

# AALL Hosts the 2008 Joint Study Institute in June

## *What is the JSI, and why should you care?*

by Hazel L. Johnson

**A**ALL will host the Sixth Joint Study Institute this June 25-28 in Washington, D.C. What is the Joint Study Institute (JSI), and why should a U.S. law librarian should care about it?

### **The Inspiration for JSI**

In 1995, the presidents and chairs of the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians (BIALL), Canadian Association of Law Libraries/Association Canadienne des Bibliothèques de Droit (CALL/ACBD), and AALL enjoyed attending one another's association annual conferences so much that they discussed ways for the three associations to cooperate. Their idea was to create a series of joint meetings focusing on the legal research techniques and laws of their respective legal systems. The aim of the JSI was to feature programming by experts about the host country's legal heritage and traditions.

BIALL organized the first JSI, held in 1998 at the University of Cambridge in England. Subsequent JSIs were hosted by AALL (2000) and CALL /ACBD (2002). The addition of the Australian Law Librarians Group brought the JSI to Sydney in 2004 as the final institute in the first cycle. The New Zealand Law Library Association (NZLLA) joined as a sponsor group in Sydney, and the respective association leaders agreed that the JSI was a valuable experience and should continue. The second cycle of institutes began in 2006 at Oxford University, hosted by BIALL.

The initial institute cycle focused on the intricacies and legal research of each country's administrative, judicial, and legislative systems, as well as legal publishing, terrorism, and the impact of politics on the development of a country's law, among many others. For the second cycle of institutes, the focus shifted a bit, and the programming broadened.

The 2008 JSI theme is "Harmonization and Confrontation: Integrating Foreign and International Law into the American Legal System." The programs will focus on the historical use of international law in U.S. Supreme Court jurisprudence and the appropriateness of using international rules and norms in U.S. judicial decision-making, as well as issues dealing with federalism, researching foreign and international law, the Web 2.0, and other related topics.

### **An Intense Learning Experience**

The JSI provides a small and intense learning experience. Attendance is generally 70 or fewer. With no concurrent programs, every delegate attends every program. Most meals are included in the registration fee and are group affairs. These arrangements encourage camaraderie and create the opportunity for in-depth discussions among the delegates about the topics at hand or those at home. "Our shared heritage and contrasting divergences unfold throughout the period we are together and become the foundation for helpful and stimulating discussion," says Margaret Greville, law librarian at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand.

The size facilitates meeting and networking with law librarians and other legal professionals from around the world. Catherine Bowl, of TraversSmith in London, says, "I am still in contact with some of the delegates I met in Cambridge and Sydney."

The JSI concept clearly offers a unique experience and atmosphere. The combination of challenging programs and networking possibilities provides a truly exceptional experience. The opportunity to gain a better sense of the ramifications of research in the law of the Anglo-American countries, a deeper understanding of the issues facing colleagues around the globe, an appreciation that there are more similarities than differences among law libraries of various type and location, and the chance to develop personal contacts with law librarians across the globe should not be missed.

Loyita Worley, senior manager of EME Operations for Reed Smith Richard Butler LLP in London, summarizes nicely why AALL members should care about the JSI. "At a JSI, everybody talks to everybody, and within a very short space of time, people build relationships with librarians from around the world," she says. "These are not the same faces that you might see at the national conventions, but new faces having different perspectives and different backgrounds."

Worley continues, "So much of my job these days is management, rather than research, and even the researchers at my firm here are doing more business research than law because of the delivery to the desktop of the legal resources. Therefore, I find it energizing to go back to looking at the law again and the influence it has on our society and how that applies to each of our jurisdictions."

Additional information on the arrangements and programming for the 2008 Joint Study Institute can be found on the JSI Web site at [www.aallnet.org/committee/jsi](http://www.aallnet.org/committee/jsi). ■

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