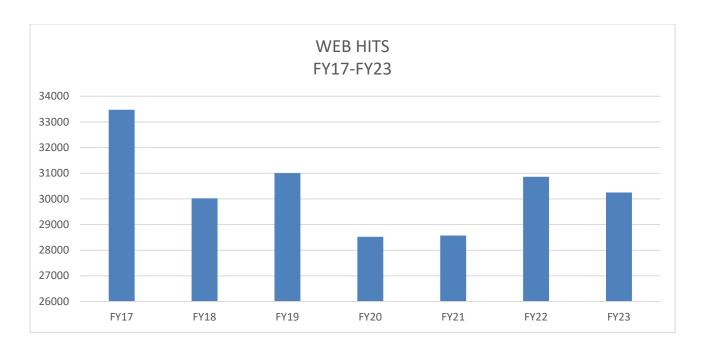
This report provides a picture of library use, programs, resources, services, staff, and finances. The strategic plan with goals and actions taken is included.

Use Statistics FY2023

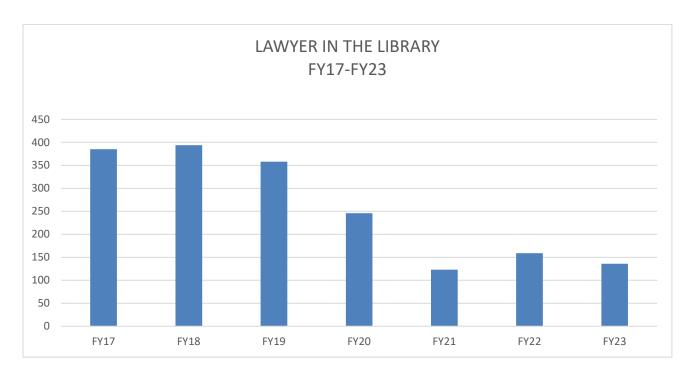




The number of questions increased 58.5% and the number of visitors increased by 24.4%. Library use has increased but still not to pre-covid levels.

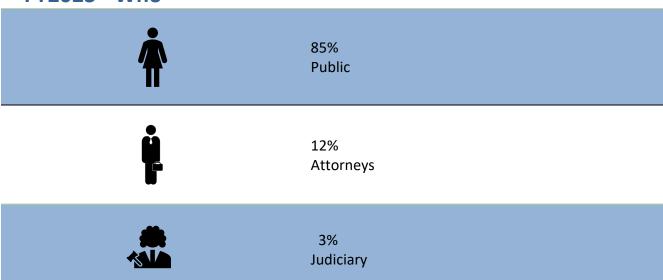


Online access remained steady with a slight decrease in library related web hits.

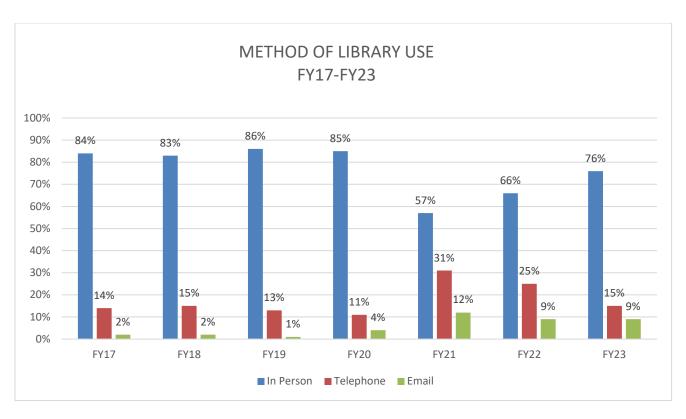


The Lawyer in the Library program assisted 136 people this year. The number of people served is still lower compared to pre-COVID numbers. The program is still remote only.

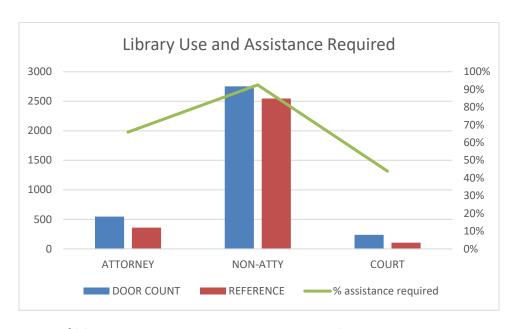
FY2023 - Who



FY 2023 - How	
Ļ	76% In Person
	15% Phone
	9% Email

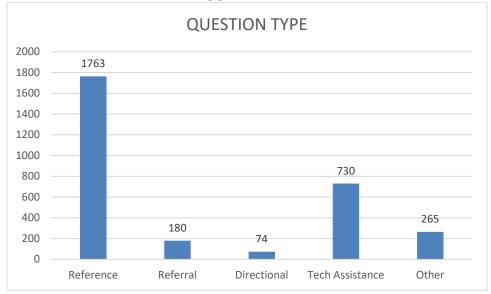


In-person use has increased by 42.5% when compared with FY22. This is still a 58% decrease when compared with FY17.



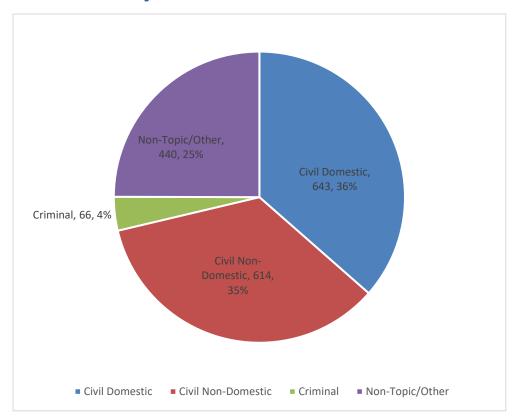
85% of library users are non-attorneys and require more assistance than court and attorney user groups.

FY2023 - Question Type



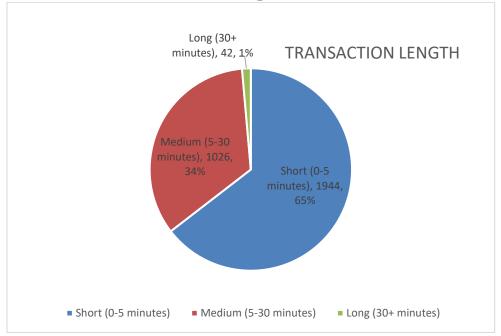
59% OF QUESTIONS ARE REFERENCE

FY2023 – Subject Matter

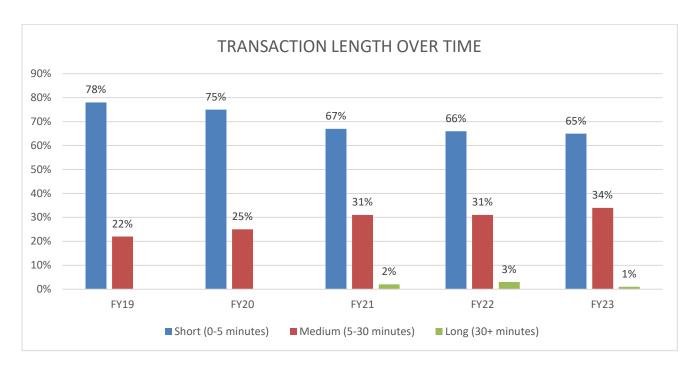


71% OF QUESTIONS INVOLVE CIVIL ISSUES

FY2023 - Transaction Length



65% OF
TRANSACTIONS
TAKE 5
MINUTES OR
LESS



The percentage of questions that take longer than 5 minutes has increased again this year.

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. Move planning continued for the anticipated move in late summer or fall of 2023. The new space will bring the Family Court Help Center back into the library space after three years. We have been planning the space and thinking of improved ways to serve those visiting the law library and/or FCHC. Planning Includes adding links to information on the increased number of public library computers that will be in the new space. With the new space the law library will be better positioned to serve the court, attorneys, and the public.

Cataloging Project

Sarah Green continued to catalog the historic collection - reducing the number of historic primary resource titles to be cataloged to under fifty. This project that has added electronic resources and records for all primary sources, current and historic, to the <u>library online catalog</u> ensures that all library resources are discoverable.

Library Services

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 allow users to search databases with librarian assistance in real time remotely.

The law library maintains a <u>Virtual Reference Desk</u> for easy access to remote library services. The limited space in the temporary location makes remote service an even better option.

The law library provides access to legal databases and online programs. They include Westlaw, Lexis, the National Consumer Law Center, Nolo Legal Information Reference Center, SasiCalc, VitalLaw, HeinOnline and West Academic. As a result, most all print titles once found in the original library space are available in the temporary – much smaller – space.

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

The law library serves the bar with:

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

Thank you again for all of your help with the legislative/regulatory history research. As promised, I've attached the filed addenda of libraries to keep hard copies of old records.

This is extremely helpful!

This is extremely helpful!

I was able to find quite a

bit of general

information after I

information after I

contacted you and what

contacted you and what

complements what I

complements what I

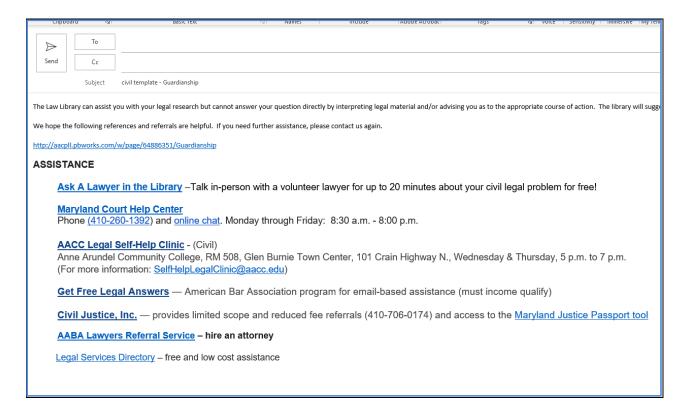
have found.

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 <u>AACPLL BLOG – Law Library News</u> is one of the methods that the law library uses to reach users online. This year posts included Lawyer in the Library program summaries, pro bono news, new Maryland laws, new books added, and reviews of new and established library resources. Topical posts covered emergency relief, the United States Supreme Court, and banned books.

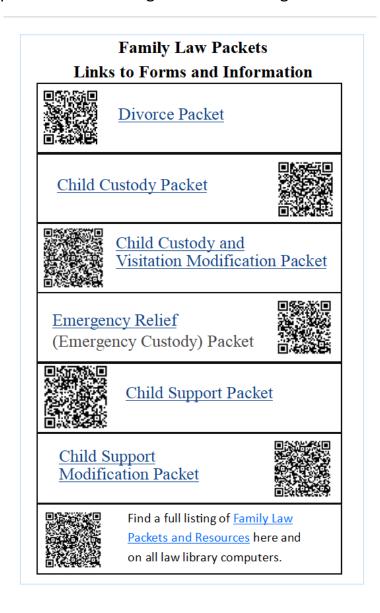
The law library uses email FAQ templates for family law and civil issues in order to respond to the remote requests of self-represented litigants more efficiently. The templates provide links to the <u>Wiki FAQs</u> and <u>Family Law Resources</u> as well as <u>legal assistance referrals</u>. The templates can also be used as handouts for inperson library users.



Civil template topics include mandamus, administrative appeals, landlord/tenant, and power of attorney.

Family law packet templates cover divorce, child support, child custody, guardianship, and name change.

<u>Wiki FAQs</u> 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 <u>AACPLL Self Help and Pro Bono WIKI</u>. **Library FAQs and Family Law Resource Packets** were revised as handouts with QR Codes last year. This year a **Family Law Packet Poster with QR CODES** was created in anticipation of collocating with the FCHC again.



The Clerk of Court **Cheat Sheet** was updated. The Civil Department of the Clerk of the Court's Office has an internal referral "Cheat Sheet" that is sometimes used as a handout for the public. The law library had noticed that some of the information there was outdated and offered to update. The law library will make revisions as needed in the future.



A legal referral display was created. When a leak in the cooling unit in the AABA office across the hall resulted in extra furniture outside of the library, we were able to take advantage and use that furniture to display legal referral information.



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 in partnership with the Anne Arundel Public Library and the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service, every Wednesday from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

The Lawyer in the Library program discontinued the monthly evening program so

I am very grateful for the time the lawyer afforded way of explaining things. It hope the library is able to

as not conflict with the new in-person AACC Paralegal Program Legal Clinic held on Wednesday and Thursday evenings. The Lawyer in the Library was heavily used when held in-person at the Glen Burnie Library, but the remote format was not used as much there. The law library has collaborated with the AACC Paralegal Program in establishing this new service in Anne Arundel County.

Maryland Justice Passport

The Maryland Justice Passport is a project of the Maryland Judiciary, Civil Justice, and A2J Tech. 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 and promoting passports. The law library can provide the technology, access to computers and scanners, for passport creation. The library made 18 specific Passport referrals this year.

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 <u>AACPLL Self Help and Pro Bono WIKI</u>. 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 was shared by Denise Wolf and Sarah Green until Sarah left for another position in May of 2023. Jeff Ross returned to help at that time.

There have been thirteen different people in the assistant law librarian position since the permanent position became contractual in 2011. 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 online legal reference training to public librarians with presentations of "Law on the Frontlines: Resources for Public Library Reference."

Joan Bellistri proposed, coordinated, and moderated a program, Law on the Frontlines: Libraries as Partners in Access to Justice, for the Partners for Justice Conference held May 25, 2023. The program that discussed how libraries can support their organization's mission and expand program reach; public and court library partnerships for such programs as Lawyer in the Library and Maryland Justice Passport access and creation; and how training public library staff in the use of legal information and referrals can expand access to justice was well received.



The panel included Catherine McGuire, Deputy Director of the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library; Sarah Mullen, Librarian at the Anne Arundel County Public Library Eastport-Annapolis Neck Library; and Reena Shah, Executive Director of the Maryland Access to Justice Commission.

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 Ligation Network's Law Librarians Working Group to create a national survey of law library services to the Self represented Litigant (SRL) that will update the 2019 survey and collect information on the effects of the pandemic on law library service to the SRL. The Survey was launched in the spring of 2023.

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
 - o 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)
 - o Best Access to Justice Practices Committee, 2021-2023 (Chair, 2022 -2023)
- 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)
- Access to Justice Commission Public Library Training Workgroup, 2016 present

Presentations – Joan Bellistri

- "Law on the Frontlines: Resources for Public Library Reference," Online Webinar, ongoing
- "Law on the Frontlines: Libraries as Partners in Access to Justice," Partners for Justice Conference, 5/25/2023

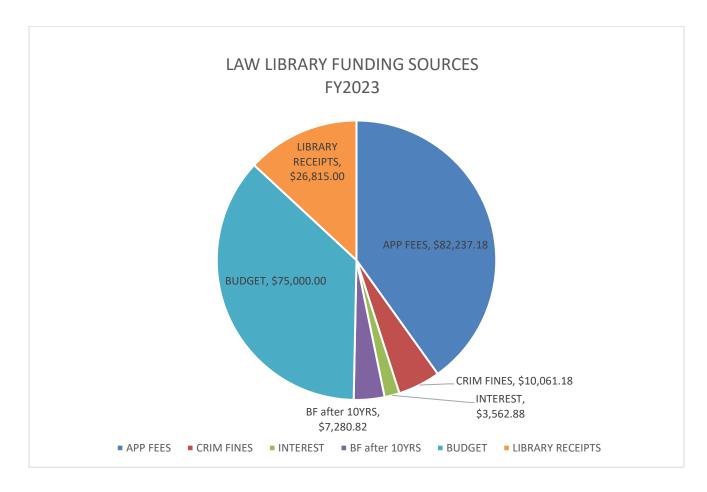
Memberships – Sarah Green

- 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

Law Library Financial Report FY2023

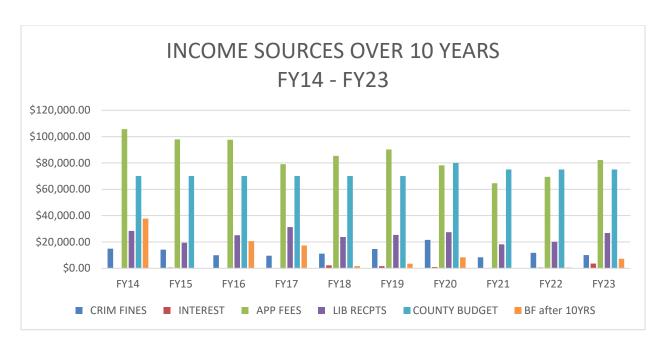
Funding

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.

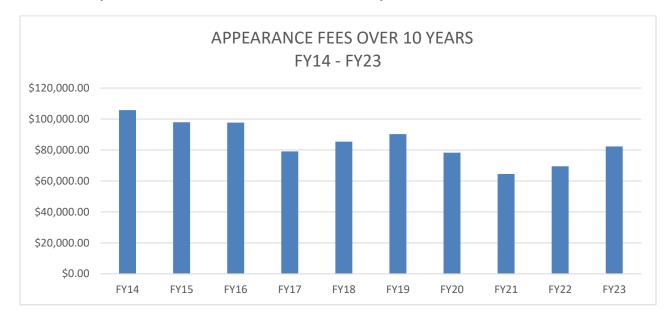


Income

Income increased by 15% this year. Although income did increase this year, it is 20% lower than it was ten years ago in FY14.



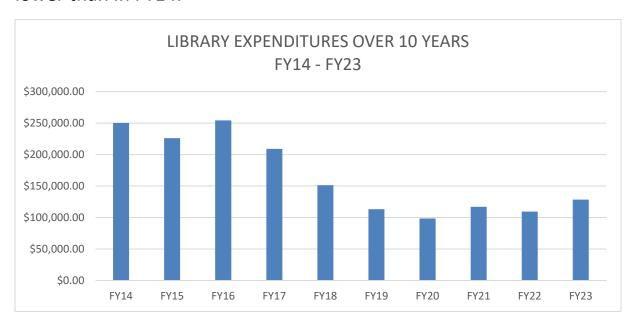
Until COVID, appearance fees were the law library's largest source of income and that is true again this year. Appearance fees increased by 18% this year but are 22% lower than they were in FY14.



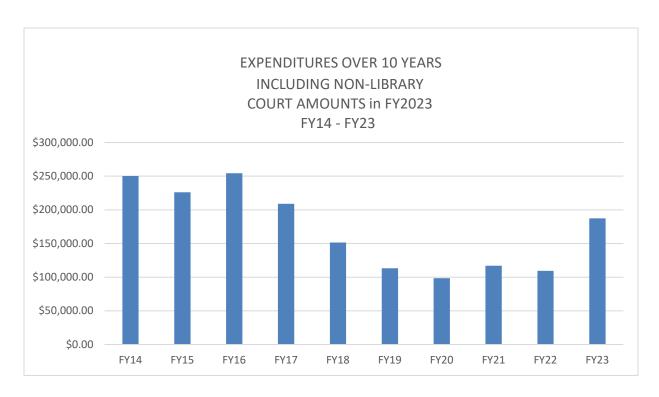
Expenditures

Law library expenditures increased by 17% when compared to last year. This increase is attributable to the increase in cost of updating existing

library materials and subscriptions. However, expenditures are still 49% lower than in FY14.



There were additional non-library expenses this year. Funds were used to cover move related expenses for the law library and other courthouse projects. Still, even with the increased non-library expenditures, the amount is still 25% less than 10 years ago.



Audit

In June of 2023 the law library, with other court departments, prepared for the Judiciary's audit.

Return on Investment (ROI) – database costs

The conversion of much of the law library's United States collection to a digital format on Westlaw and Lexis has resulted in lower costs and a more efficient use of space without sacrificing access to the excellent content that has been offered and expected over the years.

The costs of these databases comprise 44% of library expenditures. These expenditures provide a \$5.00 return on investment for each dollar spent.

Goals / Conclusion

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

Goals for the next Fiscal Year include:

- Complete cataloging of historic collection and re-organize the area dedicated to house this collection.
- Continue work as chair of the American Association of Law Libraries
 Government Law Libraries Best Practices for Access to Justice Committee,
 with the Self-Represented Ligation Network's Law Librarians Working
 Group, to produce the report resulting from the national Survey of Law
 Library Services to the SRL.
- Create multiple methods for Family Court Help Center visitors to find information pertinent to their issues by creating displays of information and form checklists in addition to the online curated information.

• 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.

The law library is ready to move to its new space and looks forward to increased visibility and improved library service to the court, attorneys, and the public.

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 selfrepresented 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 probono 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 Court 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.
- Retain and maintain the historic code collection for legislative history research.

ACTIONS

- The law library provides and maintains 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 information and listings of resources in the law library. Packets include QR codes. (1, 2, 6, 7
- A Family Law Resource poster with QR codes with links to the online family law form packets was created. (1, 2, 3,4,7
- The law library updated the Clerk of Court Cheat Sheet. (1, 2, 3, 7
- The law library added a legal referral display. (1, 2, 3, 4
- Joan Bellistri as chair of the American Association of Law Libraries
 Government Law Libraries Best Practices for Access to Justice Committee,
 worked with the Self-Represented Ligation Network's Law Librarians
 Working Group to create a national survey of law library services to the Self
 represented Litigant (SRL). (1, 3, 7)
- Joan Bellistri proposed, coordinated, and moderated a program, Law on the Frontlines: Libraries as Partners in Access to Justice, for the Partners for Justice Conference held May 25, 2023. (1, 3, 6, 7
- The law library continues to offer the Lawyer in the Library Program remotely in partnership with the Anne Arundel County Public Library and the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (MVLS). The program is held every Wednesday from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 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*. (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 are included. (3, 6
- Law library maintained legal information <u>FAQ pages</u> on the <u>AACPLL Self</u> <u>Help and Pro Bono Wiki</u> and published <u>Law Library News</u> 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 <u>library online catalog</u> so that all library resources are discoverable. (1, 2, 5, 6, 8
- Financial reports provided quarterly to court administration. (5
- 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
- The law library partnered with the Maryland Justice Passport to assist in creating and promoting passports. (1, 7)
- Law library participated in the court's new law clerk orientation by providing information on resources available to chambers. (3, 6