



2008 Annual Report



Reference Room, June 2008

“How fabulous are YOU?! Thank you for the time you gave me in the email, much appreciated!! :-)” – Minneapolis Resident

Like most of the world, the Minnesota State Law Library weathered economic hardships in 2008. Expressions of gratitude, like the one above, are always welcome, but in tough economic times, they are appreciated even more. As a morale booster, we posted some of our [kudos](#) on our website.

The State of Minnesota turned 150 in May 2008. The Minnesota State Law Library shares this birthday, as well as an older one. The Library and the Territory of Minnesota were created by the same act of Congress on March 3, 1849. Although the original name (State Library), as well as oversight responsibility for our operation from the Executive to the Judicial Branch, was changed, excellence in service has remained constant over the years. Library staff provides a wide variety of information services to the Judiciary, the Executive and Legislative branches of State Government, bar members statewide, and the public. We take seriously our commitment to be the “**First Rung on the Ladder of Justice.**” Find out more about the [Library’s history](#) online.

This is my seventh and last annual report since becoming the 25th [State Law Librarian](#). I note that I am the fifth woman to hold this position, and I leave after 25 years of State Law Library service. For one who appreciates numbers, it feels like destiny. I take this opportunity to thank all present and former staff who worked hard to make the Minnesota State Law Library a great institution.

Barbara L. Golden
State Law Librarian

Fun Facts

If you were to place the Library’s print volumes (315,004) and microfiche (471,057) lengthwise, you would travel nearly 100 miles (99.3). That’s almost four marathons!

Natura Brevium, a handbook for lawyers on English common law, is the Library’s oldest volume, published February 27, 1557.

It would only take 44.7 days to skim all of the appellate opinions from May 1996 through December 2008 (20,106) in the [State Courts’ Appellate Opinions Archive](#). The State Law Library archived 1,758 appellate court opinions in 2008.

500 governmental entities published some or all of their local laws online by the end of 2008. Watch the [list of county and municipal ordinances](#) grow.

Profile

Staffing

Eighteen staff members provide reference, outreach and technical services to the Judicial Branch and the public. Many of these positions are part-time, including a circuit-riding law librarian who was added to the staff in 2008. This librarian primarily travels in southwest Minnesota, providing services to county law libraries and their public library partners. Budgetary constrictions and a hiring freeze left us with two vacancies (1.6 FTE), including the significant loss of a full-time electronic services librarian who maintained the Library website and CourtNet pages. These and other functions have now been divided among six current Library employees.

Staff Milestones

Barbara Golden, State Law Librarian, 25 years of service
Bill Erlandsen, Library Clerk, 20 years of service
Susan Larson, promoted to Head of Public Services

Collection

The Library collection numbers 315,004 print volumes and 78,510 microfiche volume equivalents, for a total of 393,514 volumes. In addition to print resources, the Library subscribes to eight comprehensive electronic databases, including HeinOnline, Lexis and Westlaw. In compliance with our [Collection Development Plan](#), the Library collects primary legal materials of the federal government, its territories, and the states; secondary materials on a wide variety of legal subjects; Minnesota law on a comprehensive level; and federal and state government documents selected through depository programs. All of these resources support the work of the three branches of state and local government throughout Minnesota and are available to the general public.

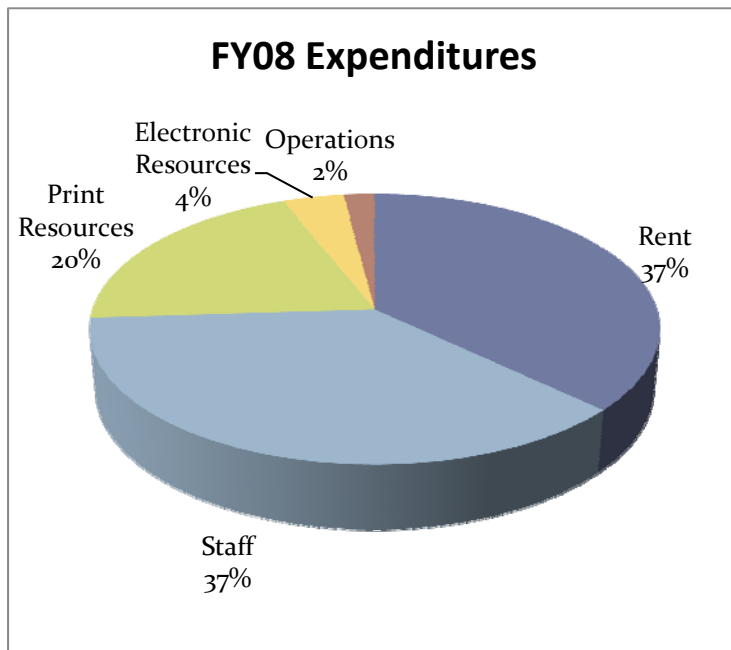
Locations

The primary law library location is the ground floor of the Judicial Center. Library staff maintains working libraries in several other Judicial Center locations and in the Supreme Court chambers in the State Capitol.



Supreme Court Conference Room,
Capitol Building

Expenditures



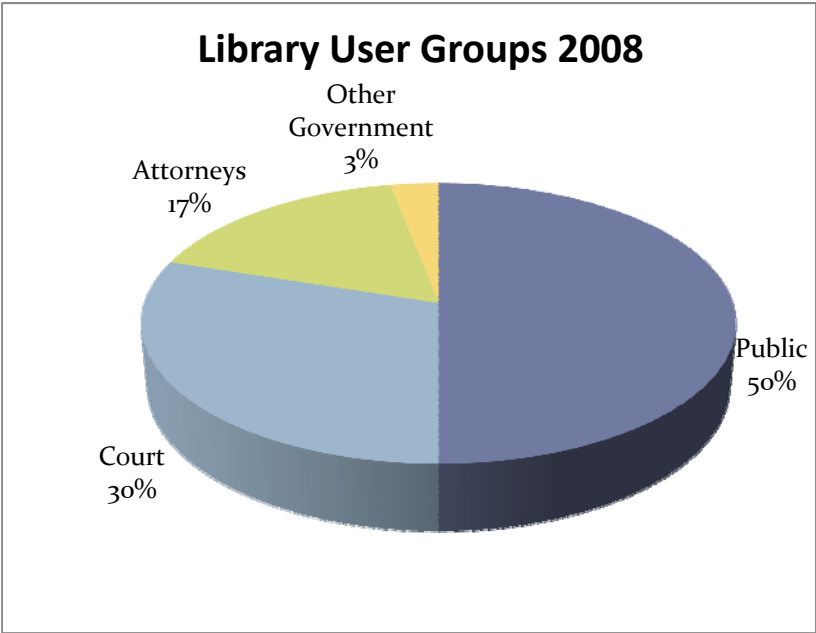
The State Law Library is a good steward of public funds and is cost-efficient in comparison to other law libraries. *The American Lawyer's* 2008 law library survey of the top 200 firms reported an average library budget at \$5,899,610 and the median at \$3,804,055. In contrast, the State Law Library provides comparable services for a mere \$2,145,000.

Public & Electronic Services

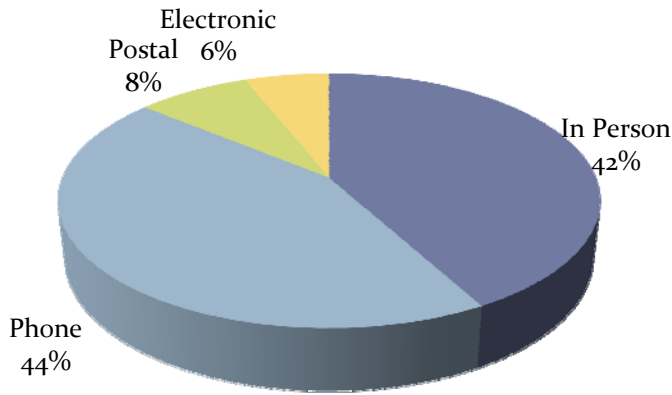
- 1044 reference requests received and answered via email
- 316 reference requests from jail inmates and state hospital patients
- 1622 items scanned and emailed (as a result of a request)
- 5891 estimated pages of material copied and mailed
- 2520 items circulated from the collection
- 106 items circulated to interlibrary loan networks
- 16,796 estimated reference questions (including electronic, postal, phone, and in-person requests)

The Public Services department is the public face of the State Law Library, and circulation and reference statistics express our interactions with Library users. Numbers alone do not convey the success or the tone of the interaction, but do help us spot trends and respond to needs. Overall, our statistics confirm that we are busier than ever, that public use is on the rise, and that we are doing more for the courts than in years past. During 2008, staff worked with twelve groups, involving 258 individuals, to provide tours and orientations of Library facilities and services; additionally, 393 PowerPoint introductions to the Library were emailed to new Judicial Branch employees.

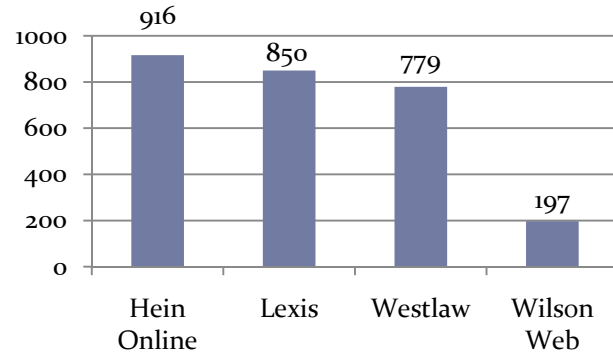
At the request of a public patron, “Open to the Public” was added to the sign near the entrance to the Library. It is a visible reminder of a national trend in law library usage. The general public is our largest patron group in terms of service. In 2008, they submitted 50% of the reference questions handled by our staff. As a public library, MSLL embraces the mission of the Judicial Branch: *to provide justice through a system that assures equal access for the fair and timely resolution of cases and controversies.*



Method of Contact for Questions and Requests 2008



Hours of Commercial Database Usage by Library Patrons in 2008



www.lawlibrary.state.mn.us

2,425,218 hits on the Library website (6,598 per day)
 141,609 website visitors (25,346 repeat visitors)
 13:10 average duration per visit in minutes.
 484,956 Library catalog hits
 145,693 opinions archive search engine queries

The Library website is our most visible service to the world, available 24/7. Although used primarily by residents of the United States (94.36%), individuals from 98 other countries visited our website during 2008. The website makes many of our resources accessible to all our users, from indigent pro se patrons to judges on the highest appellate courts.

Email reference questions submitted to “Ask a Law Librarian” are representative of the services provided by the Law Library. In Fiscal Year 2008, there were 16.6% more questions sent to “Ask a Law Librarian” than in 2007. About a third of the questions are referrals from the Court website, (31.7% in 2008, down slightly from 32.7% in 2007). In both years, two-thirds of the questions came from the general public (non-attorneys).

Topical Reference Requests: An analysis of the FY 2008 questions from non-attorneys reveals the difficult times that people are now facing. There were many questions about state and federal court procedures in all courts, from conciliation courts to appellate courts. Questions about forms are predominant. The information available on the Judicial Branch’s virtual Self-Help Center (SHC), as well as the statewide courthouse computer terminals connected to the SHC, helped Library staff provide better assistance to our

patrons. Criminal expungement requests increased due to problems patrons had concerning securing and retaining jobs, obtaining housing, etc. There were more employment questions, including issues about layoffs, reductions in pay, and involuntary leaves. It should be noted, however, that family law issues continue to be the most prevalent subject area.

FAQs: When it becomes evident that certain resources generate significant interest, the Library creates Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) entries for the website. The posting of these answers to questions that we receive on a consistent basis best utilizes staff time and effort and quickly makes the material more easily accessible to the public. All the [Library FAQs](#) are available online. This FAQ page is the third most visited on the Library website. One of the Library's most popular FAQs, which was created in 2008, relates to the significant increases in both mortgage foreclosures and bankruptcies, as well as interest in [Law on the Edge](#). This FAQ is a collection of materials and information on a Minnesota decision commonly known as the [Credit River Decision](#). The Library's FAQ on this topic was cited in [The ZipDebt Blog](#) on December 18, 2008; it was the fourth most visited page on our website with 39,500 hits in 2008.

FAQs from Our Website

Criminal Law

- Does Minnesota have a website where I can run a [criminal background check](#)?
- How can I [expunge a criminal record](#)?
- What do minors and adults dating minors need to know about [sex and the law](#)?

Family Matters

- [Child support and custody](#): Where can I get information or help?
- Can a [custodial parent move out of state](#) with the child?
- Where can I find basic information on [wills and probate](#)?

Finding the Law

- Is my boss required to give me [breaks at work](#)?
- I heard there is a little-known way to legally opt out of paying [income taxes](#). It sounds good. Is it too good to be true?
- Where can I find information on [mortgage foreclosures](#) in Minnesota?

Working with the Courts

- How do I [appeal](#) from a district court decision?
- How can I [find a case by citation](#)?
- What [self-help resources](#) are available on the Internet?

Outreach Services

Law Library Service to Prisoners (LLSP)

9224 DOC prisoners (as of 7-1-08)
87 prison visits
7,384 miles traveled
1,145 inmate interviews
1,891 individual inmates assisted
30,152 inmate requests processed
1,403 hours worked by volunteers

The mission of LLSP is to provide law library service to inmates incarcerated in Minnesota. The program supports the Judicial Branch core values of equal, accessible, and fair access to justice. Circuit-riding prison law librarians conduct monthly visits to eight adult correctional facilities to meet with inmates. Questions that cannot be answered on-site using the prison collections of core legal materials are researched at the Minnesota State Law Library. Inmates can also write or call LLSP for assistance with their legal research.

In 2008, the number of requests filled increased 18.6%, and the number of inmates requesting services increased by 5.1%. For more information, read the separate [LLSP 2008 Annual Report](#).

County Law Library Program (CLLP)

The [County Law Library Program](#) provides guidance and assistance in the operation and maintenance of county law libraries throughout Minnesota. In 2008, CLLP continued to distribute free sets of primary legal resources, including *Minnesota Statutes*, *Laws of Minnesota*, and *Minnesota Rules*, to the county law libraries. The Program assisted five county law libraries with significant collection development and management issues, and several phone consultations and onsite visits occurred. CLLP remains an important source of filing fee information for both county law libraries and court operations.

In 2008, significant emphasis was placed on the continuing development of the [Minnesota Law Libraries Self-Help Network](#). A circuit riding-librarian (formerly with the Fifth Judicial Project and a contract employee with the Network), was hired by the State Law

Library to coincide with the rollover of the Fifth Judicial District into the statewide network on July 1, 2008. The rollover proved seamless to member libraries, and the Network was expanded into the Eighth Judicial District. As of December 31, 2008, eighteen counties have joined, including Steele, Mille Lacs and Anoka, as well as all counties in the Fifth Judicial District.

In May, the State Law Librarian presented a program entitled “Minnesota Law Libraries Self-Help Network” at the *Self Represented Litigants* preconference program for the 2008 Equal Justice Conference held in Minneapolis. The program discussed the development of our network as one approach to working with self represented litigants.

Judicial History



Judge Cahill and State Law Librarian Barbara Golden greet fairgoers.

and Barbara Golden, State Law Librarian, were among the founding members. Barb Golden also played a substantial role in its first publication: *Testimony: Remembering Minnesota's Supreme Court Justices*. [Photographs and portrait reproductions of former Supreme Court Justices](#) are now available, as is the [Minnesota Supreme Court Table of Succession](#), which details the line of succession from the first to the present Supreme Court Justices.

On behalf of the Minnesota Supreme Court Historical Society, some of the Library's historical artifacts were displayed at the State Fair on August 29, 2008, in the Sesquicentennial tent. Six to seven thousand people passed by the table.

The State Law Library continues to support the efforts and documentation of the Minnesota Supreme Court Historical Society, which was founded in 2007. Former Supreme Court Justice Sam Hanson, Associate Justice Paul Anderson,

Library 2.0

Library staff has enthusiastically embraced the concept of Library 2.0, a series of technological tools to provide better, more interactive access to library resources. These new and emerging technologies are rapidly changing how information is used and created, particularly on the Internet. With that in mind, several law library staff members experimented with these new technologies by participating in [23 Things on a Stick: A](#)

[Library Learning 2.0 Program](#), an ongoing tutorial sponsored by Minnesota's seven multicounty/multitype library systems. With the knowledge and skills developed in this tutorial training, as well as many other workshops attended throughout the year, Library staff created several collaborative tools for internal use, making the Library more efficient. Wikis, which are collaborative websites whose content can be edited by anyone in the designated wiki community, were created for the Technical Services and Public Services departments. These Library wikis allow staff to post and edit policies, procedures, collection development decisions, reference sources and research tips. The Library's use of SharePoint for staff collaboration also increased in 2008.

Another significant component of Library 2.0 is empowering library users. To this end, the Library enhanced its presence on the web beyond our website, beginning with [LibraryThing](#) (a social networking site) and [Wikipedia](#) (a collaborative web-based encyclopedia). The Library is experimenting with these web tools to allow for patron comments.

Professional Collaboration

In order to expand professional knowledge and collaboration, most Library staff participates in various professional associations. Barbara Golden served on the Minnesota Library Access Center (MLAC) Advisory Board. Daniel Lunde serves on the Minnesota State Library Advisory Council. The staff also participates in intra-branch collaborations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Judicial Branch. Daniel is a member of the judicial Diversity Collaboration Group and the MJB Competencies Workgroup.

Focus Group Meetings: When the Office of Administrative Hearings recently relocated to the Department of Revenue building, Library staff met with them to discuss Library services and resources that are available to their staff and to give them an orientation/tour of the Library. Subsequently, staff met with and provided tours to their summer staff. Each year, Library staff also participates in the orientation sessions provided to all new Judicial Branch employees. These interactive meetings, in turn, help educate Library staff about the needs and services of various departments and courts within the judicial system, as well as other governmental agencies, so that the Library is better able to support the work of the patrons.

Dennis Skrade participated in a local archivist focus group meeting, *Connecting to Collections/Minnesota*, sponsored by the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS), to identify ways in which each library or collection can draw on the other's expertise in preserving, documenting and providing public access to specialized collections, as well as utilizing the resources of MHS.

Technical Services

6,075 print items added
17 digital materials added
7,708 microfiche added
1,413 electronic records added to online catalog
1,617 briefs processed
2,134 transcripts processed
2,844 federal government depository documents added
39,898 online catalog edits

The Technical Services department is often thought of as a staid center of sanity. While it is true that sanity reigns, the department experiences constant change. A substantial change in 2008 was the retirement of a cost control system that was created by Library staff in 1983. This remarkable program, which was years ahead of its time, kept track of collection costs and provided information for making decisions about materials to purchase and retain. The serials (periodicals) module from Aleph, our integrated online library system, replaced the aforementioned program, and this component now tracks our materials budget. Standardizing our acquisitions/payment procedures resulted in \$1044.49 in savings for FY08.

Microfiche materials: In order to conserve space, preserve materials, share resources, and facilitate electronic transmission of documents, the Library converts paper copies of published Minnesota appellate court briefs to microfiche. To help defray costs, seven libraries and institutions now purchase the microfiche brief sets from the Library. The University of St. Thomas Law School Library was added to the participant group in 2008. The Library also changed the fiche vendor to obtain cost savings, due to a dramatic increase in the number of fiche: from 472 in 2007 to 1332 in 2008.

Access to the National Center for State Courts microfiche collection was enhanced by cataloging each publication in 2008. In the past, only paper indexes were available for this collection that includes a wide variety of research papers, surveys, and judicial publications from courts throughout the United States.

Cataloging and duplicate materials: The Library continues to catalog materials for eight Minnesota county law libraries; in 2008, 1178 items were cataloged for these libraries. When the Law Library does original cataloging - producing a catalog record for publications that have not been cataloged before - it is reimbursed by OCLC, the online system we use to catalog materials, for each original record. This decreases costs for the State Law Library.

Exchange of library materials: As the Library receives duplicate library materials, they are offered gratis to law libraries around the country. In 2008, the Library offered 779 items, 489 of which were requested; MSLL needed 83 items and received 30 items gratis from other institutions, allowing the Library to augment its collection with free materials. One request came from a law student who was travelling home to Nigeria; she requested various American legal periodicals, especially the *Harvard Law Review*, for her law school in Nigeria.

Archives: The State Library/State Law Library archives was reorganized and moved to larger quarters within the Library. Organizational work was also done in collecting, organizing, and moving the archives of the Minnesota Association of Law Libraries and the Capitol Area Library Consortium to a new location in the library.

Digital resources: In 2008 the Library continued its collaboration in the Minnesota Digital Library, an electronic collection of over 31,000 images and documents from more than 95 organizations across the state. MSLL currently has nine publications of historical significance and interest in the Digital Library, five of which were added in 2008: the first five volumes of the official version of *Minnesota Reports*. Other materials from the Law Library collection that are included are *Constitutional Convention Debates 1857, Democrat and Republican*; *Index Digest to all the laws of Minnesota to 1893*; and the first court rules for Minnesota, which were handwritten in Stillwater on August 13, 1849. All of the publications, which document the history of the court and political systems of Minnesota, can be viewed at [Minnesota Digital Library](#).

Summary

The Library continues to explore opportunities to provide innovative and cost effective services to a broad base of library patrons. In difficult economic times those efforts are more necessary than ever. As the accolades at the beginning of the report indicate, the Library is succeeding in meeting patron needs.