

## BIALLs and IALLs and JSIs, Oh My!: Considering an International Conference

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In her recent column, current AALL President Darcy Kirk wrote of the value she saw in attending international conferences. Beyond learning new and interesting facts about different countries' legal systems and library organizations, one of the main points she made was the value that comes from making connections with colleagues outside of the US. Connecting with an international librarian, she wrote, "enables us to broaden and diversify our AALL network, and, in doing so, we gain perspective about the legal profession, legal practice, and law librarianship beyond our shores."<sup>1</sup>

As FCIL practitioners, many of us are well aware of the value these connections with foreign colleagues can provide when we are in need of documents and information from other jurisdictions.<sup>2</sup> By attending international conferences, we are able to make new connections and also put faces to names that we have seen on listservs. The network we gain from exchanging business cards and offering assistance is one of the most useful aspects of attending a conference, regardless of its location. And attending international conferences allows us to not only meet new colleagues but also to spend more time talking to fellow AALL members who are in attendance. While AALL meetings can often leave us feeling like we never saw half the people we wanted to see, most international conferences tend to be smaller in size and scope and therefore offer more time to

socialize as a group. By fostering both old and new connections, we return to our institutions offering greater value through a strengthened network of people resources upon whom we can call when necessary.

We all have personal anecdotes on how these connections have come in handy in our work, but how can we leverage these sometimes intangible benefits to convince our employer to say "yes" to a foreign conference? Here are some ways that international conferences can benefit your library:

In addition to connections with foreign librarians, international conferences allow attendees to make valuable connections with foreign vendors. Just like at AALL, legal information vendors are present at almost every international conference I have attended, and have afforded me the ability to learn about upcoming changes and new products that affect my library's subscriptions. Having developed a specialty in UK legal research, I greatly benefit from the opportunity to learn about new products and resources available to the UK market at the BIALL conferences, often learning about new developments before they are even marketed to US libraries.

If your library has a particular specialty in one or more foreign jurisdictions, attending a conference in said jurisdiction is an excellent way to acclimate yourself with their legal system and resources, as well as affording you the ability to visit local libraries that have significant holdings in that jurisdiction's legal resources. After meeting a Singaporean librarian at the IALL conference last year, I was able to make arrangements to have a tour of her library during my subsequent visit to Singapore and she was able to show me what Singaporean resources were considered

most vital to the students' work. This was far more instructive to me than simply reviewing a catalog of relevant titles on the jurisdiction, and I was able to make purchase recommendations based on the knowledge I gained from that library tour.

If teaching FCIL legal research is in your portfolio, keeping up to date on international legal issues and resources as well as gaining more knowledge of foreign legal systems can be very useful in planning and updating your curriculum. This semester I was able to re-tool some of my in-class exercises for Commonwealth jurisdictions to make use of the knowledge I gained on the Malaysian legal system and legal resources at the IALL conference.

Regardless of whether your employer is supportive of your participation in an international conference, the reality is we are all faced with budget and time constraints that can severely limit our ability to attend any conference, let alone an international one. I, like many FCIL librarians, enjoy traveling,<sup>3</sup> and I have been fortunate to attend many international conferences in my short time as a professional law librarian, but all of these have been either partially or fully funded by myself—although my employer is incredibly supportive and grateful for my enthusiasm to participate in these conferences, it is not a professional development gravy train. Despite the costs incurred, I sincerely believe that my career has been helped tremendously by attending these conferences through both the

<sup>1</sup>Darcy Kirk, "From the President: Connections with Our International Colleagues", AALL SPECTRUM, March 2012, 4-5.

<sup>2</sup>The benefit of people resources when addressing FCIL questions is discussed in further detail in Ly-onette Louis-Jacques and Mary Rumsey's article "Jumpstart Your Foreign, Comparative and International Research: Use People Resources," available at <http://www.aallnet.org/sis/fcilsis/jumpstart.html>.

<sup>3</sup>Traveling is a hobby shared by many law librarians—my mentor once authored an article on researching travel options for conferences: Steve Young, *The Flying Librarian*, 48 LAW LIBR. LIGHTS 5 (2004). Although they are a bit dated, the travel booking tips in this article are still fairly relevant.

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information gained and the connections made.

For those who are looking for ways to attend international conferences without breaking the *entire* bank, here are some tips I employ when considering an international conference:

### *Present a session*

Most foreign law librarian associations are much smaller than AALL and therefore have greater opportunity for members to participate in the conference programming. If you are a member of a foreign association, why not propose a session on researching US law or another FCIL-specialty area that you are familiar with? By participating in the conference as a speaker, you are often compensated with free or reduced registration fees, and sometimes even more, such as a free night in the conference hotel or travel expense reimbursement.

### *Use frequent flier miles to get yourself there*

There is no way I would have been able to attend the IALL meeting in Kuala Lumpur had it not been for the 60,000 miles I had accumulated on Continental. There are a variety of frequent flier programs out there—find one that has the best earning and redeeming opportunities for your personal travel habits. Also

look into getting an airline sponsored credit card, as they often give substantial mileage bonuses for new card holders to help get you the miles you need to redeem international flights quicker.

And for those who might want to consider employing some of these tips in the near future, here are some upcoming international conferences of interest:

**British and Irish Association of Law Librarians (BIALL)** Annual Meeting, June 14-16, Belfast, Northern Ireland. A wonderful, small conference that provides excellent opportunities to speak with UK librarians and vendors—especially at their fabulous social events.<sup>4</sup>

**International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA)** Annual Conference, August 11-17, Helsinki, Finland.<sup>5</sup> Although more general in nature and much larger than other conferences, IFLA does have a section for law libraries<sup>6</sup> and also for government documents, so there are generally quite a few

sessions of interest to law librarians. IFLA also has a very comprehensive calendar of library-related conferences.<sup>7</sup>

**International Association of Law Librarians (IALL)** Annual Course on International Law and Legal Information, September 30 – October 4, 2012, Toronto, Canada.<sup>8</sup> IALL conferences are structured differently than most librarian conferences in that they focus on providing substantive legal information on the host jurisdiction and surrounding regions. This year's conference is conveniently located in Toronto and should provide a great opportunity for many US law librarians to attend.

**Joint Study Institute**, February 13-16, 2013, Melbourne, Australia.<sup>9</sup> Similar in focus to IALL conferences, JSIs concentrate on the host jurisdiction's legal system and its interaction in the international area. A great article written in 2008 for the US-hosted JSI explains the conference in more detail.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ifla.org/en/events/calendar>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.iall.org/iall2012/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ala.asn.au/conferences/jsi2013>

<sup>10</sup> Hazel L. Johnson, "AALL Hosts the 2008 Joint Study Institute in June," AALL SPECTRUM, February 2008 at 21, *available at*: [http://www.aallnet.org/main-menu/Publications/spectrum/Archives/Vol-12/pub\\_sp0802/pub-sp0802-jsi.pdf](http://www.aallnet.org/main-menu/Publications/spectrum/Archives/Vol-12/pub_sp0802/pub-sp0802-jsi.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.biall.org.uk/pages/belfast2012.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://conference.ifla.org/ifla78>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ifla.org/en/law-libraries>

## **Seeking Contributions!**

The FCIL Education Committee is soliciting new and updated contributions to our Syllabi and Course Materials database! If you have a syllabi, assignment, PowerPoint, or other document relating to teaching FCIL topics, and wish to share it with your colleagues, please send it to Alison Shea ([aashea@law.fordham.edu](mailto:aashea@law.fordham.edu)) by June 30. Also, please consider attending our Committee's Roundtable on Teaching FCIL Topics, to be held on Sunday July 22, 2012 from 10:45-11:45 a.m. in the Sheraton-Independence Ballroom East. Attendees are encouraged to bring copies of their teaching materials to workshop with other participants, and also to bring ideas and techniques for teaching various FCIL topics to share. Stay tuned for more information!