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>> Welcome to an episode of Beyond the Bench, a podcast series produced by the Florida Supreme Court. These podcasts will give you a better understanding of how Florida's courts work, and how they work for you.

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>> Hey, my name is Billie Blaine, and I'm the librarian at the Florida Supreme Court, and this is Eric Robinson, and he's the archivist.

>> Hello, Billie.

>> We're here today. We're going to tell you about the Florida Supreme Court Library, kind of who we are and what we do, and how we can help you. The library was established way back in 1845, and that's when the Supreme Court came into being, as well.

>> That's correct. That was our first constitution.

>> So there was a library from the beginning, from the very beginning.

>> Even before the beginning. There was an informal library during our territorial period.

>> So the territorial courts were served by that library?

>> Yes.

>> Okay, so then 1845, established, and the library was – well, the Supreme Court were originally in what used to – what's now the old State Capitol, right?

>> Correct.

>> And all three branches of government were there, you said.

>> All three together under one roof.

>> Uh-huh, and then we got our own building in 19 –

>> 1913.

>> Thirteen, and then we've been in this build a since –

>> Forty-nine.

>> Nineteen forty nine, yeah. The library is the oldest, well, one of two of the oldest state-supported libraries in Florida, and the other one is right across the street.

>> The State Library was created at the same time that we were.

>> Out of the same statute, you said, exact same time. So they can claim it, we can claim it, but two of the oldest state-supported libraries in Florida. The Supreme Court Library was originally designed for use by the Supreme Court, the justices, and the attorneys that practice before the court, and we still serve

that function, but now we do a lot more. Our staff is three librarians, and Eric is the archivist and also the office manager. And our main patrons now, well, we're open to the public, but our main patrons are the staff attorneys that work with the justices. They do a lot of the research and writing, and so we're here, really, to support them, and each justice has three staff attorneys, and usually, they have an intern. They come and go. We're also open to the public Monday through Friday, 8 to 5, and we serve the Office of the State Court's administrator, and that's, basically, the administrative arm of the Florida courts. And so we work with them and their staff and state agencies, and also, as I mentioned, the general public. We have over 120,000 print volumes, and yes, we do still have print. You'll be happy to hear, Eric.

>> That's a good thing.

>> There's still books in this library, and, as far as our books, our most valuable resources I really that historical Florida legal resources, and so statutes, laws, the Constitution, going all the way back to when Florida became a state and even before.

>> When it became an American territory in 1821, in fact.

>> So all of that, we have in print going all the way back, and most of that isn't online. It's really not accessible anywhere, but it's still valuable for research. I mean, it's, you know, it's the law, and it's still important, and so anybody that needs that, we have it here, where they might not find it elsewhere.

>> And that's especially important at the highest appellate level.

>> Mm-hm, exactly. It's surprising, in a way, how many times we hear from the staff attorneys that they need some of that older, the older law that still is applicable today. We also have secondary sources, which they're the books and encyclopedias and dictionaries, they're the sources that explain the law, and you know, we all need that. Even lawyers need that. So that's really valuable, and we have that available. We concentrate on Florida law, for obvious reasons, but we also have federal law also, both in print and online. We're also a federal government depository, as far as for government documents. We don't get everything, obviously, but we choose certain areas to collect in. And so we get those either in print or we also have access online, and part of that is we have to make all of that accessible to the public, anybody that needs any of that. Tell me, go ahead and tell me, Eric, about the archives and the rare books collection.

>> Well, the rare books are rare because we bought them when they were do 150 or 160 years ago, and we're still using them, but we're only using them rarely, because they're not called for very often.

>> Because they're rare books.

>> Correct. Another definition of rare. The archive is something that's more recent. Our second librarian, Brian Polley, started the archives back in the early

1980s, and that's where all collection, more or less, started, the late 70s to the early 80s, and we're keeping up, as best we can, with the justices' papers, and these are all physical papers right now. Probably, in the very near future, there won't be any paper at all, but I'm just now catching up on all the paper archives with cataloging and preserving.

>> And making it accessible to anybody that's doing historical research.

>> Yes, exactly.

>> And all those, maybe not all, but most of those papers, most of that collection, they come from the justices themselves directly.

>> The collection is entirely focused on the justices' working papers. So that we have speeches, we have drafts of opinions, but those are confidential currently, and the public can't see those without asking special permission of the justices.

>> Yeah, some of it is confidential, but there's still a lot of really valuable, interesting material there.

>> Lots of good stuff

>> Yeah, and the rare books, we have a rare book room –

>> We do.

>> That we're really proud of.

>> And there wasn't enough room in the rare book room for all the rare books that we do have. They were on our general shelves, and a number of them were being treated rather poorly, just by being left there. So we've picked out the things that needed extra care, and we're caring for them in that room.

>> And I always like to refer to that as a working collection, meaning anybody that needs to use any of that stuff we'll pull it off the shelves.

>> Nothing is for display. Even our oldest book from 1597 is available for research.

>> Yep, might have to wear white gloves, but you can use anything that you need.

>> You might.

>> And along with that, all of the books that we have in the library, you can come in, anybody can come in and use them. They don't circulate, though. We don't let them leave the library, for the most part. So you would just take notes or whatever you needed. But along with that, our three librarians can help you do your research. So if someone out there is, you know, representing themselves in court or just has some kind of a curiosity about something, they can come in, and the librarians can help them. We can't give them legal advice, obviously. We can't tell them how to proceed with their case or anything like that, but we can kind of direct their research and maybe get them started on – give them the

help they need to at least get started on their project. As I mentioned, we have print, but we also have computers for Internet access, and we have Westlaw, too, which is free for anybody that comes in. Westlaw's a commercial, a great, big commercial legal research database, and it's something that attorneys, you know, it's very costly for attorneys, but we offer it for free for anybody that can come into the library and wants to use it. And then, of course, if somebody wants to do archival research or rare book research, you can help them with that.

>> And I do.

>> And you do. We also have a document delivery service, which means if you need a particular resource, and you know exactly what it is, you have a cite to it, we can copy and send it to you. There's a small fee for that. And as I mentioned, we're open to the public, Monday through Friday, 8 to 5. You can call us if you want, 850-488-8919, or you can see our website by going to the Florida Supreme Court website and then clicking on the Law Library. So that's FloridaSupremeCourt.org. And call us or stop by and if we can help you with anything. Thanks, Eric.

>> All right, and you too, Billie.

>> Okay.

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>> Thank you for listening to be on the bench. The mission of Florida's courts is to protect rights and liberties, uphold and interpret the law, and provide for the peaceful resolution of disputes. To fulfill this mission, courts need the trust of the people they serve. These podcasts are designed to strengthen your confidence in Florida's courts by increasing your understanding of them. We hope you join us again.

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