

# Visit to IALS Library: a Comparison with the Facilities of the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies Library

**Abstract:** Ufuoma Lamikanra and Dr T. O. Dada visited the IALS library in March 2010 to study the running of a large academic library with a view to trying to modernise procedures in the Nigerian Institute's library.

**Keywords:** academic law libraries; Nigeria

## Introduction

After making several attempts, spanning almost a decade, to spend my sabbatical leave at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (IALS), London, an opportunity finally materialised in the form of a brief seven day study visit, in March 2010. Mr T.O. Dada, the Institute Librarian, Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS), led the two man team. Our visit was initiated by the Director General of the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Prof. Epiphany Azinge, (SAN). It was aimed at acquainting principal officers of the NIALS Library with the operations of a modern library with a view of replicating the same in the NIALS Library. Why the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (IALS), London? A brief history of the NIALS will show why we were sent on the study visit.

## Historical background of the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies Library

The Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS) Library, modelled on the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies Library, is the largest law library in Nigeria, with a collection of about 49,234 volumes. The Nigerian Institute was established on March 17 1979, as the apex institution for research and advanced studies on law in Nigeria. The idea of establishing the Institute was first discussed at the 1963 annual meeting of the Association of Law Teachers. The four universities then teaching law had difficulties in organising postgraduate studies because of inadequate library facilities and lack of specialised supervision. This informed the sending of Nigerian law graduates abroad for research work. To avoid duplication of

efforts and resources, a centre for legal research and supervision for postgraduate research work "jointly owned" by the four universities was set up at the University of Lagos. The latter was chosen because Lagos was the then Federal Capital and because the Nigerian Law School and Libraries of the High Court of Lagos State (the oldest in the country), the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court "could provide an invaluable adjunct to the Institute's Library".<sup>1</sup> Today, NIALS has a library in Lagos, an office in Abuja and proposed offices in the other five geo-political zones of Nigeria.

## The collection

In a speech delivered by Judge Taslim Olawale Elias during the official commissioning of the Institute and Library on March 17, 1979, the learned jurist stated that "the objective and purpose of the Institute are in broad outline to serve as a Centre of Advanced Legal Study and Research in the following specialised departments:

- (1) African customary law;
- (2) Constitutional and administrative law;
- (3) Conflict of laws;
- (4) Comparative law; and
- (5) Criminology.

These broad subject outlines actually dictated the main thrust of the acquisitions and collection development of the Institute Library. However, the library has failed to maintain minimum standards in these core subject areas and in newly emerging subject areas. The state of the library today is very different from what the founding fathers envisaged, having been relegated from its previous position as the hub of the Institute. The library's collection now consists of only about 15,000 titles

amounting to 50,000 volumes of monographs and periodicals (journals and law reports). This translates to only 500 titles or 1666.66 volumes acquired per annum since its establishment.

The reasons for the stunted growth of the Institute library are many. The principal reason is that the Institute is no longer under the control of the Universities, but is a part of the Federal Ministry of Justice and is managed by a Council.<sup>2</sup> This single act has had far reaching negative consequences on the growth and development of the Library and on the progress of the Institute in general. The appointment of the Director General of the Institute, for example, has been highly politicised.<sup>3</sup> The Institute does not have access to additional funds, such as the Education Trust Fund (ETF) available to the libraries of other higher institutions of learning. Inconsistent federal government fiscal and monetary policies, which have stultified collection development in libraries nationwide, have also affected library development. Finally, the new system of bidding for library books commonly known as the “due process” has also contributed to slowing down the rate of library acquisitions. This recent federal governments policy, which equates library materials with physical goods such as air conditioners, refrigerators, cars, plants, generators, etc. has been strongly condemned in library circles and has been referred to as, “a disservice to education and research objectives of institutions.”<sup>4</sup>

### Law reports and journals

The NIALS periodical collection, which is mainly of overseas origin, is outdated with huge gaps to be filled. The Due Process system of acquisitions does not accommodate periodical subscriptions pre-payment and even before the ‘due process’ started, libraries were already experiencing difficulties in effecting regular payments for overseas periodicals. For example, the only online database which the Institute subscribes to, the **Hein Online Periodical Subscriptions Scheme** has been discontinued for about 6 months due to bureaucratic issues concerning the remittance of foreign currency.

### NIALS E-Initiatives

Efforts made in the past to automate the library processes did not record any remarkable success, making information service delivery a Herculean task. The Library presently has none of the following:

- Reliable internet access;
- OPAC (On-line Public Access Catalogue);
- LAN (Local Area Network);
- Functional computer hardware and software.

The Director General has promised to make the automation of library processes a priority and this is part of what informed the London trip.

### Learning time

Our visit took place in March 2010. One of the facilities available for our use included a fast internet connection which was a far cry from the slower connections back home. This made it possible for us to have regular contact with colleagues, friends and family and also to do a bit of research whenever we got away from the tight schedule of our programme. The intensive programme for the visit was drawn up by David Gee and it included visits for comparative purpose to four other libraries in London.

### Library tour

David Gee and Lesley Young conducted a facilities tour of the library, showing us the floor layout and the arrangement of the books from the various jurisdictions on the shelves. We were pleased to see a sizeable Nigerian collection located on the ground floor and eagerly pointed out some gaps in the collection.

### Lectures begin

The following day, the Co-director and Institute Librarian, Mr. Jules Winterton formally welcomed us and gave a brief lecture on the “Overall Library Strategy, IALS, ULRIS and the University of London context”. He gave a brief history of the Institute, which was conceived in 1946 and formally established in 1947 as a focus of legal research in Britain and the Commonwealth.

Mr. Winterton noted that the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies forms part of the University of London as one of the many departments of the University competing for scarce resources from the Senate. Consequently, in addition to the funds received from the University of London, emphasis on income generating services has proved to be of immense benefit to the library. The various Colleges of the University of London pay the IALS Library for their students’ usage of the legal collection, while practising barristers and solicitors, who also use the library, pay higher fees. As a meeting point between academics and practitioners, IALS has a strength in the uniqueness of its Law Library, which is second to none in the services it offers to legal researchers.

The status of the Institute Librarian as a co-director of IALS has allowed the Library to be semi-autonomous, in terms of budgetary control of allocated funds and decision taking. This situation ensures smooth and efficient administration, devoid of interference from non-professionals. This is very different from the NIALS Library, where the Institute Librarian has no input in the preparation of the library budget and the Library Committee, chaired by a non-librarian, takes decisions on such crucial matters as acquisitions of library materials. The Institute Librarian observed that the present building of the Institute opened in 1976, was designed and

structured to be functional but was now due for expansion. The NIALS is considering a different kind of expansion, by opening more offices in the six geo-political zones of the country.

Recollecting how the Institute has had a long term relationship with NIALS from its formative years, the Institute Librarian expressed surprise at the fact that unlike NIALS, the recently launched Ghana Institute of Advanced Legal Studies<sup>5</sup> has already signed a Memorandum of Understanding with IALS.

Other educational and interesting talks and lectures delivered during the course of our visit included:

- **Library users and services, the structure and research support activities of the academic services department and the in-house staff training programme. Library admission categories and access. (David Gee).**

The Academic Services Department, headed by the Deputy Institute Librarian, is autonomous in its financial operations, in accordance with the recommendation of the Megarry Committee of the University of London, 1986. The autonomous status enables it to effectively serve the large number of students and academic staff seeking information and assistance from the library. A unique feature of the library is the unit staffed by non-librarians who are in charge of library admissions and the issuance of cards. The trust reposed in non-librarians is noteworthy because at NIALS the admission process ends at the Institute Librarian's desk. He has the final say on library admissions.

- **Collection development policies and the structure and activities of information resources development (Lesley Young)**

The IALS library is similar to NIALS in having no written collection development policy. There is a rather general acquisitions policy. Selection, spread across jurisdictions, English and non-English, is done by subject experts. There is however, an Acquisitions Committee that monitors and supervises the acquisition processes. Due cognisance is also accorded to the inter-disciplinary as well as the comparative law aspects of the collection. Lesley highlighted some of the constraints, which include the high costs of relevant electronic resources, unlike books and monographs, are not exempted from VAT. It will not be very easy for NIALS to match the pace of acquisition at IALS, mainly because the inconsistent fiscal policies of the federal government have made the acquisition of foreign materials by Nigerian libraries a very difficult task.

- **Training session on IALS archives (Elizabeth Dawson)**

The Archive collection housed in the library basement is funded by a grant. This brought home to us the need to look for alternative sources of funding

for library services. We realised that total reliance on government funding, as is the case at NIALS, will prevent us from achieving the goal of effective service delivery.

- **Millennium library management system, IALS website and the 'Structure and Activities' of the Information Systems Department (Steve Whittle)**

After several failed attempts at computerising the collection, NIALS library is currently receiving proposals from several firms and is in the process of selecting one that will provide us with an effective library management system.

- **IALS Library E-initiatives: VLE and E-repository; Intute; Eagle-i; BAILLI (Steve Whittle)**

After going through the various IALS e-initiatives we hope to replicate some of them in our library. We were advised to start with a Nigerian LLI, which will be based on student's reading lists, as this is likely be a cheaper project to execute.

### Visits to other libraries

We were informed that the first three libraries we were to visit were all within walking distance of IALS. However, they turned out, by Lagos standards, to be within 'driving' distance. The visits to the Lincoln's Inn Library, with its interesting bays; quaint method of arranging books and rare materials of historical value; the British Library, with its rich collection, covering all known subjects; the UK Supreme Court Library, a recent development, housed in a beautiful renovated structure and the London School of Economics Library, with its unique architecture, were highly rewarding experiences as they revealed the varied practices and operations of the library world. The warm welcome we received in the libraries we visited made up for the long walks we took!

### Rounding up

With the help of Lesley Young, we spent part of our last two days selecting books from the IALS Duplicate Books Collection. We got three trolley loads of valuable materials. We would have selected more books, but for the high costs of shipment. In fact, we are still searching for public spirited individuals or organisations to help pay for the cost of shipping the books to Nigeria.

### Lessons learnt

We were impressed by the prodigious output of the 25 staffing members, made up of only 15 professionals, manning the 250,000 volume collection. Determined to make a difference, we wrote a report of our study visit

immediately we arrived back home. The Institute Librarian then set up a Committee, to study and make recommendations on the Report to the Director General of the Institute. The Committee agreed that for NIALS to replicate the type of legal information delivery services in operation at IALS, we need to surmount the twin problems of inadequate funding and erratic power supply. Recently, NIALS acquired an electric power

generating set, but the cost of the fuel needed to run it is too high for it to be used effectively. We also need to look for alternative sources of funds, since total dependence on government subvention will not help NIALS attain and maintain the level of services offered at IALS. Finally, we believe that cooperation with IALS Library will expedite our efforts to provide an efficient and effective legal information service to our users.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, University of Lagos. Information Brochure. – 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. – Lagos: NIALS, April 1980, 20p.

<sup>2</sup>See section 2, Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies Act Cap. NI 12 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004.

<sup>3</sup>A former Director General confessed at a management meeting, that it was when he failed to get a ministerial appointment which he was lobbying for, that he was offered the position of Director General as compensation.

<sup>4</sup>Dada, T. O. "The State of the Institute's Library". A Report presented at the Library Committee Meeting, 12 October 2010.

<sup>5</sup>16 September 2009.

*Legal Information Management*, 11 (2011), pp. 133–138  
© The British and Irish Association of Law Librarians

doi:10.1017/S1472669611000442

### Research and Resources

# Research and Resources for Competition Lawyers

**Abstract:** Daniel Harrison, professional support lawyer, and Lisa Bunker, senior information officer, at Clifford Chance LLP explain why competition law research is so heavily based on European Union (EU) law and briefly describe the organisational framework and where to find key documents.

**Keywords:** competition law; EU law; legal research

### Introduction

The Clifford Chance Global Antitrust Group is made up of about 150 lawyers in 20 offices around the world, including in the EU, United States and China.

### General characteristics of a competition law practice

A UK competition law practice typically includes lawyers from throughout the EU and from even further afield,

leading to a culturally stimulating environment in which to work. This is because competition law is substantially the same throughout the EU and there is an increasing convergence of competition laws globally (in the US, competition law is referred to as antitrust law). This gives competition lawyers the flexibility to work abroad and make use of foreign language skills. It also explains why international law firms tend to have competition teams in Brussels (the seat of the European Commission) as well as in other jurisdictions.

The UK competition researcher or librarian therefore needs to have an in-depth understanding of the regulatory bodies, legislative framework and judicial procedures of