

*FROM MARYLAND'S FIRST LEGAL
RESOURCE*

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LIBRARY OPENS NEW SPECIAL COLLECTIONS ROOM

BY STEVE ANDERSON

On September 21, 2006, after several months of construction, the Library opened the doors of its new Special Collections Room to the public. The expanded room, which houses rare books, documents and artwork, offers a state-of-the-art preservation environment so that Maryland's history will be protected long into the future. At the same time, the Library marked the return of its collection of [*John James Audubon's Birds of America*](#) prints, which had undergone substantial restoration at the [*Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts*](#) in Philadelphia. The prints, originally acquired by the Library in the 1830's, are quite valuable and celebrated worldwide for their exquisite artistry.



A view of the bookstacks in the Special Collections Room.

prints. The “double elephant folio” prints previously were bound in four sturdy oversized volumes. However, because of the deterioration of the linings used during the binding process eighty-five years ago, the Conservation Center recommended that each print be stored separately on flat shelving. Therefore, in order to house the restored prints in properly designed cabinets, the Library sought expansion of its older, much smaller “Rare Books Room.”

The modern, improved Room features a variety of “high tech” systems, designed to preserve the Room’s contents under almost any adverse condition. For example, the Room includes an FM-200 “clean agent” fire suppression system, a leak detection system mounted in the ceiling, custom shelving and cabinetry, and security equipment. An air filtration system with automatic climate controls ensures that the room stays at a constant 62 degrees Fahrenheit with 50 percent humidity.

The Library inaugurated the room on the afternoon of September 20th at an opening reception for Judiciary employees and guests of Maryland’s legal and library communities. The reception’s highlight was a brief address and ribbon-cutting by the Honorable Robert M. Bell of the Court of Appeals, who also serves as Chair of the State Law Library Committee. The Library Director made some remarks and presented an appreciation plaque to the State Archivist, Dr. Edward C. Papenfuse, for his assistance with various aspects of the project.



The Honorable Robert M. Bell officially opens the Room. Standing from left to right are Library Director Steve Anderson, Rolf Kat, Senior Conservator at the Conservation Center, and the Honorable Clayton Greene of the Court of Appeals.

Approximately 110 guests toured the new Room, which featured displays of several rare and valuable items. While some of these works relate to law, the collection also includes many items of historical or scientific importance, acquired during the period in the 1800’s when the Library was known as the *Maryland State Library* and purchased books on a wide variety of topics. In addition to displays of several *Birds of America* prints, guests perused original correspondence between Audubon and State Librarian David Ridgely, the original purchaser of the prints. The exhibition also featured the two oldest books in the collection, *An Abstract of All the Penal Statutes Which Be General, in Force and Use* by Ferdinando Pulton, published in 1579, and *Le Size Part des Reports de Sr. Edward Coke* from 1607, a book written in “Law French.” Of special note were two 19th Century works, which featured hand-painted engravings similar to the *Birds of America* prints. The Library owns a copy of an interesting horticultural work, *The Orchardist’s Companion*, featuring drawings of tree fruits as they existed on the 1800’s, making it a rare documentation of “heirloom” fruits. A work more appreciated for its artistry and history is the 1837 printing of Thomas McKenney’s and James Hall’s *History of the Indian Tribes of North America*, a valuable set that continues to be an early source of information about America’s native peoples. A *sketchbook of Frank Blackwell Mayer* rounded out the exhibition.



Visitors mingle with Chief Judge Bell and inspect the displays.

The Special Collections Room is open to the public for research purposes. Visitors will be asked to review the Library's access and materials handling guidelines in order to ensure that the materials will be preserved long into the future. If visitors require in-depth viewing of the *Birds of America* prints, they are asked to schedule an appointment with the Library staff because of the special nature of this collection.



Le Size Part des Reports de Sr. Edward Coke from 1607.

Photography courtesy of the Court Information Office.

MARYLAND STATE LAW LIBRARY VOLUNTEERS: STEWARDS, ENABLERS AND GUARDIANS

BY RUDOLF B. LAMY

The recruitment and use of volunteers to assist with the work in libraries is both traditional and time-honored. Libraries of all types and sizes are, even in today's technological era, make use of volunteer assistance and expertise, and the Maryland State Law Library is no exception.

Often simply thought of as essential but unpaid staff, volunteers can, and do, contribute a great deal more than just their time and labor. If encouraged to do so, they can bring to any organization added talents, a fresh approach and different motivations.

The Maryland State Law Library is celebrating the opening of its redesigned and remodeled Special Collections Room. That work is a very visible part of the Library's commitment to the preservation of Maryland history and recognition of the Library's stewardship of the documentation of that history. That commitment makes the Library a primary guardian of Maryland history and an important enabler of Maryland historical research.

Just as the Maryland State Law Library relates to Maryland law and history, our volunteers relate to us. At the Library our volunteers are assigned to work on everything from daily chores to special projects. Through their efforts and the always-successful completion of their labors, our volunteers become important enablers of the Library's progress. With their commitment of time and money (remember, they are unpaid!) they make of themselves stewards of all the Library's collections.

Of course, the most difficult part of using volunteers is simply finding them. It is one thing to have projects that volunteers can do and quite another to have volunteers to do those projects. There is also the need to match prospective volunteers and their skills to the work that needs doing.

The Library has, over the years, acquired our volunteers from two main sources. There are those researchers and scholars who use the Library and its resources and then later on become volunteers. There have also been quite a few who have come to us through the good graces of the [Anne Arundel County Department of Aging and Disabilities, Retired Senior Volunteer Program \(RSVP\)](#).

As we now open our new exhibits, the Maryland State Law Library will take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers, past and present, who have through their efforts made a significant contribution to the establishment of our Library as it now exists.

"AUDUBON PRINTS" RETURN TO LIBRARY

BY STEVE ANDERSON



Audubon's "Blue Jay."

John James Audubon's *Birds of America* prints continue to be the world's most renowned artwork featuring avian fauna. Visitors to the Library's permanent exhibit of the prints will be astonished by the intricate details featured on each print. For example, one can easily make out the lines of small feathers or the almost three-dimensional shading of tree bark. Those appreciating fine art also will be impressed by the magnitude of Audubon's accomplishment—a series of 435 lifelike portraits of American birds, a few of which, sadly, are now extinct. The Library displays one or two prints at a time in a special exhibit case in the Library's main reference area. In order to ensure that the fragile prints are exposed to light for only a short period, the works are displayed on a weekly rotating basis. It will take approximately four years to display the entire collection.

The story of Audubon and his artwork is a tale of craftsmanship, entrepreneurship, and a profound appreciation of America's natural resources. One reference book about Audubon and his prints claims that the work is notable because the prints are simply without peer—there is no comparison anywhere in American art. No one before Audubon or since contributed as much to the art of painting birds. No one else used such naturalism or included such a record of the animals' habitat.

John James Audubon was a French immigrant and itinerant wanderer who dabbled in drawing. He soon excelled at the craft. By the 1820's he had ventured on several expeditions throughout the Mississippi Valley and middle America, composing a portfolio of 240 paintings of birds. He accomplished this extraordinary feat primarily by surveying his natural surroundings and living in the woods. He was deeply interested in nature, and would even autopsy the birds he killed in order to find out food sources to include in his works. He experimented with media; most of his drawings combine pencil, pastel, ink, watercolor, crayon, oil and egg white. Upon his return to

audience.

In England, he realized that his works could have a wider audience than wealthy European patricians and enlisted one of Britain's preeminent engravers, Robert Havell, to assist him. Audubon's drawings were traced onto copper plate, and then handpainted by a staff of artisans totaling 50 men and women. Audubon frequently complained that the engravings and colorings were not uniform or exact replicas of his drawings.

Nonetheless, the gregarious Audubon himself began marketing subscriptions to his prints. He had only about 200 subscribers, who paid approximately \$2 per print. In addition, he was a self-taught scientist, authoring his *Ornithological Bibliography*, which the Library also owns, to accompany the prints. One reason for Audubon's productivity can be attributed to his industrious nature; the other reason has more to do perhaps with finances. Audubon's original target of 400 prints ballooned to 435 so that he could ride out the Panic of 1837. In later years, Audubon had hoped to complete a similar work on mammals, but his health was failing, and it became clear that he gave his "all" for the *Birds of America*.

The State Library, the institutional forerunner of today's Law Library, was an original subscriber to the prints, and correspondence between Audubon and the State Librarian David Ridgely is housed inside the Special Collections Room. The State Library acquired the prints at a point in its history when the Library collected many types of works, not just law.

Today about 112 sets of the original 200 still exist. The Library owns 430 of the original 435 prints. Who would have envisioned that the legacies of Audubon and Ridgely would continue into the 21st Century?

Photography courtesy of the Court Information Office.

VINTAGE MARYLAND STATE PUBLICATIONS AT THE LIBRARY

BY MARY JO LAZUN

The Maryland State Law Library answers an amazing array of questions that require consulting our vintage collection of state publications. Most law clerks quickly find that the Library's collection of task force reports can provide a glimpse into legislative intent and the Library's collection of Maryland Manuals acts as an informal "Who's Who" of Maryland politics and government. One researcher is even using the Maryland Board of Education Meeting Minutes to write a history of the education of African Americans in Maryland during the 1950's and 1960's.

The collection also includes press conferences from Governors Lee, Hughes and Schaefer. The evolution of the role of government can be traced through the Maryland Budget which was 127 pages in 1921 and now numbers well over 2,000 pages.

Although most of these publications are listed in the Library's catalog, finding them can be a challenge as the names of state organizations have changed throughout the years. For example, the Maryland Lunacy Commission, whose reports begin in 1887, is now the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Similarly, the Maryland Bureau of Industrial Statistics, which began gathering data in 1886, has evolved into the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulations. If you would like assistance in navigating this collection, the Library's State Publications Librarian, Mary Jo Lazun, or any staff member will be happy to assist.

LIBRARY PRESERVATION: A BRIEF ESSAY

BY STEVE ANDERSON

Libraries, archives and museums exist in order to accomplish two goals for their constituents: to provide access to the public to collections, and to preserve and build those collections for posterity. The Library's new Special Collections Room and the Audubon print conservation project are fine examples of how libraries fulfill their missions to serve society.

These projects remind me of an outstanding book I recently read, authored by Aaron Lansky and entitled "[Outwitting History](#)." As a young adult 30 years ago, Lansky began "saving" books written in Yiddish. At the time, Yiddish books literally were being thrown in the trash because few people had use any longer for literature written in a so-called "dead" language. However, Aaron Lansky saw in these books history, meaning, individuality and art. These books, some of which survived the Holocaust, remain the original record of the life and culture of a people. In order to preserve this unique information, which is found nowhere else, Lansky founded the [National Yiddish Book Center](#).

Those in the library, archives and museum community share Lansky's belief that there is no such thing as a "dead" book or an "outdated" piece of art—all have history and meaning. It is our job to share that history and meaning with others. With a little luck, skill and vision, we all can try to "outwit history" and save literature and art for posterity.

PIXELS

BY DONNA WIESINGER

Although this column is normally about some aspect of the Law Library's technology, in honor of the reopening of our newly renovated Special Collections Room, the focus will shift this issue to the Library's Audubon *Birds of America* prints.

The Library staff was very excited to learn that the prints were featured in a recent video about their restoration. The Conservation Center for Art and Historical Artifacts, the Library's contractor in the restoration process, and WHYY, Philadelphia's local public television station, recently collaborated to film the conservation treatment of the Library's copy of John James Audubon's *Birds of America*.

The 15-minute film shows the restoration process step-by-step and includes commentary by Conservation Center staff. The film is available for viewing at the Maryland State Law Library. Just ask at the Reference Desk, and we'll set you up!

In addition, you can view a short version of the video on the WHYY, Channel 12, website: <http://www.whyy.org/artsandculture/stories.html>. Scroll down the page until you come to the heading "Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts," then click on the link for "Watch this video." The clip uses a Quicktime plugin, which must be loaded on your computer. The free software can be downloaded from the Apple Corporation/Quicktime website at <http://www.apple.com/quicktime/win.html>.

Stay tuned! In the Fall 2006 Pixels column, I'll discuss the new CCH Tax and Business databases which are now available at the Library's public workstations.