

## **American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) Meeting and Conference** **A REPORT**

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My attendance at the 97<sup>th</sup> Annual American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) Meeting and Conference as the 4<sup>th</sup> Ellen Schaffer Grant Recipient was very significant, and fruitful for me. The experience was very rewarding for a professional law librarian from the Philippines. One significant advantage in attending the AALL meeting and conference is the establishment of linkages with fellow law librarians. I have now received communications from publishers and librarians such as Ms. Mirela Roznovschi, Janice Hyde, Mila Rush and others.

Another advantage was in attending the lectures which are relevant to the Electronic Judicial Library Project of the Supreme Court of the Philippines and the education and training of law librarians. It is noteworthy to mention that the Supreme Court E-Library <http://www.supremecourt.gov.ph> was launched last November 19, 2004. It is the first web-based electronic library in the Philippine government. Meeting with the Law Library of Congress officials has facilitated my research of unpublished Supreme Court decisions in Washington, DC. The *Benchmark*, the bi-monthly publication of the Supreme Court of the Philippines Public Information Office in their article "Court Library Now Online" stated that "Mrs. Ong recovered a substantial amount of missing unreported decisions while attending a seminar in the United States last July."

Initially, I was able to share the results of my travels with my fellow Philippine law librarians and library science students through the Philippine Group of Law Librarian's (PGLL) forum held last August 20, 2004. Other relevant topics such as legal deposit, copyright, networking and resource sharing will form part of a three day conference to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the PGLL this August 2005 where I am the conference chair. The PGLL welcomes FCIL and AALL members as speakers/lecturers or participants in this important event.

The most significant opportunity for me was being given the honor to be a part of the panel of foreign law librarians to share experiences in Philippine law librarianship with the other law librarians in different countries. The sharing of experiences on topics such as education, professional associations, continuing education and training were truly global in context. To be able to introduce the practice of Philippine Law Librarianship is indeed important for this is new to law librarians from the United States, England and other countries.



**Did you know?** Are you in the final throws of a desperate search for foreign law on the internet? A regional search engine may be just what you need! Search for the law itself, or for the relevant government ministry. **Search Engine Colossus** is a good place to start: <http://www.searchenginecolossus.com/>

### **Grant Recipient continued...**

Now, those who attended AALL know that in the Philippines, law librarianship does exist and plays an important role in the library profession in the entire country. The other members of the panel were Amanda Barratt, University of Cape Town (South Africa), Louise Hamill, Inland Revenue Department (New Zealand), and Jules Winterton, Acting Director and Librarian, Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (London).

Acknowledgement of my receipt of the grant was made throughout the entire duration of the conference in dinners, luncheons and publications.

The dinner hosted by Oceana was an important opportunity to meet the presidents of CALL, AALG and BIALL and to renew acquaintances with Mr. & Mrs. David Cohen whom I met in the Philippines in the 1970s. Mr. Rubens Medina, Law Librarian of Congress extended the invitation to the Supreme Court of the Philippines to join the *Global Information Network (GLIN)* during the dinner tendered by The Law Library of Congress. A formal invitation letter followed after the visit. He, together with his staff further invited me to visit the Law Library of Congress in Washington D.C. to formally orient me about the *Global Legal Information Network (GLIN)*, and to assess the Philippine Law collection. This I did right after the AALL meeting. Ms. Hyde did the orientation of GLIN, Ms. Bernal assisted me in locating the Asian collection of the Library of Congress where I hoped to find materials for my research.

They were generous to donate a publication entitled "*Philippine Holdings in the Library of Congress 1960-1987*," wherein I was surprised to see two entries under my name. Mr. Kersi B. Shroff was so kind to arrange a visit to the United States Supreme Court. While in Washington I was also able to visit a World Bank Library and the National Archives where I was able to gather significant number of unpublished Philippine Supreme Court decisions 1940-1941.

The luncheon for foreign librarians and the FCIL SIS Reception for attendees at the Harvard Law School Library further gave me the opportunity to become acquainted with fellow law librarians.



### **Grant Recipient continued...**

To be formally introduced to about 3,000 law librarians attending the conference during the Association Luncheon was notable. After this event, I was approached by some law librarians of Philippine descent and some who have friends in the Philippines or who have visited the Philippines. There were several write-ups starting with the FCIL *News and Events*, conference kit pamphlet entitled "Awards & Acknowledgements" on page 5 and in two issues of "The Hub."

The Exhibits introduced me to law publishers, a considerable number of which I had encountered for the first time. I am surprised by the reaction of some who learned that a number of institutions in the Philippines subscribe to the *Westlaw* and *Lexis*. It is noteworthy to say that they have included the Supreme Court in their mailing list of "hard copy" and/or email. I have already received some upon my return to work this Monday, August 2, 2004. I was able to purchase some titles and some were given free during the convention. This has facilitated collection development.

The only problem encountered was the hotel change on the last day. Hotel reservation made was until July 14 or the end of the meeting. It was only upon my arrival that I learned that there were functions planned for the night of July 14. Although the room was still available, the hotel was charging the regular rate of more than \$300 for a day's extension. Their reason given by the hotel is that extension should have been done in advance.

My sole suggestion to the FCIL is to notify the awardee of the grant sooner. It is difficult for foreign librarians to get a US visa. Applications for visas and interviews can take about two months. I was able to get my passport with the approved visa the day before I left. I was lucky to be able to get a ticket on the same day.

Having experienced the difficulty of obtaining a visa and having traveled twenty two hours straight from the Philippines to Boston to attend the 97<sup>th</sup> Annual American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) Meeting and Conference were insignificant as compared to the experiences that I had as a professional law librarian - information was not only gained, it was shared with other fellow law librarians all over the world. Attendance at AALL opened a lot of doors to opportunities for further development of the law library profession globally. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Ms. Ellen Schaffer, Nona K. Beisenherz, Jean M. Wenger, Mary Strouse and the whole FCIL SIS for giving me this rare opportunity to attend the AALL and for making sure that my stay was memorable, noteworthy and enjoyable.