

**Minutes of the**  
**Workgroup on Libraries & Access to Justice**  
**2 o'clock p.m.**  
**Wednesday, May 21, 2014**  
**225 Spring Street, Room 4B**  
**Wethersfield, CT**

**Members in attendance:** Atty. Jeff Dowd & Ms. Krista Hess, Co-chairs; Ms. Aisha Banks, Atty. Nancy Boone, Ms. Heather Collins, Ms. Ann Doherty, Ms. Curleen Elliot, Atty. Cheryl Halford, Atty. Barbara McGrath, Ms. Anne Rajotte, Mr. Christopher Roy, Mr. Jonathan Stock, Ms. Julie Styles.

**Members absent:** Ms. Dawn LaValle, Co-chair; Atty. Jamey Bell, Mr. Joseph DiBenedetto, Ms. Jocelyn Kennedy.

- 1.) Welcome and Introduction of new members by the Atty. Dowd and Ms. Hess: Ms. Curleen Elliott, of the Norwalk Community College Library, has been added as a member. Another new member, Ms. Jocelyn Kennedy of the University of Connecticut Law Library, was unable to attend today's meeting.
- 2.) Approval of [Meeting Minutes of April 9, 2014](#): The minutes were approved with a minor correction to a member name.
- 3.) Status of Judicial/Academic law librarians survey: Co-chair Dowd presented the results of a survey completed by 17 government librarians and six academic librarians. The 12-question survey was designed to gauge the level of interaction between public librarians and their law librarian counterparts. The results showed that there is some interaction, with public librarians seeking information for patrons on a variety of legal areas, though primarily family (divorce, custody) and housing matters; many also indicated that patrons had questions about probate issues and debt collection and foreclosure. The respondents said that more than half of patrons seeking assistance were self-represented. The data also indicated that people asking for assistance were generally litigants; that is, very few were people actually just trying to educate themselves about the law. The librarians also indicated by majority that hosting pro bono workshops for the public would be very helpful; receiving information about the courts' available services and resources would also be helpful. The librarians also commented that they believe training for public librarians on navigating the branch's law libraries pages and information would be useful.
- 4.) Status of Court Service Center/PID Staff Survey: Co-chair Hess told the members that the survey of CSC/public information desk staff members gave an overall picture of what is important to increasing access to justice through collaborative partnerships. She reported that

eight of 22 Court Service Staff members have had one-to-one meetings with their local librarians, acting as ‘ambassadors’ of information of the services available for the public in our courthouses. Polled about their most requested services, the CSC//PID participants said notary services are a frequent request; pro bono programs would be helpful in public libraries, which are open on nights and weekends and have room meeting space; only 1 in 4 reports having helped a person who had been referred to the local CSC/PID by a public librarian; the staff report that the bulk of contact has been outreach from them to the PLs; more than 1 in 4 assistance requests from PLs to CSC/PID staff related to family/divorce cases; 9 in 10 people who seek assistance from CSC/PID staffers are self-represented; CSC/PID staff are anxious and willing to share their resources with PLs as a way to increase access to justice.

5.) Public Librarians’ Preliminary Survey Results: Co-chair La Valle: This agenda item was postponed because the co-chair was unable to attend due to an emergency.

6.) Focus Groups: Co-chair La Valle: Postponed until the next meeting.

7.) Status of Online Calendar Proposal: Co-chair Dowd

- Members support a shared calendar to be posted on the Branch’s Internet site in location(s) that would be most intuitive for court users. The members believe that a calendar could be designed with simple search features, i.e, clinics by practice area and geographical location. The clinic information would need to be provided to the Branch by the providers and kept timely. Ideally, the clinic info would be listed in a simple format, i.e., “Foreclosure, Stamford” but hyperlinked to the provider’s detailed information on location, scope, time, contact info, etc. After some discussion, the Committee agreed to recommend to the full Access to Justice Commission:
  - **In keeping with the Access to Justice Commission’s mission to work to close the justice gap in Connecticut, and in support of collaborating with all judicial stakeholders, the Workgroup on Libraries and Access to Justice proposes that the full ATJ Commission recommend to the Judicial Branch that it host, on its public Internet website, an easy-to-find, easy-to-understand calendar of pro bono clinics. It should be the responsibility of the pro bono provider/facilitator to provide to the host accurate and timely information, including online links, to the pro bono clinic/workshop. The Judicial Branch should encourage pro bono providers/facilitators to share the calendared information.**

8.) Recommended List of Books for Basic Law Collection: Atty. Dowd, Atty. Rajotte and Ms. Doherty agreed to review, on the Workgroup’s behalf, a list of 20 books recommended by two law librarian professional associations to determine the usefulness and relevancy of the

list. They will assess the recommendations for timeliness and accuracy and relevancy to Connecticut law and Connecticut residents; further, they will examine what Judicial Branch publications would be useful to public libraries for mine-collections of legal information. Judicial publishes a number of information guides useful to self-represented parties, including landlord/tenant rights and responsibilities, and divorce guides. There was discussion about whether the Judicial Branch would agree to foot the cost of printing and distributing materials to public libraries, and whose responsibility it would be to replace outdated or incorrect materials.

- 9.) Assign date for next meeting and assign tasks: No additional tasks were assigned to the group. The next meeting will be on June 24<sup>th</sup> at 2 p.m. at 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, CT. An agenda will be forthcoming. The meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.