

Through the Looking Glass session

Petal Kinder, Court Librarian, High Court of Australia

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Everything was gargantuan – an enormous venue, over 2000 attendees, vast auditoriums, and a simply massive Trade Exhibition. There was something for everyone, from the solo librarian to the cataloguer, to the teacher of legal research and law librarianship. It covered Special Interest Sections such as courts, foreign and comparative law, academic law libraries and private law libraries, this section has a membership of over 1600 firm, corporate, and independent law librarians and comprises more than one third of the membership of AALL

The theme of the conference, Energise, Explore, Evolve, was followed through in the title and content of many of the papers - How to energise your catalogue, energise your students, energise your curriculum, energise your patrons and energise your law firm, evolving legal education and exploring library 2.0.

Issues discussed concerned the use of technology in law firms for the purpose of case and client management; document management and electronic discovery; information literacy; and presentation technologies.

Some papers mentioned a more traditional mix such as email and power point while many papers made mention of more Web 2.0 based technology, or what some people refer to as Bloomberg technology such as blogs, podcasts, RSS Feeds and the requirement of meta data for more effective retrieval of documents. There were also papers, (which I unfortunately did not attend) on exploring Second Life and teleporting yourself to a virtual world.

One paper, titled the Future of subject access in the 21st century, discussed the pros and cons of issues arising from users bypassing catalogues and using folksonomy or social tagging as opposed to controlled vocabulary. Other papers dealt with the subject of International law and treaty research, while yet others consigned themselves to discrete topics such as the legislative history of the Oregon Death with Dignity Act or demystifying Patent Searching.

As I said, there was something for everyone and there were a lot of papers. The Program catalogue itself was huge with 66 sessions held over three days. Each session is graded according to a level i.e. introductory, intermediate or advanced, a competency skill is added together with a target audience plus an abstract is given for each of them. It is highly recommended that you read through the program prior to attending and decide which sessions to attend otherwise you will be totally confused.

If you miss a session or there are sessions held concurrently you can purchase audio recordings of each session they are also available in MP3 format.

Prior to leaving any AALL conference the usual practice is for people to put their name down and register for the next year's conference, and even book their accommodation. I tried to book into one of the conference hotels two months prior and was told that if I had not booked at the previous conference I would need to go on what is called a 'wait list'. I put my name on the wait list but it was akin to 'waiting for Godot.'

Having received a special invitation to attend the conference I was put into the VIP category. This meant I was invited to many 'meet and greet' cocktail sessions. I was also invited to say a few words at the AGM at which I heard that the coffers of the AALL hold over 4 million dollars – no wonder they can afford to have a large administrative machine behind the usual Committee members and achieve such a fantastic educational program.

It's no wonder also that they could, and I am certain they had to, afford to pay for the keynote speaker, David Pogue personal-technology columnist for the New York Times, who, after graduating from Yale with a music degree, spent ten years conducting and arranging Broadway musicals in New York.

He was absolutely brilliant, the best keynote speaker, with the exception of course of our own keynote speaker Chief Justice Robert French, that I have ever heard. His paper titled *Disruptive Tech: What's New, and How It Will Change Everything*, was witty, informative and set the pace and theme for the rest of the conference. He identified megatrends and spoke about how they would change our lives – trends such as skype and voice to text could save us money and time. He discussed wireless and web 2 with its attendant problems such as privacy, credibility and permanence and finished with a very polished satirical musical number about UTube set to the tune of Sonny and Cher's "I've Got You Babe".
http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/david_pogue_says_simplicity_sells.html

On the whole it was an eye opener. The meeting of new people and exchange of contact details was extremely worthwhile. For instance I met David McFadden, Chair of the Foreign, Comparative and International Law (FCIL) Special Interests Section (SIS) specialising in Internships & International Exchanges. He asked if I would distribute information about the AALL FCIL Committee on Internships and International Exchanges. I have since done so via the ANZ e-list. However, for those who missed my email, if you are interested in participating in an exchange or visit, or if you are willing to host an exchange or a visitor in your library, have a look at the following website for information:
<http://aallnet.org/sis/fcilsis/internshipsnewsite.html>

Everyone I met at AALL was hospitable and friendly, it was a great and valuable experience and I thank my sponsors Kluwer Law International and ALLA for sending me to the conference.

IALL – Mumbai – December 2007

The International Association of Law Libraries (IALL) presents a Course in law librarianship in a different country each year. Founded in 1959 it has over 600 members worldwide. The courses or conferences have been held since 1966 with the eighth course being held in Sydney in May 1981 and the 18th in Melbourne.

Last year the 26th Course was held in Mumbai. It was held in early December due to the need to avoid the monsoon season.

IALL courses are quite different in content and numbers to the AALL conference. Usually anywhere from 90 - 120 people attend and the content is focused on the legal system of the host country.

The program is over five days and covers three aspects. First there are sessions on the legal system. Papers are presented by judges, lawyers, academics and librarians. In Mumbai we were given an overview of the common law system and courts of India followed by specific papers on human rights and women's rights during which we heard the very sad story of the prevalence of dowry death in India, environmental law, the training of lawyers, and the publishing of caselaw online.

A second part of any IALL program includes cultural events, for example in Mumbai we had walking tours of various private and public libraries, visits to temples and Ghandi's home. The third part of the program incorporates social events. On the opening night we were treated to a Bollywood extravaganza of music and dance, both classical and regional.

IALL is what I would call a boutique conference where one is provided with specialist legal information about a specific jurisdiction. Due to the small number of people attending it allows for the making of solid and enduring contacts and, if you are in need of hard to obtain resources from overseas, then this is one conference where you will find people from many countries who are more than willing to assist you.

This year the conference will be held in Puerto Rico in late November once again, as with Mumbai, to avoid the hurricane season which has so unfortunately devastated parts of the Caribbean only a week or so ago. Next year the conference will be held in Istanbul and in 2010 we go to The Hague. I would encourage as many of you as possible to join IALL. It is a friendly, collaborative, informative and extremely valuable Association.