We are heading steadily for Baltimore and the waterfront. One deadline after the other goes by shaping the events of the Annual Meeting and it is not too early to ask ourselves what we want to accomplish there or in the meantime.

At the heart of the activities are the educational programs. They have been decided since last fall, with some disappointment for our SIS. The approaches taken in the selection were explained to some extent in the Program Announcement that came out last December. That notwithstanding, the selection process is a source of concern, and our education chair, Marci Hoffman, has raised several questions and comments in this regard. On the hopeful side I can report that we were given the opportunity to make suggestions regarding the Annual Meeting format and content to the newly established AALL Professional Development Committee chaired by Kay Todd. I have forwarded Marci’s thoughtful suggestions and hope they will be taken into account.

The crunch of the matter is that we are assured only one program slot and have to compete for the others. Educational programs designed to be helpful to our members don’t always make it and at the same time the FCIL SIS is no longer alone in proposing programs with foreign and international contents. We need to coordinate our efforts better and we need to start the process of developing programs much earlier in the year. By the time we meet in Baltimore there is precious little time left to fine-tune proposals before they have to be submitted.

As I write this message the FCIL SIS homepage is under construction and in the competent hands of Anne Burnett. By the time you read it we may have a site where you can post program proposals and any suggestions or wishes you may have for the workings of our SIS. In time it will be linked to the AALLNET. The temporary site is found at http://www.lawsch.uga.edu/fcil/fcil.html.

I have enjoyed reading the report of the Special Committee, “Towards a Renaissance in Law Librarianship,” and feel encouraged by the stand it takes on the need for professional knowledge and educational opportunities. How can we identify what the needs are for our members? Another take on the library profession, a discouraging picture of a fishing expedition, is found in the editorial of Legal Reference Services Quarterly, vol. 15(2) 1996, which I recommend highly. There is much food for thought out there.

From the Vice Chair
by Bill McCloy
University of Washington Law Library

Although the July conference still seems far off, it is already time to ensure continuity and continued strong leadership for our working groups and committees. Many of you have chaired these groups faithfully for a number of years.
years, giving generously of your time and talents. Hats off to you! And thanks to others of you, relative newcomers to our SIS, who have just as enthusiastically stepped up and volunteered to take on a more active role in the future.

While there is no question that most working groups are going strong, I have a few concerns about which I would appreciate feedback from our membership. I will not appoint new or continuing chairs for these groups until I am convinced that you feel that these are still needed. At the Indianapolis conference, no one attended our Processing Issues Working Group (with the exception of the dedicated chair, Sandy Beehler). The previous year, there were only two attendees. Is this because our membership does not have sufficient interest or because (as Aaron Kuperman pointed out in our October issue) these issues are already being discussed in the Technical Services SIS?

Though it is often difficult to attend specialized meetings of other SIS groups with the complications of scheduling and a full plate of our own SIS meetings, the scheduling problem is not solved by planning meetings which do not attract our members’ interest or which duplicate topics being discussed elsewhere.

An ironic twist to the above dilemma is that the International and Intergovernmental Issues Working Group at the Indianapolis conference discussed what many view as primarily a processing issue: the development and implementation of the Library of Congress’ revised classification schedules for United Nations materials (JZ and KZ classifications). Without questioning the importance of the topic or the dedication of those who led the discussion, some members have expressed concern that this topic might have fit better within the scope of the Processing Issues Group or that perhaps a combined session of the two might have been more appropriate.

When the International Issues Group was formed a few years back, some felt it was a welcome addition to our array of working groups, a place where, for example, the challenges of dealing with international documentation could be discussed. However, those issues at present appear to be being addressed well and in a timely fashion on INT-LAW. Is this working group really needed? If so, what should be its role and agenda? What are members’ interests in and expectations for this group?

Please discuss these issues among yourselves and get back to me as soon as possible with your opinions. I promise to take all of them seriously. I would also be interested (always) in any suggestions or concerns you may have for the betterment of our SIS. I’ll look forward to hearing from you! My e-mail address is wbmcclay@u.washington.edu and my phone number is 206-543-7447.

The FCIL Newsletter website has a new address at AALLNET. Please update your bookmarks and links:

http://www.aallnet.org/sis/fcilsis/fcilsis.html
AALL Seeks Nominations
by Pauline Aranas
Vanderbilt Law Library

The AALL Nominations Committee has begun the process of identifying possible candidates for the 1998 AALL election. Candidates are needed for the office of Vice President/President-Elect, Treasurer, and two Executive Board members.

The committee must, to the best of its ability, present a slate of candidates that reflects the diversity of AALL’s membership. The Executive Board must maintain a balance based on library type, geography, gender, and minority representation.

Each AALL member is encouraged to submit names to be considered for candidacy by writing any members of the Nominations Committee or AALL Headquarters by April 18, 1997.

1997 Nominations Committee

Pauline Aranas, Chair
Vanderbilt University
Alyne Queener Massey Law Library
Nashville, TN 37240

Caroline Ahem
Wiley Rein & Fielding
1776 K Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20006

Camille Broussard
New York Law School Library
57 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013

Frank Alan Herch
Clark County Law Library
P.O. Box 557340
304 Carson Avenue
Las Vegas, NV 89155-7540

Judith P. Krane
Bondurant Mixson & Elmore
One Atlantic Center, 39th Floor
Atlanta, GA 30309

Rita Reusch
University of Utah Law Library
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Gail Warren
Virginia State Law Library
Supreme Court Building
100 N. Ninth Street, 2nd floor
Richmond, VA 23219

Medley of Marketing Ideas
by Janice Shull
Law Library of Louisiana

Tired of singing the same song in your public relations products? Promoting a library’s services and a librarian’s skills can bewilder and perplex the best of us at times. What better place to discover a new theme, hear a different orchestration than at the AALL Public Relations Exhibit in Baltimore.

Sponsored by the Public Relations Committee, this annual event (formerly the Poster Session) features displays of successful promotional efforts from many creative law librarians in all types of libraries. Come to the PR Exhibit, located in the Exhibit Hall, for fresh ideas. You will have a chance to talk to the experts at scheduled times Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, and to pick up samples of their work.

If you have composed something special that you think other librarians should see, please consider volunteering to exhibit your materials at this year’s AALL meeting. We seek all kinds of promotional items—brochures, fund-raising ideas, posters, National Library Week celebrations, newsletters, multi-media—that sing the benefits of using and supporting our libraries. For further information and to volunteer, please contact one of the coordinators listed below. Let us hear from you!

Janice Shull
Law Library of Louisiana
301 Loyola Ave.
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Michelle Schmidt
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E-mail: mschmidt@luce.com
Two of our personalities this time are very new to the profession: Rebecca Alexander and Xinh Luu both started at their respective jobs last fall. While Susan Van Syckel had been in FCI law since 1994, circumstances didn’t allow me to profile her last year. I am very pleased to be able to tell you now about Susan.

Rebecca Alexander says she is new to law librarianship, but she comes to foreign and international law librarianship with international exposure and with specific interest in Africana. She was a graduate research assistant to the Africana bibliographer while she was working on her library degree at the University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign. Her interest in Africa led her to a summer stint in Nigeria in 1994 on a Fulbright/Hays Group Project Abroad studying the Hausa language. She was also the Slavic cataloger at the University of Kansas from September 1993 to April 1995.

Rebecca started at Washburn University of Topeka School of Law Library last October as catalog/reference librarian. As such she divides her time equally between technical and public services. She is also responsible for maintaining the foreign and international law portion of WashLaw Web. (Something for FCIL members to take note of: Washburn director Professor John Christensen tells me that he really wants this particular resource very well developed, I would presume in coverage, organization, and design.)

She was a catalog/reference librarian at the University of the Virgin Islands, St. Croix campus, where she worked before coming to Washburn. Still prior to that, she was at the University of Kansas cataloging the library’s Slavic materials. She prepared for her first library job with a B.A. in Slavic Languages and Literature from the University of Kansas in 1984. She bolstered her library credentials with a library degree from the University of Illinois, which she received in 1993.

Rebecca says she is learning a lot, especially since this school year is her introduction to law librarianship. She signed on to INT-LAW this month. She expects to join AALL and FCIL, but is not sure whether or not she will make it to Baltimore.

AALL in Indianapolis, IALL in Vancouver.

Xinh (as in Sing) Luu was doing the professional conference circuit even before she formally joined the profession. She reminded me that we had actually met at the Indianapolis airport when she conveyed compliments on the Hong Kong program. She was however brought to the newsletter’s attention by our Chair, Margareta Horiba, who met her at Xinh’s first IALL conference. Xinh found the IALL experience enlightening, rewarding, and a marvelous introduction to international law librarianship. She particularly enjoyed meeting with INT-LAW colleagues, many of whom had come a long way to share information, exchange ideas, and rekindle friendships.

Xinh joined the University of Virginia Law Library in November 1996 as the International Law Librarian. She is a 1996 graduate of the master’s program in law librarianship at the University of Washington. She also holds a J.D. from the University of Utah and degrees in chemistry and chemical engineering from the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Xinh has practiced law in Colorado, including two years devoted exclusively to patent law. She is a member of the Colorado Bar and is registered to practice before the United States Patent and Trademark Office. Before law school, she worked as a petroleum engineer with Amoco Corporation.

Susan Van Syckel is one of those people who was engaged in multi-tasking in school and is still doing it. In 1990, Susan concurrently completed a master’s in education at California State University at Sacramento (CSUS) and an MLIS at University of California (Berkeley).
Today she is the Foreign and International Law Librarian (more about this later) at McGeorge School of Law, as well as a partner in a family business that markets energy conservation products (Susan maintains its website). She also teaches Legal Research and Advanced Legal Research at MTI Business College (also in Sacramento) as part of an ABA accredited paralegal program, is pursuing a master’s in international relations at CSUS, and takes paralegal and computer courses as continuing education activities.

Her previous job experience includes fifteen years as grants administrator for cities, counties and school districts involved in community-based programs for pre-school and school-age youngsters with special needs. She went through a seven-month internship at California State Law Library, then settled into a reference librarian position at McGeorge in 1990.

In 1994 a new position was created at McGeorge, that of Foreign and International Law Librarian. Susan landed this new position. In addition to regular reference duties, she also lectures to the Legal Process and Survey of American Law classes, prepares library publications/research guides (primarily in areas of foreign and international law), assists in the development of the Law Library homepage; assists with collection development in areas of foreign/international law; assists Transnational Lawyer writers, LL.M. students, and visiting scholars with research in foreign and international law; and assists faculty (primarily instructors in international/transnational law courses) with scholarly research. She appreciates the commitment of those doing legal research (having a son in law school) and finds a lot of pleasure working with McGeorge’s distinguished faculty.

Susan has been a member of AALL for seven years and its two local chapters for six. She joined FCIL even before she became Foreign and International Law Librarian—she has been a member for five years. From 1992/93 to 1993/94, she chaired a special committee of FCIL that looked into developing an AALL coordinated response to overseas requests for American legal materials; I can attest to the work and commitment she put into this committee. This special committee’s reports during Susan’s tenure as chair can be found in the FCIL Newsletter, v. 8:1, October 1993, p. 16-19 and v. 9:1, October 1994, p. 11-13, respectively.

Susan has high praises for her colleagues in FCIL. She says she is especially grateful for their work in educating new foreign and international law librarians (translation: her) and for the generous “mentoring” posture of the more established members who have so often provided her personal research assistance and so often contributed to INT-LAW. She attended three of the five international law institutes and strongly encourages the decision-makers to offer these institutes again. And remember this, Institute organizers: Susan offers to help, even with “grunt work.”

IALL Meets in Vancouver
by Amber Lee Smith
Los Angeles County Law Library

On September 29, 1996, almost forty law librarians representing institutions from nine countries gathered in Vancouver, British Columbia, to attend the Fifteenth Annual Course on International Law Librarianship of the International Association of Law Libraries. In keeping with the topic of the course, “Law and the Pacific Rim Countries,” there were presentations on the future of Asia in the Pacific Rim, Hong Kong and the Rule of Law, Research Materials on Chinese Law, Developments in Vietnam, Singapore, and the Influence of Asia in the Resolution of Transnational Business Disputes. In keeping with IALL’s practice of including sessions on law and law librarianship in the host country, there was a presentation on
Canadian constitutional law and a panel discussion of the problems facing Canadian law libraries and various cooperative solutions which librarians are using to solve these problems. There was far too much information to describe here, but these were some of the presentation highlights.

The increasing global significance of the Pacific Rim was discussed in the opening session, a presentation by Dr. Terrance McGee, professor of geography and director of the Institute of Asian Research, University of British Columbia. Dr. McGee, who illustrated his remarks with projections of maps and charts, defined what is generally meant by the Asia Pacific region and the factors which make its growth significant not only for the world economy, but also for diplomacy and international relations. Professor Diana Lary of the history department of the University of British Columbia, outlined the problems facing Hong Kong when it reverts to China in July of this year and pointed out that many of these problems stem from the very different ways in which attitudes toward the rule of law has evolved in Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China.

Three of the presentations were particularly informative about the problems facing legal researchers. Pittman Potter, professor of law at the University of British Columbia and director of the Center for Asian Legal Studies, spoke about research materials on Chinese law. He emphasized that with Chinese legal research finding the text of the law is only a starting point because the real key is the regulations. These are very difficult to get even in China and pose enormous obstacles to researchers who do not read Chinese because they are rarely translated. Professor Bill Neilson, director of the Center for Asia Pacific Initiatives at the University of Victoria, explained similar problems facing researchers in Vietnam, where in addition to the ordinance which declares the framework of the law, one also needs to find the decrees of the implementing ministry with responsibility for the law, and implementing instructions. Professor Steven Saltzman of the University of British Columbia discussed the Japanese legal system and made particular mention of the problems of translation of Japanese laws. He stated that the EHS translations, used in many law libraries because of the breadth of their coverage, are unreliable and inaccurate and suggested that if there is a choice between using an EHS translation and a translation from Kitagawa, the latter would be preferable. Even between countries with a common language, there are translation problems caused both by conceptual difficulties and by carelessness. Professor Potter gave the example of the different connotations of the term for contract in the People's Republic of China—coming together of parties and commonality—and in the Republic of China—responsibility of parties and what is being given up.

The course participants were also given opportunities to become a little acquainted with Vancouver and its environs. There were tours of the new Vancouver Public Library and the law school library at the University of British Columbia and a visit to the Museum of Anthropology with its marvelous collection of carvings. The session on resolution of transnational business disputes was held in Whistler, a ski resort about two hours outside Vancouver, and the closing banquet began and ended with a SeaBus ride across Vancouver Bay.

If you have not attended an IALL course, I recommend them highly. The sessions are always informative, and as a bonus they are smaller and there are more opportunities to interact with speakers and other participants. The 1997 course is on international human rights at Lund University in Sweden which will be held the last week in August, just before the IFLA meeting in Copenhagen. The 1998 course is on international efforts at unification of law and will be held in Rome.
Bibliography on Book Donation
by Margaret Aycock
Gulf Coast Environmental Library, Lamar University

[Editor’s note: In response to an objective of the AALL Long-Range Plan for 1990-94, which called for developing “means to coordinate responses to Third World law libraries’ requests for American legal materials,” Chair Mila Rush set up a special committee in 1992 to investigate what had been done by other groups, to suggest possible ways AALL might respond to these requests, to recommend to AALL the most appropriate and realistic responses, and to develop (with the approval of FCIL SIS members) implementation strategies. Margaret Aycock served on the special committee from its inception and succeeded Susan Van Syckel as chair in 1994.

The materials listed in this bibliography are being donated to the AALL archives at the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign.]


The American International Book Development Council was established in 1985 by the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation. The organizations whose activities are described in this thoughtful handbook are engaged in distributing American books to overseas institutions and individuals, primarily in countries in the developing world. Most distribute books as their sole or primary activity. All provided information about their activities to the council.

This organization defines “donated books” as books which are distributed to needy institutions without cost to the recipient. A serious concern expressed by the council is that only books which are appropriate to specific needs be sent. This agency recommends that questions of cultural context, content, currency, and physical conditions be answered by the donated book organizations through regular communications to overseas recipients before any shipments are made. Noted in the directory for each participating organization are its sources of books, usual destinations of shipments, kinds of books distributed, and content selection policy.


This book was produced as a result of a study commissioned and funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation as the first in a series of projected studies of higher educational institutions in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Over 700 libraries were studied in 1994. Among the conclusions reached was that need varied throughout the region, that donor organizations should focus on the end use of the donated materials, that the donation process should be approached as an integral whole from selection of materials to end use. They concluded that compliance checks, accounting, publicity, consultation with faculty members at recipient institutions, and donations or discounts on alternative technologies such as CD-ROMs could improve the effectiveness of donation programs.

The published report sought to fulfill three objectives: 1) to provide information about current needs in the region to governmental and non-governmental organizations; 2) to offer recommendations to current and potential donors; and 3) to facilitate the exchange of information.

Types of donation programs analyzed were mass regular, mass irregular, financial, and integrative. Drawbacks to each type of program are described in the report.

The study concluded that it was difficult to assess the efficacy of book donation projects in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe in part, because donors, suppliers, partner organizations, and recipients have failed to create mechanisms through which to measure their impact. Recipients continually cite quality of donations as the greatest problem. Defects encountered were age of donated materials, incomplete sets, inappropriate academic level, donated books displayed as trophies, and inadequate length of runs of journals. This excellent handbook includes charts and graphs.

This publication was prepared for CHESS by the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications. The book is divided into general purpose donors, subject-specific donors, and organizations not directly involved in donations, including bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, professional bodies and associations, learned societies, and foundations. The directory describes the organizations, services, and materials offered, policies, modes of operation, and geographical priorities.

Section 2 comprises a list of organizations which donate materials by subject specialization, including law. However, the Commonwealth Lawyers Association is the only organization which is listed.


This guide points out that books are a unique medium for transferring information and ideas. It asserts that donated books programs are an important way of sharing books between countries and peoples at little or no cost to educational or needy institutions. This workshop sponsored by the Library of Congress and held in Baltimore, Maryland, brought together program administrators, funders, book donors, distributors, and recipients. Ninety-five delegates from 44 countries attended. The aim of the workshop was to educate the four key players in the book donation process, namely, recipients, book sending agencies, donors, and funders, about each other's needs, interests, and limitations. Recommendations were made to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of donated book programs and for facilitating a continuing dialogue between partners in donated book programs, improving access to and increasing the flow of donated educational materials.

Other options for libraries considering offering assistance are providing funds to purchase books, arranging for books published in one developing country to be distributed in another, subsidizing print runs of books, purchasing copyrights of titles which can then be printed locally, and developing indigenous publishing capacity. Recommendations resulting from the workshop included recipient-led book programs, communication among players, responsible partnerships, and development, not relief.

The study emphasized that the provision of donated books is only a short-term solution to the gap that exists between the demand for and the supply of appropriate reading material in developing countries. The report stated that the most important contribution donated book programs could make would be to develop local infrastructures of libraries, create a literate environment, develop a market for and appreciation of books, and buy and distribute locally produced books.

Specific criteria were set forth for defining a selection policy, for selecting a distributing agency, and for evaluating success. The book includes 26 most commonly asked questions with answers and describes 84 organizations.


This newsletter published quarterly by the International Relations Round Table of the American Library Association contains news about international library activities, the international work of ALA and other organizations and people in the field. The Fall 1994 issue sets forth some of the issues involved in donation programs and lists major North American organizations involved in this work. The ALA International Relations Committee recommends inter alia that any book drive or donation program be aimed at the specific recipient which participates in the planning process. A two-page annotated bibliography of directories or sources of information for donation programs is provided. Selected organizations involved in donation programs are described individually in this eight-page newsletter.


INASP: International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publication was established by the ICSU Press, the Publishing Service of the International Council of Scientific Unions as a cooperative network of donors and representatives of scientific institutions. The objectives of the network were set forth as: supporting and strengthening existing programs involved in the distribution, publication, exchange and donation of books, journals, and related materials; encouraging new initiatives to increase the availability of quality scientific literature; and identifying methods that would permit the ongoing and sustainable exchange and distribution of scientific publications. While the directory focuses on scientific information, legal information needs are similar in some respects, and the book is useful for law librarians. The scientific
network itself might be seen as a model for a future clearinghouse of organizations donating legal information.

The introduction provides a brief review of the network, its objectives, and current activities. Donor organizations are arranged under broad subject headings. While many of the subject headings have little relevance for law libraries, some do, including Environmental Sciences, Information Technology and Data, and Medicine and Health. Other sections list agencies supporting general library and book development and agencies with some responsibility for library or book development. The index lists the organizations by name, and abbreviations. All of the organizations are involved with book donations and have expressed an interest in being members of the network. Many, however, are involved in other work as well.

Besides providing information common to many directories, services offered, materials offered, the purpose, mission, procedures are also outlined. Donated publications are often named. Statistics provide the numbers and names of countries served, along with number of cartons, and number of offer lists distributed.


In the guide examined, 112 periodicals were listed as being available to Peace Corps volunteers at a reduced rate. Others are listed because of the technical information that they might provide to Peace Corps volunteers. Although the principal users of this guide are Peace Corps staff and volunteers, some of the publications might be useful to acquire at regular library subscription rates or to purchase for background information for librarians considering participating in a library exchange program.


Thirty-one organizations are listed. This guide is intended to help Peace Corps volunteers identify organizations that might provide books and other educational materials to their communities. The descriptions apply specifically to Peace Corps volunteers, and might be different for others requesting assistance directly. Most of the organizations are voluntary groups with limited staff and resources which might require special procedures or partial payment for shipping.

However, the practical tips about selecting donor organizations may be of use to foreign recipients or to U.S. law libraries in drafting a description of their services. Recommendations of other organizations are included. A section is devoted to how to effectively organize a book drive.

**The Virginia Model Law Books Project: An Initiative of the Virginia Bar Association, the Virginia State Bar, the American Bar Association Central and East European Law Initiative (CEELI), the American Friendship Library Project. Final Report.** April 1995. 1 v. (Various pagings)

This publication includes a final report of a successful book drive organized by the Virginia State Bar. It includes documents such as the Memorandum of Understanding between CEELI and the Virginia Bar Association, the time line for the model state drive for books, the budget, guidelines for regional coordinators, plan of action, correspondence minutes, a complete foreign library request list, published articles, committee membership lists, and acknowledgments from the recipients.

It is apparent from the report that the Virginia book drive was very well organized and successful. This report should be reviewed by any law-related organization seeking to begin a book donation program in order to benefit from the experience gained from the Virginia model state drive.

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**Introducing LIBClient**

LIBClient is a new Internet research engine designed specifically to retrieve legal information from the World Wide Web. Of special interest to FCIL members is LIBClient International, which lists sites for treaties, foreign legislation, and foreign case law.

LIBClient was developed by Bert Dempsey (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) and Robert Vreeland (Coleman Karesh Law Library) and funded by a grant from the AALL/Aspen Law and Business Research Grant Program. Try it at

http://www.iis.unc.edu/~vreel/libclient/index.html
LC Classification Gets Automated
by Aaron Wolfe Kuperman
Library of Congress

Bibliographic (book) cataloging data has been distributed in a machine readable format for almost 30 years. The Library of Congress Subject Headings have existed as a computer file (from which printed volumes are produced) for over a decade. The Library of Congress classification schedules have remained totally manual. When numbers are added or changed (which happens on a weekly basis), they are distributed on printed lists from which conscientious catalogers manually annotate their printed copy of the schedules, or file replacement pages into loose-leaf copies of the schedules. Most libraries purchase and maintain few copies of the schedules, and rarely is a copy available to public service staff. Except for a non-updated index, access is limited to browsing or looking for a known number. This is about to change, radically, for the better.

The Library of Congress is converting its classification to machine readable records, and will shortly start to distribute them just as they distribute records for bibliographic data and subject headings. Already these tapes are being used by one vendor to produce a CD-ROM classification schedule, and two vendors are coming out with their own CD-ROM schedules later this year based on the printed schedules. The system for editing the records, is also used for retrieval by LC staff via an internet connection.

A major advantage of automating classification schedules is that there will no longer be a need to manually update schedules. This especially benefits libraries with large foreign law collections since we have to worry about many more schedules than a library that intensively collects only KF materials. The other advantage of an online system will be a radically improved ability to search index terms and captions. Also, an online system can give meaningful access to many users, including public service staff.

Being online and readily available will unleash the underused power of the classification schedules. A search of bibliographic records using class numbers can be far more useful than a search by any other method. For an “easy” search, e.g. contracts in France, one can quickly get material by checking subject headings or going straight to the class number based on a search of the bibliographic data base. That won’t necessarily work for a more exotic subject or a jurisdiction that lacks a comprehensive legal literature, e.g., Mandate in Mali. In that situation, a cataloger or reference librarian will need to expand a search by switching to a broader topic (contracts, or obligations or civil law), or to search jurisdictions with similar legal systems (Francophonic Africa or France, and then probably any other civil law jurisdiction).

This is where classification becomes a more powerful tool. The hierarchy in the classification is well maintained and reflects the structure of the legal systems specific to each schedule. The hierarchy expressed in the subject headings is haphazard, never country specific, and tends to reflect a common law bias. Broadening the above search to include the range of numbers for broader civil law concepts is possible using classification, but very difficult to do with subject headings since the hierarchy for those terms that are also used in common law systems are cluttered with what to someone researching civil law are wrong or misleading references. Expanding the jurisdictions covered is difficult using geographic subject headings, since using civil law is not a function of geography. Refining the search using the classification is possible since civil law jurisdictions (except for Louisiana) use different tables than common law jurisdictions.

An automated system will offer radically improved access to the schedules. Keyword access to captions will be possible for the first time. Additional index terms can be inserted.
Boolean operators will be available for searching the text of the schedules. Once the classification schedule exists as machine readable files, new “tricks” become possible. Since each number in the schedule is represented by a distinct record, it is theoretically possible to modify parts of the schedule for local needs. This could take the form of an individual cataloger attaching a personal note (“send new books in this range to the Dean” or “remember that French rente is a false cognate”). It could allow for a library or group of libraries to create local numbers that remain linked to LC’s numbers. It would make it possible to add local index terms, or to insert captions and index terms reflecting languages other than English (something now done only for KJV and KK). Having current schedules with meaningful access will encourage catalogers both in LC and elsewhere to propose improved captions and index terms. It might be possible to “break out” some jurisdictions whose legal systems are not a good match with their table (Louisiana, Israel, the Muslim countries, Australia and India all come to mind); once the schedules are predominantly seen as computerized rather than manual tools, a proliferation of country specific schedules is affordable and manageable.

None of the above is available for law, yet. While the law schedules have largely been converted to the online format, they haven’t been proofread. KF will be ready later this year, and others will follow including the new KZ schedule. The unproofread data is available internally within LC, and at present I’m the only law cataloger using it as a primary source of classification data (though I check the printed schedules frequently, but rarely find mistakes).

There are several possible ways that the classification schedules will be distributed in the future. One possibility is that the new classification tapes will be used to print “old fashioned” looking schedules. This will lower the cost of printing the schedules and result in fully revised editions coming out every few years rather than every few decades. This is what is already happening with the H social sciences schedules. This will probably have a negative impact on the two vendors (Rothman/Larry Dershem and Gale) who have been doing an excellent job of issuing loose-leaf or recompiled schedules on a regular basis. The more interesting possibility is that the tapes will be used to produce CD-ROM or otherwise computerized schedules.

The Cataloging Distribution Service (the “sales” part of the Library of Congress) is already offering “Classification plus” as a CD-ROM that includes both the entire LCSH and those schedules already converted to machine readable format. This package will include the KF schedule later in 1997, and the remaining law schedules (for non-U.S. law) when they are converted to machine readable format.

At present, “Classification plus” sells for under $500 for a single license, with only $16 for each additional license per institution, and includes four quarterly updates. This is less than what it would cost to purchase new copies of the law schedules together with the subject headings.

Two established vendors, Gale and Rothman, plan to start coming out with CD-ROMs based on the printed schedules, including the updates. Both will have products available later this year. Gale says their tentative price will be several thousand dollars though the disparity between their price and “Classification Plus” seems curious. Rothman hasn’t announced a price yet.

Larry Dershem demonstrated a very promising prototype of KF at AALL last year, which included links from the subject headings. Since LC doesn’t make such links this would be a valuable addition, though to implement it out for all schedules would be a lot of work. Presumably Gale and Rothman, as well as CDS, will be looking for features to give their products a competitive edge. As discussed below, there are many law specific features we might hope for.

Cactus Software’s Minaret system (“a software package for managing diverse collections in archives, libraries and museums”) is being used by LC for editing the online schedules and also for retrieval via a staff-only telnet connection. They demonstrated a prototype user-friendly classification at AALL,
but decided not to make it, citing, among other reasons, CDS's low price and low number of potential sales. Their system lends itself well to internet access, but whether this will be exploited outside of LC is unclear. There is also the possibility that someone such as RLIN or OCLC will make the online classification data base available online, just as the bibliographic files and subject headings are. In theory the Library of Congress could make files open to the public just as they do for bibliographic and subject heading files, though this option does not seem to be receiving strong consideration within LC. It would also raise a problem since while the classification data is produced by LC and not under copyright, the interfaces used internally by LC are licensed from private corporations.

As the first law cataloger to use online schedules on a regular basis, it appears to me that a law specific interface is needed. The non-law captions muddle up the indexing for a law cataloger. It would also be better if an index entry were initially displayed as a single line, and then expanded to show the specific numbers for each schedule only if requested. At present one has to work through a tremendous number of entries, since the index shows each table/schedule as a separate line in the index, and there are well over 30 law schedules, some of which are officially called supplementary tables even though they are really schedules (e.g. the 5000 number KJ-KKZ Table for European countries other than France or Germany). It would be nice if a system displayed search results to reflect "our way of thinking". Thus if I'm looking for Ontario law the order should be: Ontario, rest of Canada, other common law schedules, other schedules. This sort of search logic would be unique to the K schedules.

An additional problem is the infamous "Garbage in, Garbage out" problem. In the past, LC catalogers never bothered to worry about upgrading captions or index terms since they were in effect unsearchable. Many of these need revision, and more importantly, they need to be standardized. At present "Torts" and "Tort (Extra-contractual liability)" and "Tort. Delict" mean the same thing but don't index together since the wording varies. This severely undermines the value of the index. Another problem is that law subject headings lack references to call numbers, primarily since any subject heading can be used in any of the 30+ schedules. Many non-law users at LC have found the links (in the 053 field) to be a very effective way to get to the numbers, but this won't work for law libraries. The Rothman prototype demonstrated by Larry Dershem at AALL had such links for KF (based on his efforts, not LC's). Establishing links for all schedules, or even for the more popular ones would be a lot of work and would require either a very hardworking vendor or a substantial cooperative project among law catalogers. While such efforts might be easy to justify for KF which is used heavily by virtually all American law libraries, it would be harder to get support for the non-U.S. schedules which are used intensively only by a relatively small number of libraries.

Online classification offers convenience for catalogers, and will probably justify its cost since it allows us to do our current work cheaper and better. For the FCIL community these economies will be greater. As a tool, it offers many new possibilities.

This represents the author's views and is not an official communication from the Library of Congress.

New UN Database

The UN's Dag Hammarskjold Library has developed UN-I-QUE, a new electronic guide to document symbols for thousands of major UN documents. UN-I-QUE does not provide full bibliographic details or replace existing bibliographic databases (such as UNBIS). It focuses on documents and publications of a recurrent nature, including reports, journals, annual publications, and statements in the General Debate. Information in each record is presented in reverse chronological order to facilitate identification of the most recent data. Try it at:

http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/unique

--From an announcement on INT-LAW