

2023



MINNESOTA STATE LAW LIBRARY ANNUAL REPORT

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2023 Highlights

Mayflower Compact

In March the Minnesota State Law Library hosted the ABA's traveling exhibit "Join In! The Rise of Self-Governance and American Organizing from the Mayflower Compact to the Modern Day." The library also hosted a CLE on this topic - *History of the Mayflower Compact and its impact on U.S. Law*. The presenter was Julia L. Ernst, Associate Dean for Teaching and Engagement and Professor at the University of North Dakota School of Law. She is the author of the law review article "The Mayflower Compact: Celebrating Four Hundred Years of Influence on U.S. Democracy".

New Historic Court Rules Database

The law library created an online database of [historic court rules](#). The content, for most types of court rules, goes back to 1980. The court rules versions were obtained from the Revisor of Statute's Office.

New Book Club

In November the State Law Library launched its new noontime book club for the Minnesota Judicial Center. 17 people attended the first meeting, and the discussion was lively and thought provoking. Several participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to connect with colleagues. Participants declared a strong preference to read fiction books "not related to law". 53 people are included on the distribution list and individuals attend when their schedules permit. The club meets roughly every other month.

Justice Stringer Career Book Presentment

In 2023, the State Law Library completed the volume entitled "The Legal and Judicial Career of Justice Edward C. Stringer". On October 17, 2023 the book was presented to Justice Stringer and the Supreme Court at a court ceremony in the Capitol courtroom. Retired Associate Justice Paul Anderson and retired Associate Justice Sam Hanson spoke at the event. The event was live streamed and recorded. The recording can be found here - <https://mncourts.libguides.com/stringer/bookceremony>.



State Law Librarian Liz Reppe presents Associate Justice (ret.) Edward C. Stringer with his book. Associate Justice (ret.) Paul Anderson and Associate Justice (ret.) Sam Hanson look on.

Court of Appeals 40th Anniversary exhibits

Erica Nutzman and Sarah Larsen created a physical display and [digital exhibit](#) to commemorate and document the Court of Appeals 40th anniversary. The library obtained materials from the Court of Appeals and the Minnesota Historical Society to include in the display. Many items were scanned and made available online.

Douglas Hedin bequest

Attorney Douglas Hedin, who died in March 2023, named the State Law Library in his estate. He left the library the following:

- Collection of biographies of U.S. Supreme Court justices
- \$20,000 – to be used for legal history materials
- Minnesota Legal History Project website - www.minnesotalegalhistoryproject.org/

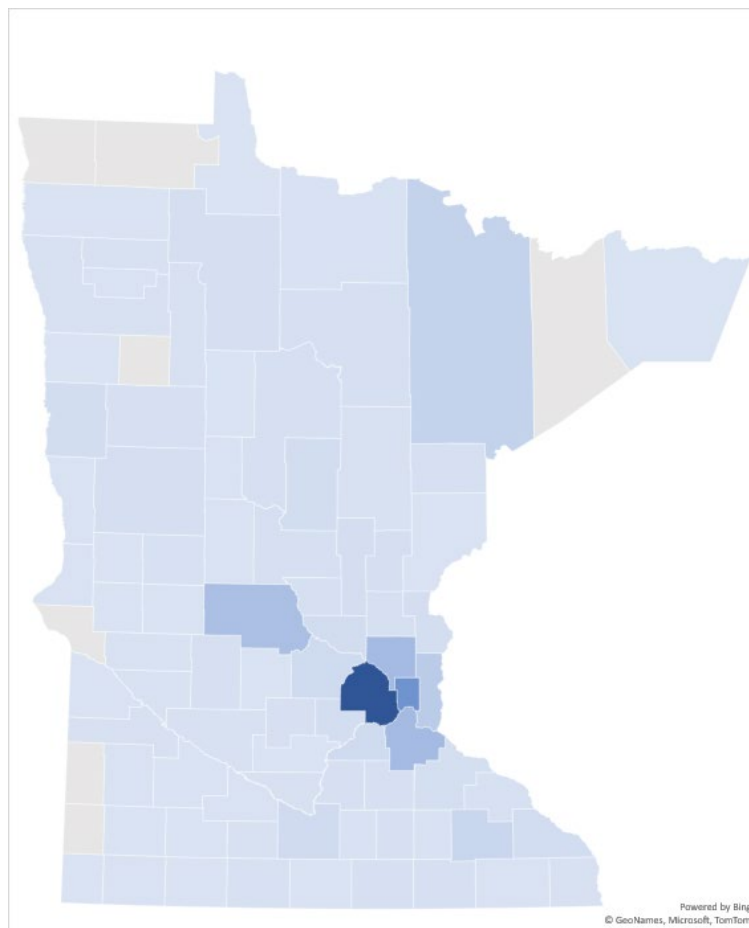
The library is grateful for these gifts.

Assisting our Patrons

Answering Questions

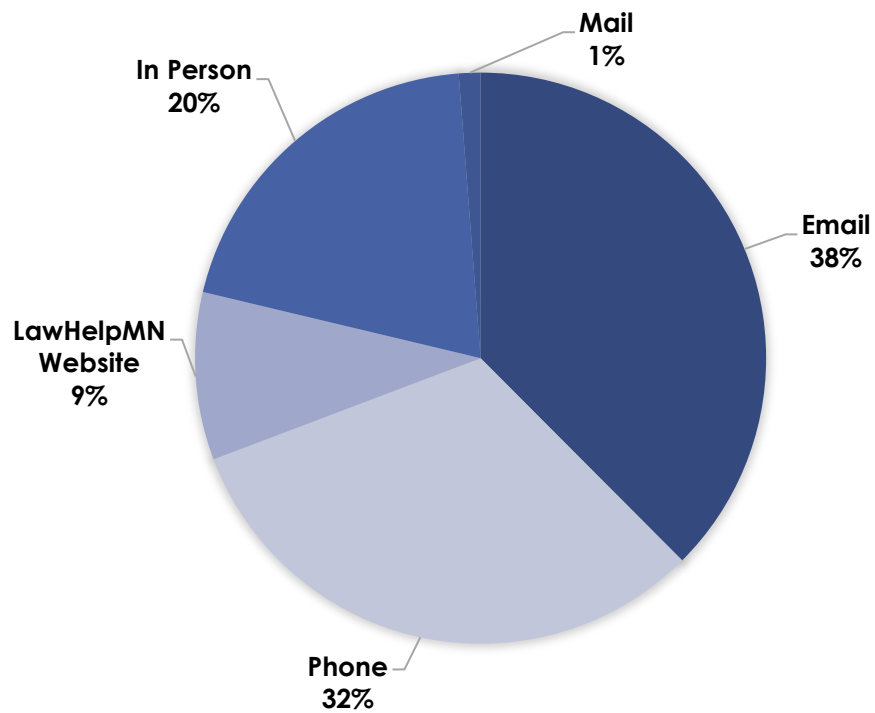
Our patrons can contact us in person, via phone, chat, email, and mail. We try to serve people in the manner that they prefer. In 2023, the reference librarians answered over 9,500 questions.

The State Law Library strives to provide statewide service. The library can determine which county a patron is in for many questions that are received via email. (Either in emails that are initiated by clicking on "Ask a Librarian" on our website and emails coming from LawHelpMN.org.) The image below demonstrates that in 2023 the library received email questions from almost every county in the state. While seven counties are shown in grey, it is possible that residents of those counties did receive assistance from the law library by calling the library or sending an email directly to our specific email address (askalibrarian@courts.state.mn.us).

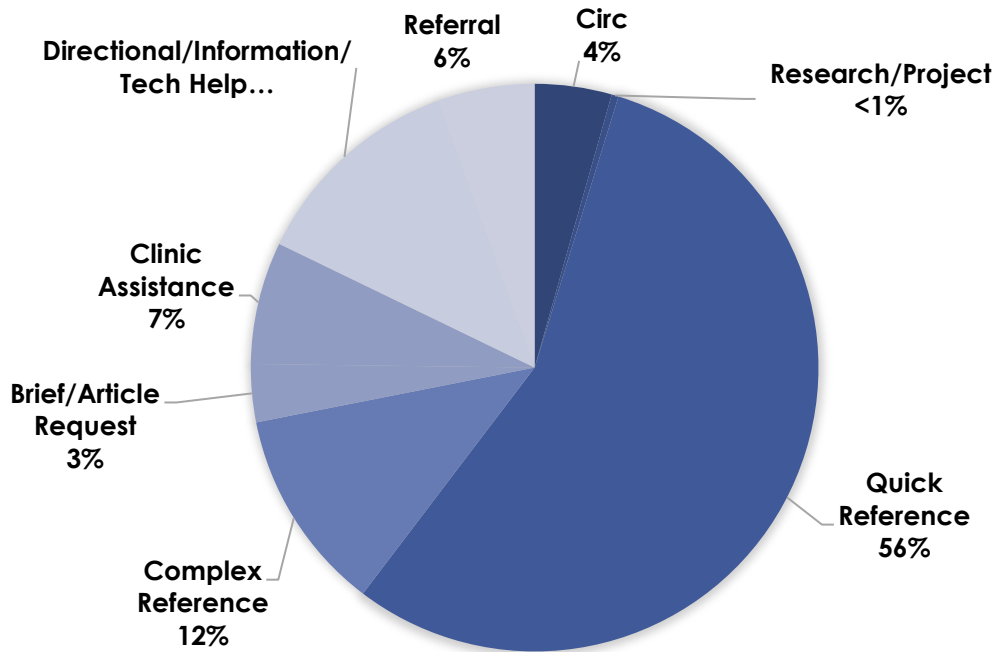


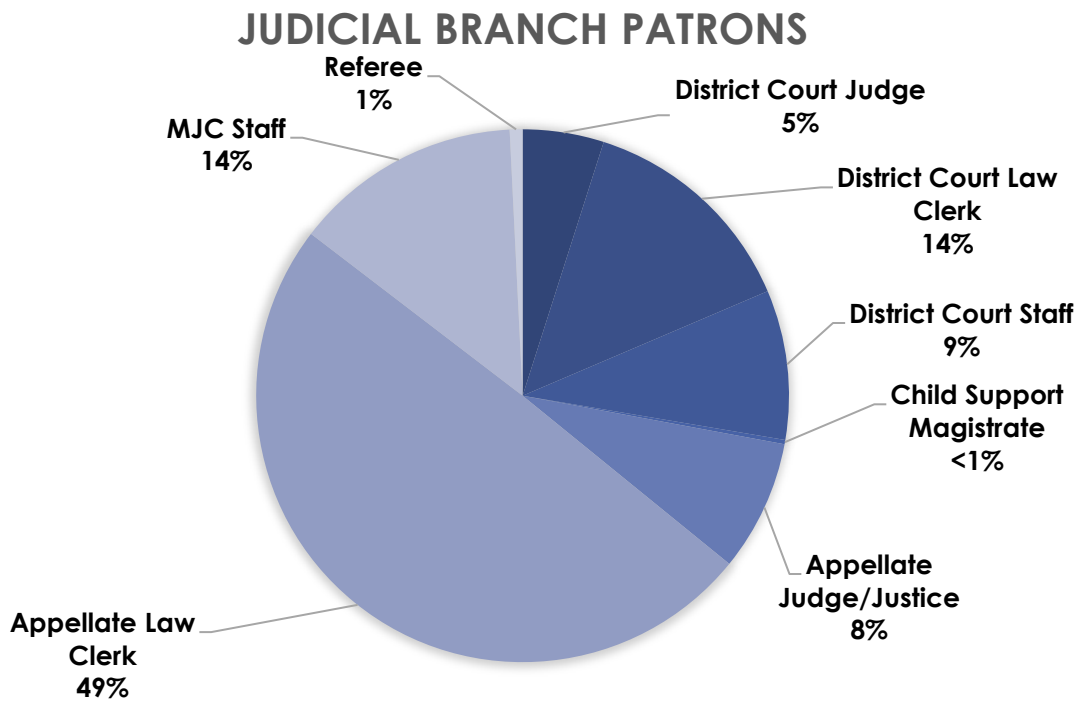
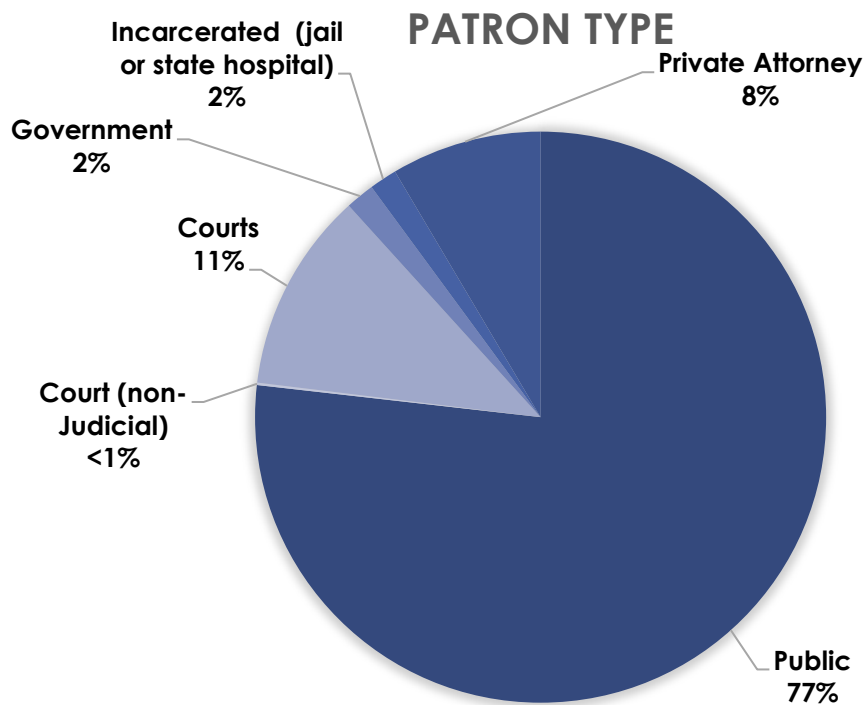
Counties from which the library received emails in 2023

HOW QUESTIONS WERE RECEIVED



QUESTION TYPE





Topics of Questions Asked	Percentage
Legal Research	17.4
Appeals	14.4
Family Law	11.0
Probate and Estate Planning	9.8
Criminal Law/Traffic	6.7
Landlord/Tenant	6.3
Court Records	4.7
General Civil	4.1
Court Process	3.1
Homeowners/Real Estate	2.9
Employment	2.6
Brief Request	2.5
Conciliation Court	2.0
OFP/HRO	1.8
Article Request	1.6
Consumer Issue	1.2
Juvenile Court	1.2
Civil/Human Rights	1.1
Bankruptcy/Creditor/Debtor, Name Change, Business, Government Benefits, Attorney/Judge Complaints, Tax, Immigration, Other	Each topic accounted for 1% or less

A Sampling of Interesting Questions

- I would like to inquire information about where I can turn to, which authority, office or government agency in the following case: A deceased US citizen, MN resident has co-ownership of a real estate property here in Europe. The inheritors, who are also US citizens and residents, should initiate a legal procedure at the local land registration authority in Europe for their estate and their ownership to be legally acknowledged and registered. We unsuccessfully tried to contact the family several times, as they have not responded our e-mails. My question would be, is there any supervisory authority for estate procedures in MN that I can turn to so that they could contact the inheritors/heirs officially?
- My name is [removed], and live in Norway. I am doing some research about my family who emigrated from Norway to Minnesota, in US back in 1892. My two family members got married in Lac Qui Parle, Minnesota, 17.11.1892. And I believe this ceremony took place in the county courthouse. I can't find the info in the church book. Do you have this kind of information paper in your library? If not, how or where can I get this type of information papers?
- I live inside the city, in a close neighborhood, and a neighbor's bee hives were compromised and I have a brown tornado of bees that looks like its riding waves in my backyard. My question is, are you allowed to keep bees in local neighborhoods, with small yards? I have neighbors freaking out because they and their kids are allergic.

- Just reaching out in regards to getting house records of any deaths at my property that I own and live in.
- Do I need a license to include mini alcohol bottle as part of a gift set for sale at a flower shop?
- I am seeking assistance with a research question concerning employer provided housing. Specifically, I'm trying to locate cases, secondary sources, or statutes concerning issues that may arise with employer-provided or employer-owned housing that is leased to employees.
- Is there any law requiring landlords to install medicine cabinets?
- In 1971, the state legislature created two lake conservation districts in Minnesota; Lake Minnetonka CD and the White Bear Lake CD. I was wondering who has legislative oversight of these two entities such as legislative committees, chairs of these committees, state agencies, etc.?
- What capacity level is necessary for an individual to sign a retainer agreement?
- I'm having trouble finding the statute that includes the provision of what the news calls "Clean Slate Act". Is there a table that cross references an act's given name and the statute section placed in?
- Is it against the law for a man to commit adultery?
- I represent a commercial tenant. At an eviction hearing yesterday the parties agreed tenant will move out of the premises next week. However, my company has changed its mind and would like to stay. It seems that there is a right of redemption in state law - 504B.291. I called the self help desk at Washington County and the state and they both did not know how it worked. Any guidance on how this procedure works would be greatly appreciated.
- What is the law on employers suspending individual without pay for cannabis use on their own time? My random drug test was positive for THC.
- My parents died several years ago in St. Louis County and they had their assets in a trust which we were able to settle without going to probate. I have come to learn that there is a small outstanding stock account in my parents' name and in order to close that account, I need a court appointment naming me as representative of my parents' estate. How do I apply to the probate court to acquire the court appointment? Do I need to do this in St. Louis County where they died, or can I do this in Hennepin County where I live?

Appellate Self-Help Clinics

Cases with at least one pro se party constituted 26% of all filings to the Court of Appeals in 2023. To assist, the State Law Library offers two appellate self-help clinics. The general [Appeals Self-Help Clinic](#) is offered once per month. In 2023, the clinic assisted 166 people. The top two types of cases seen at the clinic were family law (35%) and general civil (28%). In December a full representation option was added to the clinic. Clinic attorneys now have the option to refer clinic customers to a separate group for possible full representation on the appeal. This group is coordinated by the Fredricksen law firm. Someone from their office sends referred cases to the panel and coordinates matching cases with attorneys. In 2023 two people were referred for full representation and both were picked up by an attorney volunteer.

The State Law Library also continues to offer an [Unemployment Appeals Self-Help Clinic](#) twice per month to assist people appealing a denial of unemployment benefits Court of Appeals. 2023 marked the ten-year anniversary of this clinic. In 2023 the clinic assisted 34 people. The vast majority of these types of appeals (87%) involve an unrepresented party.

Probate Clinic

The law library's Probate Clinic was started in October 2022, in conjunction with the Probate, Trusts and Estates Section of the Minnesota State Bar Association. The clinic offers brief legal advice for simple probate process questions. It is a phone clinic, so it is available to people statewide. Issues not covered are guardianship/conservatorship, tax, medical assistance, and questions about the law in other states. Due to demand for appointments, a second attorney slot was added in June, and in August a third slot was added. 96 people were assisted by the clinic in 2023.

Online Presence

Website

Our [legal research guides](#) had 230,127 views total, a 14% increase in views from 2022. The five most popular guides in 2023 were Homeowners/Real Estate; Appeals; Neighbor Law; Child Custody and Parenting Time; Wills, Trusts and Estate Planning.

Opinion and Briefs Archives

Since 1996, the State Law Library has provided an online, [searchable database](#) of appellate court decisions. In 2023, the library added 1,038 opinions to the database.

The library also maintains a [searchable database](#) of appellate briefs from precedential Minnesota Court of Appeals and Supreme Court cases. Comprehensive coverage goes back to 2002, and staff adds additional older briefs or briefs from non-precedential cases as requested. Last year library staff added 1,710 briefs to the online archive. The database is complete back to 651 N.W.2d.

Social Media

The library now has 538 [Facebook](#) followers. The library's [X \(Twitter\) feed](#) has 1,395 followers.

Current Awareness

Each month, the State Law Library compiles a list of articles of interest to the courts and distributes the articles to all members of the Judicial Branch via email. The library also sends out a [list of new books](#) each month.

Interlibrary Loan

The State Law Library provides an interlibrary loan service for the Judicial Branch. This includes both books and journal articles. In 2023, the library obtained 59 items for the court and loaned 60 items to other libraries.

Continuing Legal Education

The State Law Library offers [free CLEs](#) for the judicial branch and other interested attorneys. In 2023, the library hosted twelve public CLE programs (10 standard credits and 2 elimination of bias credits). The library also offers several CLEs for on-demand credit via its website. This has been a popular feature. The library had 19 CLEs available for on-demand credit during 2023. 1,792 lawyers reported attendance for these courses (for a total 8,739 total CLE credits).

Judicial Law Clerk Assistance

The library communicates to the court's law clerks via a quarterly law clerk newsletter and has a dedicated law clerk assistance email account. It is a popular service, and the library regularly gets emails from law clerks all over the state. (35 counties in 2023!)

Liz Reppe and Sarah Larsen taught several training sessions for the new appellate law clerks on how to conduct Minnesota legislative history research. In addition, Sarah Larsen provided training for the new appellate clerks on the Minnesota legal resources available at the State Law Library.

Sarah Larsen presented a CLE webinar on "Minnesota Legal Research" to district court clerks in August. In November, she presented a CLE on Minnesota legislative history research for district court clerks. She also coordinated a CLE training on ethics for law clerks in October.

Kudos

The State Law Library aims to provide excellent service to all our patrons. We appreciate knowing if we are succeeding. Below is a sampling of feedback we have received.

- I would like to express my appreciation to all those who work at the Law Library and particularly to you and others who answer the questions we pose. I have never experienced a more diligent, helpful, and expedient response group than the people of Minnesota State Law Library. *~member of the public*
- I just want to say "thank you." The selection of articles that you share is always very interesting. Sadly, I rarely find time to read as many as I would like. But it's great to have the option! *~district court judge*
- Thank you so much for all of your help, truly. I had very little idea of where to start looking for these orders, and I appreciate you showing me how to find them. *~appellate court clerk*
- Thank you SO much again for all your help!! I look forward to coming back any time I'm in great need for research help! *~district court law clerk*
- This is EXACTLY what I was looking for—thank you! *~MJC staff*
- Thanks again! You provide such a nice service! *~private attorney*

- I love librarians. Thanks again for everything. You guys get back to me so quickly. This will help me out a lot. *~member of the public*
- I just wanted to take a moment to tell you that as an avid reader, I always look forward to the "new books" email! *~district court clerk*
- I have greatly appreciated all the support and help the State Law Library staff has given to me this year. You are truly such a helpful and crucial asset for the court and the law clerks. Thank you so much! *~appellate court law clerk*
- Thank you for the quick response. This is unique issue and area of the law, with little case law. *~district court judge*
- Wow, I NEVER would have found this on my own! After wasting HOURS bumbling around the court of appeals site, it took me all of 3 minutes (yes, i timed myself!) to find it following your instructions. THANK YOU *~member of the public*
- Thanks - once again your responsiveness is just first rate. Really appreciate it. *~appellate court judicial officer*
- Thank you very much for your (super) fast response! *~ government employee*

Outreach

The State Law Library works to reach people outside of its walls. In a typical year staff travel to public libraries, bar association meetings, and county law libraries to raise awareness of the State Law Library and its services. Since 2017, the law library has had a librarian dedicated to these activities.

Legal Community

Organization/Event	Outreach Activity	Staff	Date
MSBA One Profession, 6th Judicial District	Informational table	Sarah Larsen	January
Minnesota Attorney General's Office	Presentation: - Minnesota Legislative History Research	Liz Reppe	January
Court Services Division - child support unit	Presentation: Overview of State Law Library services and collection	Liz Reppe	March
St Thomas Law School, Understanding Legislative Intent course	Presentation: - Minnesota Legislative History Research	Liz Reppe	April
MSBA One Profession, 3rd Judicial District	Informational table	Liz Reppe	April
Solo and Small Firm Summit	Informational table	Liz Reppe	May

New Attorney Swearing In	Informational table	Scott Uhl	May
CCJ-COSCA Midwest Summit: Legal Services ... Are We Lost in the Desert?	Panel speaker	Liz Reppe	September
Court of Appeals 40 th Anniversary Reunion	Display of historical exhibit	Sarah Larsen, Erica Nutzman	October
Court of Appeals 40 th Anniversary Symposium	Display of historical exhibit	Sarah Larsen, Erica Nutzman	October
New Attorney Swearing in	Informational table	Sarah Larsen	October
6 th District Bar Meeting	Presentation: - Free Legal Resources	Liz Reppe	November
Tribal Court State Court Forum	Overview of State Law Library services for tribal court judges	Liz Reppe	December

Library Community/Public

Organization	Outreach Activity	Staff	Date
Law Library of Congress	Presentation: Orientation to Law Library Collections – Minnesota State Law Library	Liz Reppe	March
Twin Cities Archives Round Table	Presentation: Closed Captioning for Accessibility	Erica Nutzman	May
Minnesota Association of Law Libraries spring meeting	Presentation: Recent Diversity Issues	Elizabeth Tuckwood, Ally Ososki, Valerie Salazar	May
San Francisco Public Library	Presentation: Legal Services for Incarcerated People	Liz Reppe	June
American Association of Law Libraries Annual Meeting	Presentation: Incarcerated People Are Patrons Too! Improving Legal Information Service for Incarcerated People	Liz Reppe	July
Minnesota State Fair	Court's informational booth	Sarah Larsen	August

National Conference of State Legislatures	Panel speaker: Library marketing and outreach (for legislative librarians)	Liz Reppe	September
East Central Regional Library Staff Day	Presentation: Legal Reference 101	Sarah Larsen	September
Federal Depository Library Program – FLDP Academy	Presentation: Minnesota's Law Library Service to Prisoners Program	Liz Reppe	October
Arrowhead Regional Library Services staff training	Presentation: Legal Reference 101	Liz Reppe	December

County Law Libraries

By [statute](#), the State Law Librarian is tasked with assisting and advising county law libraries. The library has two programs for county law libraries. Members receive materials and assistance from the State Law Library. In 2023, 50 county law libraries (out of 82) opted in. 23 of those counties opted for a level of service that includes a visit from either the State Law Librarian or the County Law Library Program Coordinator.

Date	Activity
January	Goodhue - visit Pope – attend board meeting St Louis – clerk visit to update materials
February	St Louis – visit Big Stone – attend board meeting Grant – attend board meeting Wilkin – attend board meeting Stevens – attend board meeting
March	Redwood – visit Traverse – visit Stearns – visit
April	Morrison – visit Todd - visit
May	St Louis - visit
June	Becker – attend board meeting Redwood - visit

July	St. Louis – clerk visit to update materials Grant – visit Wilkin – visit Otter Tail – visit Stearns – visit Cottonwood – visit Murray - visit
August	Becker – visit Norman – visit Kandiyohi - visit
September	St Louis – attend meeting
October	Big Stone – visit Traverse – visit Pennington – visit Stevens – visit McLeod – visit Sibley – visit Goodhue – clerk visit to update materials
November	Pope - visit
December	Le Sueur – visit St. Louis – clerk visit to update materials Washington – assist with interviews



Pennington County Law Library

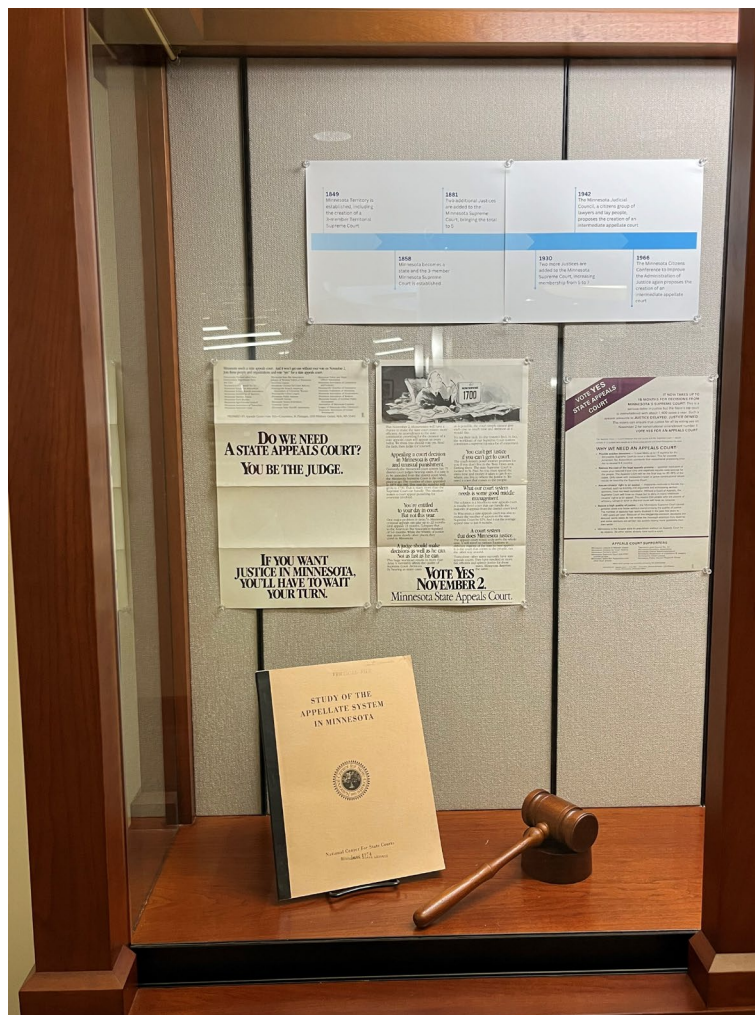
Newsletters

The State Law Library uses three newsletters to connect to patrons. There is a newsletter for law clerks that goes out four times per year, a county law library version that goes out twice per year, and a general newsletter, [Inter Alia](#), that is sent four times per year.

Display Cases

Library staff create new displays throughout the year to engage visitors to the library and promote the library collections. Often the displays connect with events or exhibits. In spring 2023, the library hosted a travelling exhibit of banner about the Mayflower Compact and created a companion exhibit for the display cases. It featured some of the library's oldest materials from the original colonies.

The second physical display featured materials related to the creation of the Court of Appeals. This was done in conjunction with the digital exhibit referenced earlier in this report.



Preserving Court History

The library continues work on the project to digitize historic appellate briefs from the microfiche collection. Staff have scanned, redacted, and uploaded 3,443 briefs from the early 1980s since 2019.

The library is working with [LLMC Digital](#) to digitize the collection of historic handwritten briefs. This project is expected to take several years due to the fragile nature of the materials. 44 volumes were scanned by the end of 2023. The scans are available in the LLMC database.

In 2023, the law library completed the career book of Associate Justice Edward C. Stringer. It is available at the [State Law Library](#), the Historical Society Library, and the law library at the University of Minnesota.

Managing the Collection

The Technical Services department is responsible for making all types of library materials available to the public and the judiciary. This department ensures that the library materials are relevant, current, and easy to find, both on and off-line. It is also responsible for making briefs available to the public in a variety of formats: print, microfiche, and through the online archive. In addition, the department preserves historic court materials. The cataloger works with five county law libraries to make their materials searchable online.

2023 Statistics

- 532 items circulated, 1,593 items used in the library
- 1,258 updates added in the three libraries (new replacement volumes, hardbound supplements, loose-leafs, pocket parts)
- 299 new titles added
- 220 electronic resources added
- 80 original cataloging records created
- 1,026 Federal Depository Library items added, 868 deleted
- 267 titles cataloged for County Law Libraries, 750 deleted
- 11,664 visits to the online catalog

Minnesota Legal Periodical Index

The [Minnesota Legal Periodical Index](#) (MLPI) is a database of Minnesota legal periodicals that the State Law Library has developed and maintained since 1984. In 2023, the cataloger indexed 980 articles for the MLPI. Many of the added articles are from the earlier paper versions of the MLPI from before it went online, which gives the databased a deeper set of resources to draw from when searching.

Appellate Briefs

The library provides access to appellate briefs in multiple formats. For Minnesota appellate decisions that are published in the Northwestern Reporter, the library binds the briefs and their addenda to ensure long-term access. These materials are heavily used by attorneys. All briefs associated with precedential opinions are added to the archive and all briefs filed in Supreme Court cases are added weekly.

- 44 volumes of bound briefs were added to the collection.
- 1,710 briefs were redacted and added to the library's [online database](#).
- 659 of the added briefs were digitized from microfiche and added to the library's archive.
- 473 briefs were added upon patron request
- In 2023, there were 3,807 visits to the online briefs archive

Law Library Service to Prisoners (LLSP)

About the Program

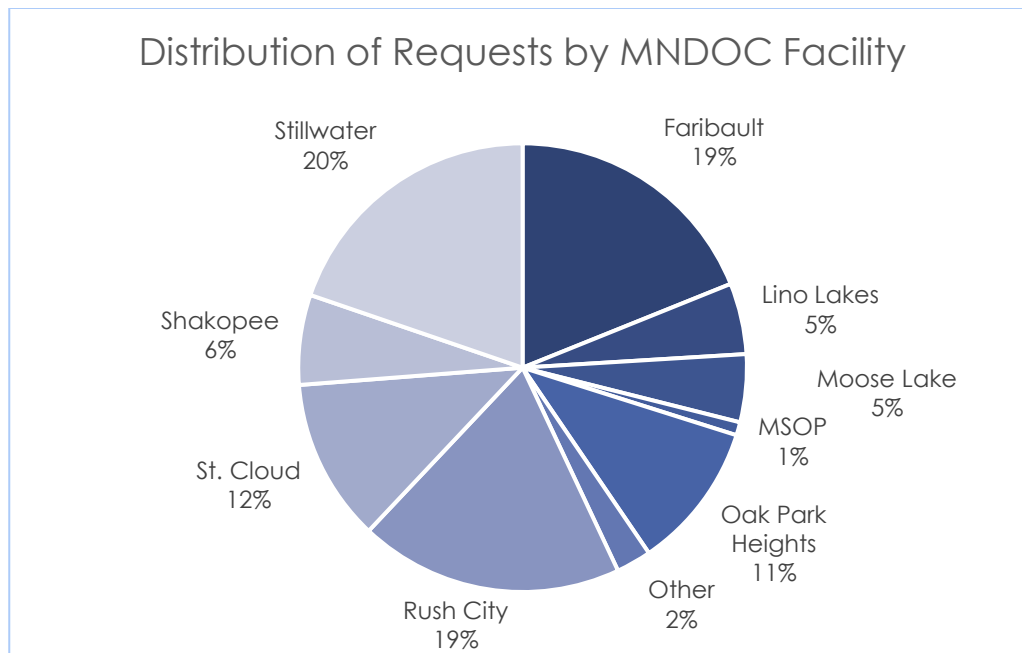
Under an Inter-Agency Agreement between the Minnesota Department of Corrections (MNDOC) and the Minnesota State Law Library (MSLL), the Law Library Service to Prisoners (LLSP) program provides law library service to people incarcerated in a MNDOC facility or otherwise under MNDOC jurisdiction.

Legal information requests are accepted by "kite," a request form available to Incarcerated Persons (IPs) at their facility. In addition, IPs may submit requests via phone or letter. LLSP librarians also conduct video visits in which IPs meet via Zoom with an LLSP librarian to discuss their legal information request. Facility librarians and the IPs have provided positive feedback about these visits. LLSP is continuing efforts to get all eight facilities on a schedule for monthly video visits. As of this writing, the law librarians have regular monthly video visits with six of the eight facilities: Faribault, Lino Lakes, Shakopee, St. Cloud, Stillwater, and Rush City. The goal is to get Moose Lake and Oak Park Heights set up within the next year.

The Law Library Service to Prisoners Program experienced staffing changes in 2023 with Stephanie retiring in January. Valerie moved from part-time to full-time in January. Gabby joined the staff as the new part-time librarian in April.

2023 Statistics

8,274	DOC prison population (as of 07/01/2023)
17,502	Questions answered
773	Phone calls (5.7% increase from 2022)
366	Video visits (136% increase from 2022)
25,711	Items sent (9% increase from 2022)
2,350	Individual IPs assisted (10% increase from 2022)



Professional Activities in the Legal/Library Community

Legal

Sarah Larsen

- Member, Minnesota Judicial Branch Self-Represented Litigant Working Group
- Member, MSBA Access to Justice Committee, Resource Development Subcommittee and State of the State Workgroup
- Member, Minnesota Judicial Branch State Fair Steering Committee
- Member, Court of Appeals 40th Anniversary Planning Committee

Erica Nutzman

- Member, Minnesota Supreme Court Historical Society's Preservation Committee
- Member, Court of Appeals 40th Anniversary Planning Committee

Library

Leslie Greenwood

- Chair, Bylaws Committee, Government Law Libraries Special Interest Section, American Association of Law Libraries
- Chair, Blog Committee, Legal Information Services to the Public Special Interest Section, American Association of Law Libraries

Sheri Huppert

- Member, Regional Advisory Group that represents depository libraries in Minnesota, Michigan, and the Dakotas.

- Member, Midwest National Collection Service Area (NCSA) Steering Committee

Sarah Larsen

- Past Chair, Legal Information Services to the Public Special Interest Section, American Association of Law Libraries
- Chair, 50 State Toolkit Committee, Legal Information Services to the Public Special Interest Section, American Association of Law Libraries
- Chair, Nominations Committee, Legal Information Services to the Public Special Interest Section, American Association of Law Libraries
- Member, Education Committee, Government Law Libraries Special Interest Section, American Association of Law Libraries

Erica Nutzman

- Member, MNPALS Consortium Governing Board
- Member, CALCO MLA Planning Committee
- Chair, Archives Committee, Minnesota Association of Law Libraries

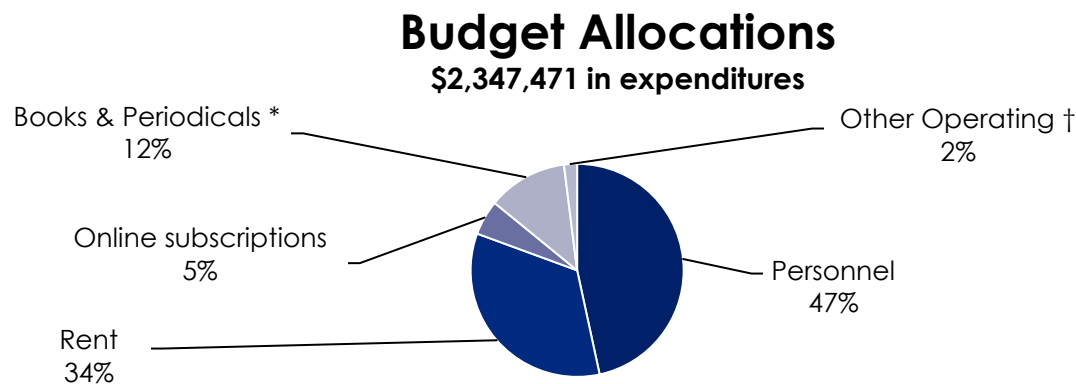
Liz Reppe

- Member, Nominations Committee, American Association of Law Libraries
- Chair, Education Committee, Government Law Libraries Special Interest Section, American Association of Law Libraries
- Member at Large, Minnesota Association of Law Libraries

Elizabeth Tuckwood

- Member, MNPALS Cataloging Community of Interest
- Convener, MNPALS Cataloging Policy Group
- Member, Diversity & Inclusion Committee, Minnesota Association of Law Libraries

Financial Summary (FY23)



* Includes materials for the Minnesota Supreme Court

† Includes expenses for binding, postage, phone, website, copying, equipment, supplies, etc.

Library Staff

Kaitlin Crawford, Technical Services Clerk
Elvira Embser-Herbert, Head of Public Services
Leslie Greenwood, Reference Librarian
Gabby Holzmer, Law Library Service to Prisoners Librarian (started April 2023)
Sheri Huppert, Government Documents Librarian
Elizabeth Karges, Technical Services Technician (until March 2023)
Karen Kenison, Technical Services Technician (promoted April 2023)
Debbie Kitzmann, Technical & Outreach Services Clerk
Sarah Larsen, Outreach Librarian
Erica Nutzman, Head of Technical Services
Allyson Ososki, Law Library Service to Prisoners Librarian
Moe Perez, Technical Services Clerk (started June 2023)
Liz Reppe, State Law Librarian
Valerie Salazar, Law Library Service to Prisoners Librarian
Stephanie Thorson, Law Library Service to Prisoners Librarian (retired January 2023)
Elizabeth Tuckwood, Technical Services Librarian
Scott Uhl, Electronic Services Librarian (started March 2023)

Leadership

Many thanks go to Associate Justice Paul Thissen who is the library's Supreme Court liaison. The law library appreciates his interest and guidance.