International Journal of Legal Information

the Official Journal of the International Association of Law Libraries

Volume 36 Issue 2 Summer 2008 - Global Challenges & the Indian Legal System

Article 6

3-2-2009

IALL 2007 Conference Report: The 26TH Annual Course on International Law Librarianship

Julienne E. Grant
Loyola University Chicago School of Law Library

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/ijli
The *International Journal of Legal Information* is produced by The International Association of Law Libraries.

Recommended Citation

Grant, Julienne E. (2008) "IALL 2007 Conference Report: The 26TH Annual Course on International Law Librarianship," *International Journal of Legal Information*: Vol. 36: Iss. 2, Article 6.

Available at: http://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/ijli/vol36/iss2/6

This Prefatory Matter is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Scholarship@Cornell Law: A Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Journal of Legal Information by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Cornell Law: A Digital Repository. For more information, please contact jmp8@cornell.edu.

IALL 2007 Conference Report: The 26TH Annual Course on International Law Librarianship

JULIENNE E. GRANT*

Background

In January 2007, a Loyola law professor asked me to prepare a research presentation for her comparative law seminar that was focusing on India, and was travelling there over spring break. I approached the project with some trepidation, as my exposure to India at that point had been primarily limited to Bollywood movies and the PBS "Jewel in the Crown" series. Rather than panic, however, I turned to Lyonette Louis-Jacque's FCIL contacts list that is posted on the website of the FCIL-SIS (American Association of Law Libraries FCIL Special Interest Section). The contacts list provides names of law librarians who are willing to assist with research questions associated with foreign jurisdictions and regions. With a sigh of relief, I found several names listed under the heading of "India," including that of Sunil Rao.

I had never met Sunil before, but saw that he worked at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (my graduate school alma mater), and immediately sent off an e-mail seeking help. Sunil quickly responded and suggested that I use his web page, "India: A Legal Research Guide," to get started on the presentation. With Sunil's page as my guide, I put together a PowerPoint that included web links to the India Code Information System (INCODIS), the Judgment Information System (JUDIS), and both houses of the Indian Parliament—the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. The professor was thrilled with the presentation, the students were engaged, and I immediately became the Law School's resident "expert" on Indian legal research.

I assisted many of the students with their research that semester--both before and after their trip--and, in the process, developed a very strong personal interest in India. I found myself fascinated with the students' specific research areas, but also by how India's legal system generally functions

^{*} Reference Librarian/Foreign and International Research Specialist, Loyola University Chicago School of Law Library

amidst such incredible linguistic, geographic, and cultural diversity. I enthusiastically added India to my list of "must see" countries, and was determined to somehow get there at some point in my life. Realistically, I didn't think I'd have an opportunity to travel there for many years, perhaps not even until my retirement.

In what can only be called serendipity, however, I saw a posting on the FCIL-SIS listserv late last spring seeking applications for three bursary awards to attend IALL's 26th Annual Course on International Law Librarianship. Amazingly, the Course was to be held in Mumbai, India the first week of December 2007, and was entitled "Global Challenges & the Indian Legal System." I perused the list of past scholarship winners, determined that I was a complete long shot, but forged ahead undaunted to try my luck. Much to my delight and complete surprise, I received an e-mail from Dr. Holger Knudsen on July 31st informing me that I had been awarded one of the bursaries to attend the Course. I spent the next four months enthusiastically preparing for the trip—procuring a visa (not a particularly easy task), getting various inoculations (five to be exact), and reading about India, including Suketu Mehta's 2004 book on Mumbai, Maximum City.

The Conference City and Venue

Mumbai, still referred to as Bombay by the locals, is arguably the most populated city on earth. It is indeed not for the faint of heart, or those that crave solitude; it is crowded, polluted, and chaotic. As Suketu Mehta puts it in Maximum City, "Bombay is the future of urban civilization on the planet. God help us." For all of its challenges, however, Mumbai is captivating. It is diverse, immensely colorful, sometimes flashy, full of vitality, and has an urban beat that beckons. The remnants of the British Raj are there, alongside the temples, rickshaws, aromatic markets, swirling traffic, skyscrapers, and slums. It is a complicated city by all accounts, but one that you can't help but embrace and hold on for the ride. Holding on is actually a necessity in Mumbai, as the streets are unwieldy at best for anyone trying to navigate them, either by foot, or as a passenger in any of Mumbai's many modes of transportation.

The IALL conference itself was held at the Godrej Dance Academy Theatre, a part of Mumbai's National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) complex. The Theatre is a lovely venue near the Arabian Sea, and was

¹ Suketu Mehta, <u>Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found</u> (New York: Random House, 2004) 3.

perfect for the IALL conference, which comprised about 100 delegates from some 25 countries. The Theatre had a small courtyard outside where high tea and meals were served, and delegates could mingle between programs. One of the things that I enjoyed most about this conference was the chance to meet and socialize with law librarians from so many different locales. It was delightful, for example, to share a table one afternoon with librarians from the U.K., Singapore, Egypt, and Puerto Rico. I also had an opportunity to meet other FCIL librarians from the U.S. who I only knew through e-mail correspondence, including Sunil Rao who had so graciously helped me earlier in the year.

The Lectures

The Course offered over a dozen lectures on subjects related to Indian law, legal education, legal literature, and Indian court libraries. Featured speakers included: Mr. Justice B.N. Srikrishna, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India; the Honorable Dr. Justice J.Y. Chandrachud, a Judge of the Bombay High Court; Ms. Flavia Agnes, an Indian women's rights advocate and activist; Mr. Nishith Desai, founder of the law firm, Nishith Desai Associates; and, Dr. Rakesh Kumar Srivastava, Chief Librarian of the Supreme Court of India. All of the presentations were thought provoking and engaging, and some of them were quite moving. Regardless of the speakers' individual roles in the Indian legal system, it was quite clear to me that they were each passionate about their country, and believed that the rule of law had a role to play in social change.

Although I knew something about Indian law and legal literature prior to the conference, the lectures broadened my perspective, and filled in gaps. I learned, for example, about the various fundamental rights that are built into the Indian constitution, some of which apply only to Indian citizens. I found out about the Indian courts structure, including the various specialized tribunals in such areas as tax, customs and excise, and consumer disputes. I heard about "public interest litigation" in India, a specialized type of litigation that allows ordinary citizens to bring an action on behalf of the public at large when there is a violation of basic human rights. In addition, I heard lectures on several specific fields of law, including intellectual property, women's rights, environmental law, trade law, and outsourcing. I also found out about Indian legal education, law libraries, and the profession of law librarianship in India. Collectively, the Course's lectures provided me with an excellent overview of the Indian legal system, how it functions, and how legal information is disseminated and organized.

Cultural Programs/Activities

Along with the academic component of the conference, delegates were treated to a variety of cultural programs and activities. The Course opened, for example, with a spectacular display of folk and modern Indian dances, choreographed by Dr. Sandhya Purecha, and performed by her young troupe. The program offered a quick historical tour of Indian dance, beginning with regional interpretations of classical dance, followed by the more modern Bollywood-style entertainment. Many of the costumes were simply exquisite, and the young dancers exhibited both grace and athleticism in their performances. The dance program overall was breathtaking--a simply wonderful introduction to the diversity of India, and to the IALL conference itself.

Other cultural opportunities offered during the conference were a city bus tour, a heritage walking tour, and a trip to Elephanta Island. The bus tour took us to sites around Mumbai, including Mahatma Gandhi's residence (Mani Bhawan), the city's Jain Temple, and the Dhobhi Ghat open-air laundry (truly, an unbelievable sight). The heritage walking tour began at the magnificent Gateway to India, and then stopped at various sites around the historic Fort Area, including the sky blue Keneseth Eliyahoo Synagogue that was completed in the 1880s. On the last day of the conference, delegates embarked on a short boat trip to Elephanta Island where we explored the famous Elephanta caves, which house ancient carvings linked to the cult of Shiva. Although the carvings were indeed spectacular, I think many of us will also remember the Elephanta trip because of the roaming monkeys that attempted to snatch bits of food and drink from unwary tourists.

Library Visits

During the 2007 IALL conference, delegates had the opportunity to visit four Mumbai Libraries: The David Sassoon Library, The K.R. Cama Oriental Institute Library, The Asiatic Society Library (with its adjacent public library), and The University of Mumbai Library (Fort Campus). Each library that we saw was truly unique in its features and focus, and each offered a quiet and beautiful respite from the chaotic and noisy streets of Mumbai. I was particularly enamored with The Asiatic Society Library, which dates back to the early 19th century and is housed in Mumbai's lovely Town Hall building. With its gorgeous built-in wood shelving, spiral staircases, and marble busts and statues, the Library is simply elegant. Strolling through it is like stepping back to the time of the British Raj, and I

had to wonder if the place really looked much different than it did one hundred years ago.

The highlight of the library visits, though, was certainly the opportunity to meet local librarians who were thrilled that we were there, and could not have been any more cordial. The Mumbai librarians welcomed us at each facility, and graciously showed us around their workplaces. They explained the history of their libraries and proudly displayed rare books and manuscripts from their collections so that we could see them up close. At the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute Library, the librarians even asked us for our business cards so they could see where we were from, and then asked us questions about our home institutions. The latter was a delightful professional exchange, and I thoroughly enjoyed telling them about Loyola, as well as the city of Chicago.

Post-Conference Activities

Since returning from India in December, I have been busy spreading the word about my IALL experience. I wrote an article about the Course for the Loyola University Libraries' internal newsletter, and a colleague reported on my trip in the Spring 2008 issue of the Loyola Law Library Newsletter. Another article I wrote about the conference appeared in the Spring 2008 edition of my local AALL chapter's newsletter, the CALL Bulletin. I am also preparing a piece about the conference's library visits that I hope to eventually publish. The alumni magazines of Middlebury College (my undergraduate alma mater) and the DePaul University College of Law (my law school alma mater) also mentioned my 2007 IALL bursary award in their most recent editions.

In addition, I have incorporated some of the knowledge I gained at the conference in the classroom. I am currently teaching a course on Foreign and International Legal Research at Loyola and have already featured India as a foreign law research example. Along with discussing various sources of Indian law, I shared some of my insights from the IALL conference, as well as several of the photos that I took in Mumbai. My current students were extremely interested in my experience, and I look forward to talking about Indian legal research, as well as the IALL conference, the next time I teach this class.

Conclusion

IALL's 26th Annual Course on International Law Librarianship was a successful blend of academic, cultural, and social activities. On the academic side, the lectures collectively offered an excellent overview of the Indian legal system, legal literature, court libraries, and the profession of law librarianship in India. The cultural activities served as a wonderful backdrop to the lectures, and offered delegates the chance to explore some of the fascinating sites in and around Mumbai. In addition, the conference provided several opportunities for networking, which I truly appreciated as a newer FCIL librarian. As I progress in my career, I hope that I can continue to attend this outstanding annual event, and I also hope the IALL Board will consider Chicago as a future conference venue. Chicago has a thriving legal community, and I know that FCIL librarians from around the globe would enjoy the cultural attractions that the city has to offer.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the IALL Scholarships Committee and the entire IALL membership for awarding me one of the 2007 Professional Development Bursaries. My attendance at the 26th Annual Course was the highlight of my professional career, and I am also extremely grateful for the year's membership in IALL. Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Local Planning Committee (Uma Narayan, Nileema Deo, K.S. Narayan, and Jules Winterton) for organizing this remarkable event. It was undoubtedly a logistical feat to put together this conference, and the Committee members did it with grace and aplomb. Their hospitality was unmatched, and they each went out of their way to ensure that everyone attending the IALL conference had a great experience.

I would also like to thank the Chicago Association of Law Libraries (CALL) and Loyola University Chicago, both of which provided financial assistance for the trip. Finally, I would like to express my unending gratitude to my parents, Tom and Ann Grant, for instilling in me an insatiable love of learning, and unending desire to see the world.