Summary

The Maryland State Law Library provides reference assistance to the Judiciary (judges, law clerks, administrative staff), the bar, and the public. The public includes self-represented litigants (SRLs), students, legal researchers, historians, genealogists and others.

Reference services are provided through in-person visits, by telephone, via email, through chat and by regular mail correspondence.

Patron inquiries range from brief directional questions to lengthy research queries. Library reference staff provide assistance through provision of informational materials such as books, databases and websites. Staff also provide instructional assistance, in the use of informational materials as well as in the use of technology; and assist patrons in evaluating resources.

Reference staff adhere firmly to Library guidelines for reference provision, including:

- *Guidelines for Legal Information Service to the Public*, as approved by the Library Committee in 1991: www.lawlib.state.md.us/services/guidelines-public.html

- *Guidelines for E-Mail Reference Service at the Maryland State Law Library*, as adopted by the Library Committee in 2011: www.lawlib.state.md.us/aboutus/policies/EmailReferenceGuidelinesMSLL.pdf

The Library employs a number of reference staff with varying hours. There are nine Library staff members with regular responsibility for handling reference services. Six of these are full-time, present 40 hours per week, mainly during regular business hours. Three reference staff are part-time contractual staff. One works two days, business hours only; one works mainly on Saturdays, with limited hours on two weekdays, and one works mainly on Tuesday and Thursday evenings (4:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.), with limited hours on three weekdays.

Reference activity is scheduled as two four-hour shifts each weekday (8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.; 12:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.). Additionally, the Library covers six hours weekly of live chat coverage on the Maryland AskUsNow! service. Seven of the nine reference staff assist in this coverage, usually in one-hour shifts.

All reference staff have additional duties and responsibilities beyond provision of reference. Generally, full-time reference staff are expected to be scheduled for no more than two shifts on the desk per week; and for no more than two hours of chat coverage per week. The combined total for each staff member is generally no more than 10 hours per week. There is broad flexibility in the scheduling. At any given time, several reference staff are absent from the office for conference and meeting attendance, educational events, presentations, other work-related absences, as well as vacation and sick leave.

Overall Reference Services

Library staff handled a total of 10,567 information interactions during FY2014. This is a 12% rise from the FY2013 total of 9440, and an almost 25% rise in five years.

Fiscal Year	Total Requests	% Change
FY2014	10567	11.9%
FY2013	9440	3.70%
FY2012	9099	3.10%
FY2011	8827	4.20%
FY2010	8471	---
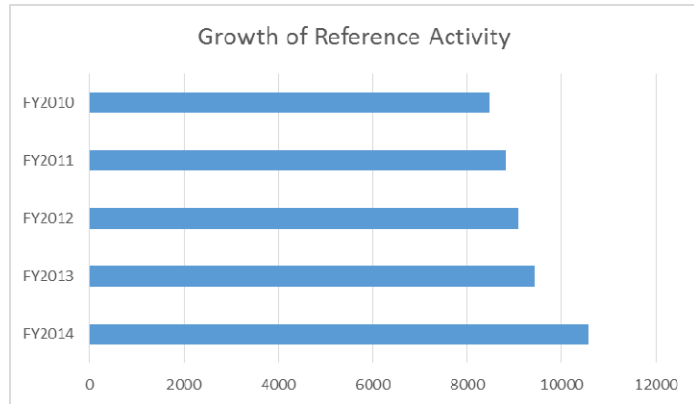
The Gimlet Tracking System

The Library uses the web-based utility Gimlet (gimlet.us) to track telephone and in-person interactions. Email, chat, and letter interactions are totalled, but are not tracked using Gimlet. Gimlet allows the Library to record and analyze more reliable statistics on how the Library, its resources and personnel, are being used.

Email, chat and letter interactions are totalled as a single number. The total number for each individual type of transaction is recorded in the Library Statistics spreadsheet, which records numbers not just for reference transactions, but also visitor numbers, website hits and other data.

For this Fiscal 2014 Report, summaries of reference activity are organized by sections titled:
- WHO is asking?
- WHAT are they asking?
- WHEN are they asking?
- HOW and WHERE are they asking?

WHO is asking?

- *Who are the library's patrons?*
- *How do we handle identified parts of the general population?*

The Library receives information inquiries from a variety of patrons, including members and staff of the Judiciary, attorneys, other librarians, government agencies, students, and members of the general public, including self-represented litigants (SRLs) and correctional facility residents.

Statistics about patron categories are recorded on the Library's Gimlet system. The Gimlet system only tracks inquiries received via telephone or in-person; however, a look at the breakdown of library patron types from these two communication methods reflects a fairly accurate picture of the percentage of interactions from each category.

Patron Category	Number of Inquiries	Percentage
Public	3345	57%
Judiciary	971	17%
Bar	865	15%
Student	339	6%
Library	141	2%
Government	116	2%
Other/Unknown	67	1%
Total	5844	100%
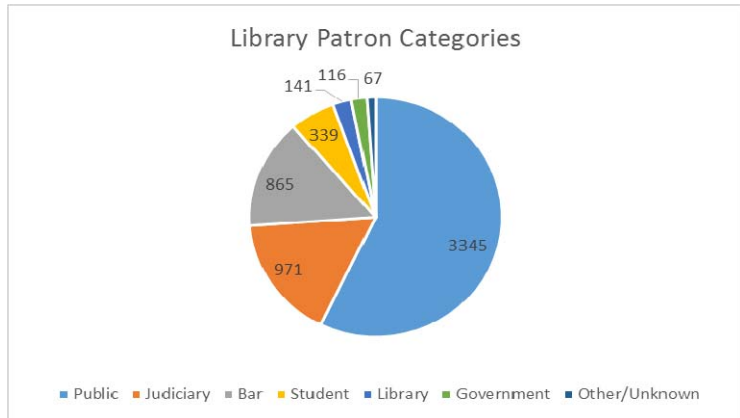
The 57% figure for questions from the public includes self-represented litigants, correctional facility residents, general informational inquiries about the law, and history and genealogy researchers.

In comparison to the previous fiscal year, the percentage of questions from those identified as "Public" has gone up almost 8%, from 49% in FY2013. The category "Government" was added in FY2014; however, that category comprised 2% of the total, and therefore likely was not an impact on the "Public" category growth. "Public" sometimes serves as a catch-all category, with patrons who are not clearly identified as one of the other categories being listed as "public" rather than "other/unknown".

Comparison of FY13 to FY14:

	FY2013	FY2014	Change
Public	49.1%	56.9%	+7.8%
Bar	19.4%	16.7%	-2.7%
Judiciary	18.7%	14.9%	-3.8%
Students	9%	5.9%	-2.1%
Libraries	1.6%	2.5%	+.9%
Government	n/a	2%	+2%
Other	2.2%	1.2%	-1%

Handling Identified Parts of the General Population

Correctional Facility Residents

The Library provides reference assistance upon request to residents of correctional facilities. Library practice is to consider such residents as members of the general public. This means that basic reference services are available, with requests subject to the Library's standard document delivery fees, currently $.50 per page, prepaid. These same fees are requested of all library patrons excepting members of the Judiciary or state agencies. Fees may be waived for page requests totaling under five pages, at the discretion of the reference librarian.

Requests from correctional residents averaged seven per month, similar to FY2012 and FY2013. Time invested in each request varies depending on the nature of the request. Many requests are for legislative history, such as the text of a particular statute as it existed when the resident was convicted. A number of requests are for varying depths of case research. While the Library does not provide case research on specific topics, reference staff make every attempt, when responding to such a request, to identify one or two sections of a legal encyclopedia, such as the *Maryland Law Encyclopedia*, *American Jurisprudence 2d* (Am. Jur. 2d), or *Corpus Juris Secondum* (CJS), that can be provided to help guide the resident's knowledge of the general area of law around their request. For some requests, other secondary texts or treatises are identified and citations provided. Where possible, helpful websites, referrals, and information on how a resident's family or friends can locate the information is included in an effort to provide as much effective assistance as possible, keeping within the bounds of legal information service.

Patrons with Mental Health Challenges

Reference staff held self-training on several aspects of handling information inquiries from patrons with obvious mental health challenges. Staff regularly handle phone calls from residents of mental health facilities. Additionally, a number of in-person and telephone patrons clearly struggle with such disabilities. Library staff discussed appropriate policies for handling these situations. At the instruction of the Head of Reference and Outreach, the Deputy Director and the Director, a one-call-per-day rule was imposed on patrons whose needs did not fall within the mission of the Law Library.

At several 2014 reference staff meetings, staff practiced relaxation techniques to help alleviate stress induced by handling such requests.

Pro Bono Attorney Assistance

At a December 2013 Reference Staff meeting, it was decided that fees for photocopies and computer printouts made by pro bono legal professionals at the Library would be waived. A register was created for the Information Desk to track requests for such waivers. The Library looks forward to better serving this patron group.

WHAT are they asking?

- *What are our patrons asking about?*
- *How complicated are the questions they are asking?*
- *What is the time involved (duration) in handling inquiries?*

Question Type

In November 2014, the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors (CMCLLD) proposed categories to be used by all Maryland court law libraries to track library reference statistics. The Maryland State Law Library revised its own categories to reflect the CMCLLD recommendations. Question type categories are described as follows:

Reference: basic category; use as the default if an interaction falls into multiple categories.

Directional: this category includes all strictly directional questions that are not related to library materials.
Examples include: Where is the Clerk's Office? How do I get to the Legislative Services Library? Where is the Anne Arundel County Circuit Court?

Referral: this category includes all interactions in which the only information provided is a referral; interactions including additional reference assistance are logged in the Reference category.
Examples include: Procedural questions about certain District Court civil matters, when we refer the patron to the District Court Self Help Center; certain complicated landlord/tenant inquiries, when referring people to Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc.

Tech Assistance: this category is used for interactions where there is not actual reference or research assistance, but only technology or machinery assistance.
Examples include: how to cut and paste in a Word document; how to use the copy machine; how to access the library's wi-fi.

Other: this category serves as an umbrella for questions that do not fit above categories and, most importantly, serves as a place-holder for the needs of libraries when no specific category fits.

The categories are structured so that individual libraries can make their own more specialized topics if required. The Maryland State Law Library uses the CMCLLD recommended categories, and further breaks down two of the above categories as follows:

Reference interactions are distinguished as:
- Reference – General
- Reference – Legislative History
- Reference – Online/Computer: this category includes questions where the patron needs online research assistance, such as: assistance Keyciting a case; instruction in how to construct a general topic search; assistance in locating a particular file in a database, such as finding the *Maryland Law Encyclopedia* on WestlawNext.

<u>Other</u> interactions are distinguished as:
- Other - Payment Only: this category encompasses the time required to receive payments, fill out and provide receipts, and run credit card payments. While short, these interactions can amount collectively to a significant chunk of time on the desk.
- Other – Circulation: this category is for time used to handle incoming and outgoing materials. Most often, this is providing assistance to law clerks in signing out texts; or time spent pulling checkout cards when materials are returned.

Prior to the category restructuring, the Library used the designation "Research" to reflect more complicated interactions. When reviewing the CMCLLD categories, Library staff determined that these interactions would more appropriately be designated Reference with a longer Duration designation being a more appropriate indicator of the complex nature of the interaction. The Research category remains on the Gimlet system for FY2014 as deletion of the category would have removed those statistics completely, and would therefore reflecting an overall FY total significantly below actual efforts.

Question Type	Total
Directional	888
Referral	122
Reference	2614
Ref-Leg History	233
Ref-Online/Computer	274
Tech Assist	278
Payment Only	450
Circulation	125
Research DO NOT USE	860
Total	5844

The bulk of library staff interactions fall into the Reference category, followed by Directional; Payment Only; Tech Assistance; Circulation; and Referral.
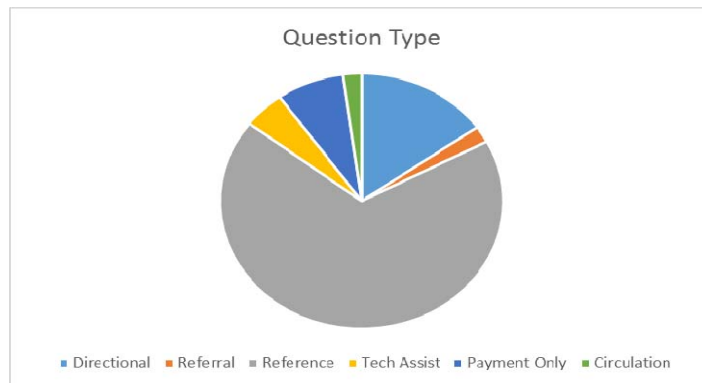
Breaking down Reference into its more specific categories (General, Legislative History and Online/Computer Reference), we see that General comprises the bulk of interactions. The previous category of Research comprises about ¼ of the total reference activity for the year. As the category comprised more complicated interactions, it likely contains a number of legislative history questions, likely pushing the share of legislative history reference into a bigger piece of the pie.
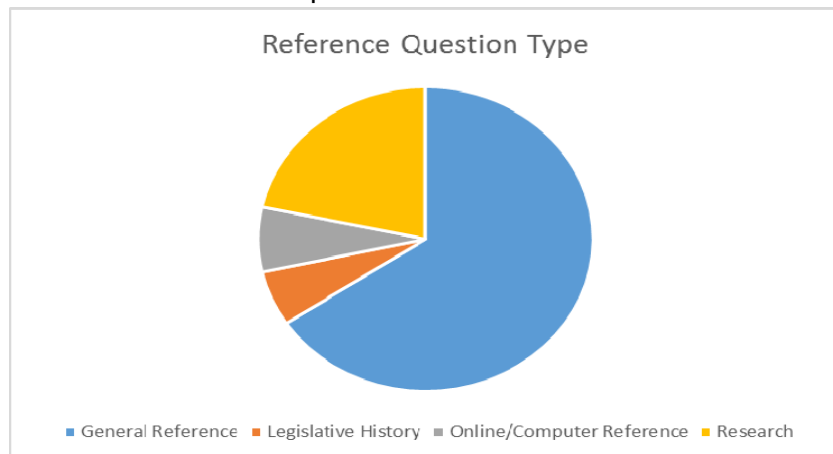
Intersecting Question and Patron Types

Looking at the intersection of question type by patron identification, there are a few things to note:

- In the Payment Only category, there are 23 requests designated as Judiciary. However, Judiciary staff do not pay for document delivery.
- The Ref-Legislative History category indicates that the highest number of history requests come from the Judiciary, making up 36% of the Library's legislative history questions.
- Government accounts for only 2% of total interactions; but 19% of their questions are related to legislative history, amounting to 9% of the Library's total legislative history questions.

Question Type	Public	Judiciary	Bar	Student	Library	Gov't	Other/ Unknown	Total
Directional	429	181	137	94	11	18	18	888
Referral	101	3	12	3	2	1	0	122
Reference	1603	384	360	115	76	53	23	2614
Ref-Leg History	47	85	58	3	11	22	7	233
Ref-Online/Computer	170	49	37	14	0	3	1	274
Tech Assist (Troubleshooting)	171	33	49	20	0	1	4	278
Payment Only	302	23	76	41	5	0	3	450
Circulation	19	90	9	0	4	2	1	125
Research DO NOT USE	503	123	127	49	32	16	10	860
Total	3345	971	865	339	141	116	67	5844

Duration of Questions

The Duration category is used to help understand the amount of staff time and effort needed to address reference desk interactions.

Rather than attempt to classify questions by level of complication, the Library places requests into categories of duration – time spent working on the interaction. The longer the interaction, it is presumed, the more complicated the question. Sometimes the complication is less the actual question, and more the level of need or challenge of the patron. Library patrons with a low level of understanding of the legal system, terminology and research methods require more attention and time from library staff and, therefore, while technically asking less complicated questions, fall into the longer duration category.

During FY 2013, time breakdowns were kept in four rather than five categories: 0-5 minutes; 6-15 minutes; 15-60 minutes; and 60+. These categories were amended during FY2014 in

accordance with recommendations by the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors (CMCLLD).

Duration	FY2013	FY2014
0-5 minutes	2138 (55.8%)	3638 (62.2%)
6-15 minutes	1108 (29%)	1509 (25.8%)
16-60 minutes	507 (13.2%)	626 (10.7%)
60+ minutes	77 (2%)	71 (1.2%)
Total	3830	5844

There appears to have been a growth in the proportion of short questions between the two fiscal years. However, it will likely take a number of years to determine whether this is a statistically significant finding.

Lengthy Questions by Month

In FY2013, Library staff began to examine the duration of questions reflected by month. A number of factors may contribute to higher numbers of "long" questions during certain times of the year, including: incoming new law clerk population in fall; frequent holiday closures during December; weather-related closures through the winter; and other factors. As stated above, duration numbers are only available over a short number of years at this time, so it is not possible to determine statistical significance.

	0-5 min	6-15 min	16-30 min	31-60 min	60+ min	Total	%
Jul-13	354	161	71	0	11	597	10.2%
Aug-13	323	150	44	0	8	525	9.0%
Sep-13	285	145	38	0	6	474	8.1%
Oct-13	301	138	58	0	8	505	8.6%
Nov-13	299	127	39	0	0	465	8.0%
Dec-13	281	106	25	7	5	424	7.3%
Jan-14	237	93	48	13	4	395	6.8%
Feb-14	257	97	44	11	11	420	7.2%
Mar-14	311	108	48	10	4	481	8.2%
Apr-14	366	162	58	17	5	608	10.4%
May-14	309	107	36	16	5	473	8.1%
Jun-14	315	115	34	9	4	477	8.2%
Total	3638	1509	543	83	71	5844	
%	62.3%	25.8%	9.3%	1.4%	1.2%		

The late Winter/Spring month numbers for lengthy questions are higher, with January through April all above the average. This generally corresponds to the findings from FY2013, when numbers in March/April/May were clearly higher than the other months. In FY2013, April was the peak month; correspondingly, in FY2014, April's number was significantly high.

WHEN are they asking?

- *Are there days of the week, times of the day, or months during which reference interactions are recognizably higher?*
- *What is the significance for staffing of any recognizably higher levels of interaction?*

Days of the Week

The Library is open six days of the week according to the following schedule:
- Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Tuesday and Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Because the Library is open late on Tuesdays and Thursdays, the number of patron interactions is expected to be higher on those days, as they are for FY2014:

Weekday	Interactions	%
Sunday	2	0%
Monday	904	15.9%
Tuesday	1231	21.6%
Wednesday	964	17%
Thursday	1216	21.4%
Friday	909	16%
Saturday	461	8.1%
Total	5687	100%

Total Questions by Weekday

- Monday - Tuesday - Wednesday - Thursday - Friday - Saturday
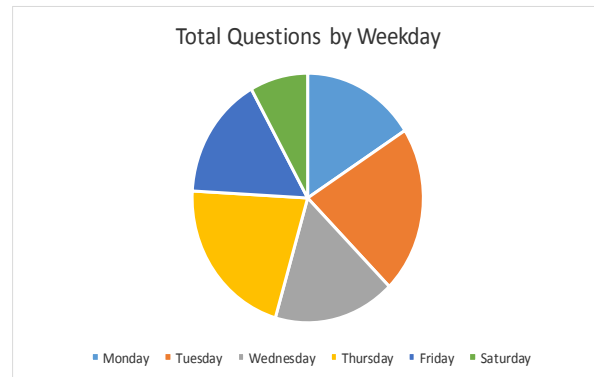
Saturday interactions account for 8% of total interactions, or about half the number generally found on weekdays when the Library is open during regular business hours (M/W/F). This is significant because there is only one staff person present on Saturdays, while during regular hours on weekdays, there can be as many as eight reference staff present to assist the information desk with incoming questions.

An analysis of number of hours open compared to number of questions shows the following:

Weekday	Number of Questions	Hours Library is Open	Questions per Hour
Monday	904	8.5	106.35
Tuesday	1231	13	94.69
Wednesday	964	8.5	113.41
Thursday	1216	13	93.54
Friday	909	8.5	106.9
Saturday	461	7	65.86
Total	5685	70	81.21

The average number of questions per day for a Monday, Wednesday or Friday is about 18 (904+964+909 / 3 to get average for the year; /52 weeks per year). The average number of questions per day for a Tuesday or Thursday is about 24 (1231+1216 / 2, /52 weeks per year). The average number of questions per day for a Saturday is about 9.

Average questions per hour M/W/F = 2.12
Average questions per hour Tu/Th = 1.78
Average questions per hour Sat = 1.29

Intersecting Days of Week and Patron Types

Looking at the relationship of days of week by patron types, there are no surprises.
- It is expected that the number of requests from Judiciary and Government personnel would be significantly lower, if not at zero, on weekend days; and this is the case.
- The Library hosts the Anne Arundel Community College Legal Writing classes on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturdays. It is therefore expected that the number of Student inquiries would be higher on those three days, and again, this is the case.

	Public	Judiciary	Bar	Student	Library	Government	Other	Total	%
Sunday	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	
Monday	505	173	149	22	28	16	11	904	15.9
Tuesday	692	198	177	96	31	21	16	1231	21.6
Wednesday	525	187	159	33	31	24	5	964	17
Thursday	682	202	177	81	32	32	10	1216	21.4
Friday	500	178	144	29	18	23	17	909	16
Saturday	329	11	40	73	0	0	8	461	8.1
Total	3234	950	846	334	140	116	67	5687	100
%	56.9	16.7	14.9	5.9	2.5	2	1.2	100	

Numbers appearing on Sunday are attributed to incorrect logging of interactions.

Time of the Day

Overall, the largest number of questions comes in regularly from 10:00 a.m. to noon and from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Questions are fairly steady from about 9:00 a.m. through 4:00 p.m., with a slight dip around noon. The 3:00 – 4:00 block has the highest number of questions, 766, which may in some part be accounted for by the entry of statistics at the end of the day. However, staff have observed this rise in activity generally; the number reflects staff observations overall.

Statistics appear in blocks for 7:00 – 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 – 10:00 p.m. when, as the Library is not open, we would not expect to see any entries. Library staff is often present before the opening and after the closing of the Library, and may receive questions from Judiciary staff during this time, or may pick up an out-of-hours phone call question. Also, there are sometimes instances when reference staff enters the information on Gimlet after handling the transaction; this may be after the Library has closed and the librarian has the time to make entries.

Time of Day	Questions
7:00 AM	8
8:00 AM	151
9:00 AM	540
10:00 AM	641
11:00 AM	665
Noon	609
1:00 PM	662
2:00 PM	681
3:00 PM	766
4:00 PM	555
5:00 PM	201
6:00 PM	120
7:00 PM	114
8:00 PM	118
9:00 PM	13
Total	5844
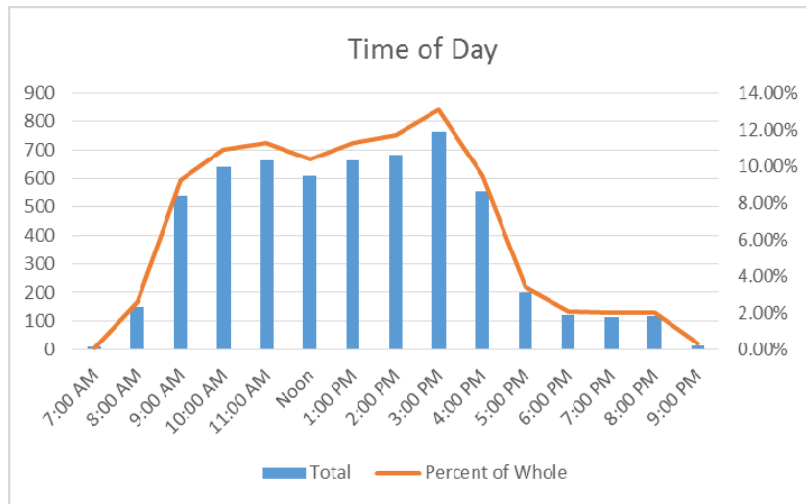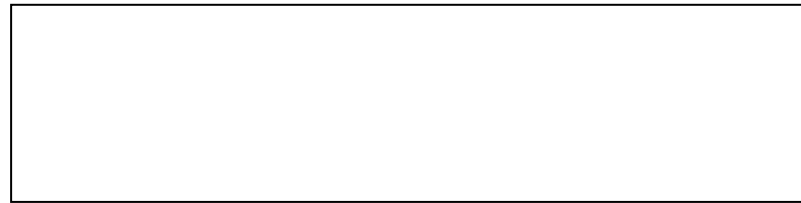
Intersection of Time of Day with Day of Week

Time of Day	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Total
7:00 AM	0	3	1	2	1	1	0	8
8:00 AM	0	35	35	32	23	16	10	151
9:00 AM	0	111	80	117	99	87	46	540
10:00 AM	0	108	96	111	136	114	76	641
11:00 AM	1	130	114	123	116	118	63	665
Noon	1	109	141	98	111	89	60	609
1:00 PM	0	115	91	127	125	128	76	662
2:00 PM	0	115	129	142	120	116	59	681
3:00 PM	0	121	148	123	136	152	86	766
4:00 PM	0	88	125	96	124	120	2	555
5:00 PM	0	2	102	7	88	2	0	201
6:00 PM	0	0	63	0	57	0	0	120
7:00 PM	0	0	59	0	55	0	0	114
8:00 PM	0	0	67	0	51	0	0	118
9:00 PM	0	0	1	0	12	0	0	13
Total	2	937	1252	978	1254	943	478	5844

*Note: totals are over the course of the fiscal year

On Tuesday and Thursday nights, activity is highest in the first hour of the evening (5:00 – 6:00 p.m.), and then numbers run steadily from 6:00 p.m. through closing.

Time of Day	Tuesday	Thursday
5:00 PM	102	88
6:00 PM	63	57
7:00 PM	59	55
8:00 PM	67	51
9:00 PM	1	12
Total	292	263

Note: totals are over the course of the fiscal year

Impact on Tuesday/Thursday Night and Saturday Staffing

A review of averages for numbers of questions during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.) shows that the average number of questions per hour asked during that window run from 110 through 127. During the four hour blocks on Tuesday and Thursday nights, those averages are 73 and 66, respectively. While these numbers appear to be significantly lower, during the evening hours the Library is staffed by only one librarian, whereas during daytime business hours, there is, generally, more than one reference librarian (usually three or four at any given time), as well as several support staff to aid in handling incoming reference questions. The evening numbers are, effectively, half the daytime average, and yet are being handled by one quarter or less than daytime staff. Likewise, Saturday's average is 68 questions per hour, yet the Library is staffed by only one librarian.

HOW and WHERE are they asking?

What methods are our patrons using to access us?

Patrons can contact the Library using five different communication methods: in person; by telephone; through email; via chat; and using regular mail letters. Email, in-person and telephone inquiries combined constitute 95% of all incoming patron inquiries.

Question Format	Total FY14	Percentage
Telephone	2656	25%
In-Person	3102	29%
Email	4354	41%
Chat	369	4%
Letters	86	1%
Total	10567	100%

This 95% is a slight drop from prior years, FY2011 (98%), FY2012 (96%), and FY2013 (96%).

Looking at those prior fiscal years, the overall number of incoming reference inquiries has been steadily growing. How the question comes to the Library, however, has changed.
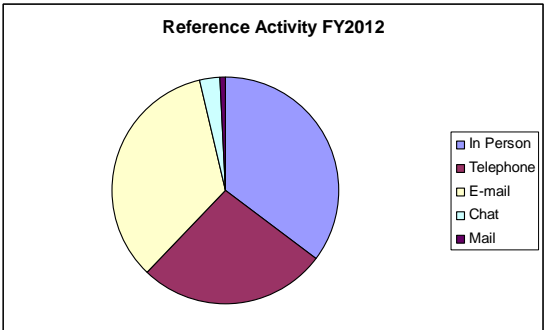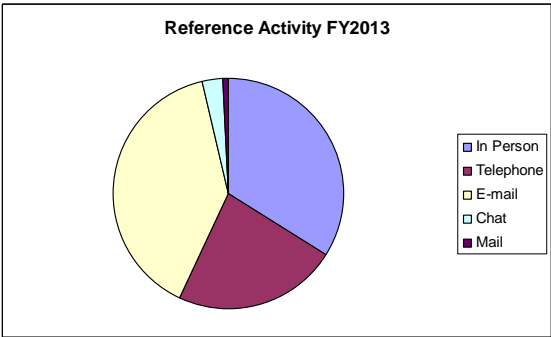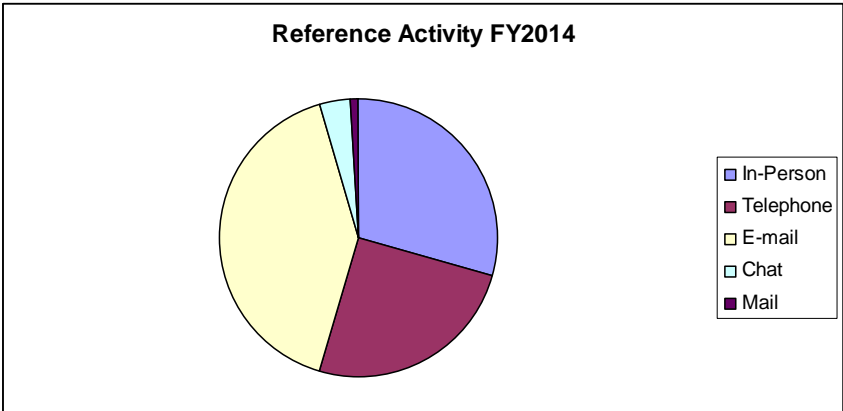
Question Format	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14
Telephone	2916 – 33%	2455 – 27%	2180 – 23%	2656 – 25%
In-Person	3100 – 35%	3204 – 35%	3271 – 35%	3102 – 29%
Email	2639 – 30%	3121 – 34%	3657 – 39%	4354 – 41%
Chat	102 – 1%	235 – 3%	246 – 3%	369 – 4%
Letters	72 – 1%	84 – 1%	86 – 1%	86 – 1%
Total	**8829**	**9099**	**9440**	**10,567**

In FY11 and FY12, In-Person inquiries were the largest percentage of library activity, with 35% of the total. In FY13, this changed, with Email inquiries taking over the top portion, with 39%. Email inquiries have continued to grow, with FY14 numbers taking over 41% of the Library's reference activity. At the same time, the Library's Chat percentages have also grown, from 1% in FY11 to 4% in FY14. This combined number now constitutes almost 50% of the Library's total reference activity. Clearly, the Library's patrons are increasingly reaching the Library through electronic communications methods   .

The combination of in-person, telephone and e-mail reference requests accounts for 95% of the Library's reference services. Chat and letters make up the remaining 5%. These proportions

have remained essentially the same over the last three fiscal years.

Reference Activity FY2014

- In-Person
- Telephone
- E-mail
- Chat
- Mail

Reference Activity FY2013

- In Person
- Telephone
- E-mail
- Chat
- Mail

Reference Activity FY2012

- In Person
- Telephone
- E-mail
- Chat
- Mail

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Conclusion

The Maryland State Law Library's reference service, through in-person visits, telephone and email requests, written correspondence and live chat, provides essential assistance to a wide range of legal researchers. Services by the Library continue to grow. The Fiscal Year 2014 saw an increase of 12% in incoming questions, for a total of more than 10,000 questions. The Maryland State Law Library is a court-related agency that serves the legal information needs of State government and citizens by promoting access to print and online collections, as well as by creating educational resources to enhance understanding of Maryland law.