

¹² Conference Committee's 2006/07 Annual Report, with thanks to David Hart.

¹³ Prizes are donated by our sponsors and exhibitors.

¹⁴ For example, Cadbury's World (1994). Portsmouth Harbour and the Mary Rose (1998).

Biographies

Catherine Bowl is Deputy Head of Research at Travers Smith LLP. She began her law librarian career in Perth, Western Australia, and has also worked for an Australian mining company. She was Hon. Treasurer of the Association from 2004 to 2008, Conference Finance Officer from 2009 to 2014 and Chair of the BIALL Conference Committee from 2015 to 2018.

John Furlong is a solicitor by profession and has worked in senior positions in two of Ireland's leading law firms. He was the first Irish person to chair the British & Irish Association of Law Librarians and was active on the Association's Conference Committee for many years. John continues to act as visiting lecturer in legal research and European legal research at the Law School of the Law Society of Ireland.

Caroline Mosley is Chambers' Librarian at No5 Barristers' Chambers and a freelance library consultant, having previously held senior positions in several large regional law firms. She was Chair of the Conference Committee from 1998 to 1999 and previously served as Exhibition and then Conference Co-ordinator. Caroline has been Chair of the LIM Editorial Board and a member of the Publications Committee as Newsletter Editor from 2015–2018.

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The BIALL Irish Group

Abstract: In the article, Jennefer Aston reflects on the involvement in BIALL of law librarians from Ireland. She writes about the development of the BIALL Irish Group, some of the challenges that Irish law librarians have faced, notes how the legal sector in Ireland grew in the 1980s and 1990s and describes the collaboration and the activities of law librarians in Ireland. She also invites former Chair of the Association, John Furlong, and current President, Renate ní Uigín, to give some thoughts too.

Keywords: law librarianship; BIALL; Northern Ireland; Ireland

INTRODUCTION

The 'I' in BIALL underlines the fact that Irish librarians were among the founding members in BIALL. Colm Gavan Duffy of the Law Society of Ireland was one of the five members of the first executive committee elected from 1969–70.¹ Margot Chubb of Trinity College Library was Adviser to the Committee on Automation and Union Catalogues and, of course, Muriel Anderson of the

IALS (Institute of Advanced Legal Studies), Chair of the Association in 1988, was from Belfast.

BIALL IRISH GROUP

So although Irish members had been involved in BIALL right from the start of the Association, it was much, much later before BIALL members met in

Ireland more formally and gave ourselves the name 'BIALL Irish Group'. Before that formal step, Irish members of BIALL were already collaborating on a regular basis so as to provide a better information service to their clients. From the minutes in the BIALL archives it seems that the first formal records were of a meeting of 2nd October 1990. More recently the group formally became a Special Interest Group (SIG). BIALL's annual conference was held in Ireland for the first time in 1990 at Trinity College Dublin; it has since returned to Ireland on five other occasions: to the University of Ulster in 1996, to Cork in 2001, Belfast in 2012 and Dublin in 2008 and 2016.² In the early days a lot depended on having willing local law librarians and law firms to support the organisation of the conference and so those local planning meetings were probably the main catalyst for formalising the group.

As Mary Blake pointed out, ours was the only regional group of law librarians to include BIALL in its name. The Group has always been an 'all island' group with members from both jurisdictions. Although this is an account of our group it is important to provide a context for its development, and that necessitates a brief account of the legal systems in Ireland.

CHALLENGES FOR IRISH LAW LIBRARIANS

Because Irish law was shaped by being the first experiment of the common law, Irish law librarians faced more challenges than their colleagues in Great Britain. In 1920, before the partition of Ireland, lawyers in Ireland dealt with legislation from three different parliaments³ dating back to the 13th century in addition to Irish case law interpreting those laws and English case law that was relevant. The establishment of two new jurisdictions, with two new parliaments, two sets of judges and two separate law reporting councils ensured that the legal systems moved further and further apart.

However, even with that growing separation practitioners faced the same issues in access to law. For many years both Irish jurisdictions relied on textbooks published before 1922. Indeed as late as the 1970s a reprint of those early editions (organised by law librarians) sold very well. The reprints were well used until late in the 20th century by which time modern Irish legal publishing was flourishing.

Both law reporting councils published occasional texts and there were some self-published texts but generally lawyers were left to their own research and experience. Both jurisdictions suffered from a delay in the publication of their law reports and a consequent difficulty in making decisions of the courts readily available in a timely fashion. In Northern Ireland this resulted in the Northern Ireland Judgments Bulletin and in Dublin in the circulation of the 'Pink Sheets' service that provided abstracts of judgments (1976–1989). With so much in

common it was only natural that the 'Irish Group' represented both jurisdictions.

IALT

The Irish Association of Law Teachers (IALT), founded in 1979, also included both jurisdictions. Collaboration between the Irish Group and the IALT resulted in two very valuable indexes to judgments covering 1966–1982, a project that also involved the co-operation of the Incorporated Council for Law Reporting in Ireland. Irish law librarians were directly involved in this and several far-reaching developments and services to improve access to legal information in their jurisdictions, to the benefit of both law librarians and lawyers.

GROWTH IN THE LEGAL SECTOR

The 1980s and 1990s saw huge change in the Irish legal scene. There was a growth in the number of lawyers; an increase in the number of law firms that had libraries, and in the number of firms that employed librarians; the advent of the internet and free services; the arrival of international online providers; a steady rise in the number of books published on Irish and Northern Irish law; the start of BAILII (British and Irish Legal Information Institute) and more.

COLLABORATION

In Dublin early examples of the collaboration of law librarians were: involvement with the Office of the Attorney General in the production of the eISB (electronic Irish Statute Book) on CD-ROM; and later the Irish Reports in electronic form. In Belfast: Servicing the Legal System (SLS) was established in Queen's University to provide training and publications on Northern Ireland law; and the Statutes Revised Northern Ireland were published.

INVOLVEMENT WITH BIALL

For many years there was an Irish representative who attended BIALL Council meetings. They were able to present an Irish perspective when necessary and report back to the Irish Group's meetings. This ensured good communication between Irish members and the Council, and an awareness of issues arising on both islands. In the past many chairs/presidents have attended Irish meetings, Dunston Speight being the most recent.

In the early years the cost of travelling, in addition to the fees, meant few Irish members could avail of most of the conferences or training offered by BIALL (this is no longer the case). The early Irish Group minutes show that members frequently presented short papers or provided training to the meeting on topics of interest. This practice arose not just from necessity, but as a means of providing training benefits locally, and encouraging those working in legal information to be members of BIALL.

This practise continues today, the most recent topic was on systematic review.

Many of the topics or recurring themes at our meetings are ones that concern law librarians everywhere. So I have made a selection of topics discussed and acted upon, and a short outline of them follows:

- The BIALL Irish Group, working with other groups of librarians, actively lobbied for, and secured changes to, the Irish implementation of the Copyright directive⁴. Those changes continue to be of direct benefit to libraries and their users.
- The difficulty of securing printed materials from Her Majesty's Stationery Office - HMSO (NI) - and the Government Publications (GP) has been discussed. Delay in the publication of primary sources from the Stationery Offices was the most common theme. However, a further concern in Dublin is the more recent development of short print runs that are sold out before they are publicly listed as being for sale. GP no longer provides the facility to place standing orders for titles without a predictable publication date such as bound volumes of Acts, Statutory Instruments and Parliamentary Debates.
- Members also collaborated on an Irish Legal Thesaurus based on the Legal Information Resources (LIR) thesaurus.
- In order to make the best use of resources the group has also combined to compile union lists of periodicals and of law reports.

PUBLISHERS AND PUBLICATIONS

In addition to working through LIG and BIALL Council, the Irish Group also seeks to solve purely local issues directly with the publishers in the first instance.

- The meetings have chronicled many developments in the publishing sector from the arrival of new publishers, to the merging or takeover of established publishers. Difficulties with frequency, price increases, changes in format and more have been discussed. Most publishers of both print and electronic forms have at some stage either presented to the group or come to discuss difficulties experienced by the group.
- SLS publications were absorbed by the Law Society of Northern Ireland who have continued the publication of 'Folio - the Northern Ireland Conveyancing and Land Law Journal' and of 'The Child and Family Law Update'. In addition to these two serial titles all SLS publications and the Law Society's own publications are available from the Library of the Law Society of Northern Ireland through their website.
- Discussion on the production and online publication of judgments has featured many times at meetings. Members have provided regular feedback to the Courts Service

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the 'in-meeting' training, more substantial training has also been organised by the group and often involves half-day or full-day conferences. One of the first of these was training in the use of the CELEX (Communitatis Europae Lex) databases. Copyright training was also provided. Some of the other topics covered locally have related to:

United States legal information and research
Moys classification training
Information literacy skills
EU materials

Today training can be delivered remotely by the Professional Development Committee and our members can avail of it like any other BIALL member.

IN CONCLUSION

In conclusion Irish members also have a long record of involvement in BIALL committees, working groups and special Interest Groups and the current situation is more fully outlined in Renate's contribution below.

I would like to thank Joe Donnelly of the Judges Library for his invaluable assistance with this account.

To date, there have been four Chairs (now, Presidents) of the Association whom originated from Ireland - Muriel Anderson (already mentioned from IALS), John Furlong, Jennefer Aston and Renate ní Uigín (who is the President for 2019-2020). It seems appropriate that both John and Renate should also contribute to this account of the Group, and it is with pleasure that I give them the last word.

FINAL THOUGHTS FROM...

John Furlong

In 2000 I was honoured to be the first person from an Irish library to chair the Association. I think I might also have been the first non-librarian to hold this position as I am a solicitor by profession. Previously, I had been an active member of the old Member Services committee and the BIALL Irish Group.

The Association had always been good to me. When I started out in law librarianship and information management at the start of the nineties, I became aware of the support available from colleagues through BIALL. I received great mentoring and assistance from Irish colleagues and also from a number of valued contacts in London law firms (step forward Elizabeth Tooms, Loyita Worley and Kate Stanfield!). As a result, I always appreciated that although there were jurisdictional differences and the law itself might be different, there was a strong unifying bond between members with regards to skills,

tools and processes. This was particularly so in the law firm sector as we came to terms with the emergence of knowledge management; the rapid growth of internet resources and the move in publishing from paper to online.

So when I took on the role of vice chair and then chair, I believed very much in the unifying and supportive role of the Association. Of course, I was pleased to 'fly the flag' for Ireland but, as I recall, the main issues then for the Association tended not to have a national basis – relations with publishers; copyright; online presence; development of the Association etc.

It was a hectic period. In addition to Council and SCOSAF meetings, there were many other associated trips to London and elsewhere. It helped to have understanding employers and the availability of Ryanair bargain air fares.

Renate ní Uigín

As part of the extensive BIALL network, the BIALL Irish Group has always been a source of support and experience for its members. Acting collectively, always conscious of the relative size of our jurisdictions on the global scale, is an ongoing strength. We encourage suppliers to listen to us as a group rather than as a set of individuals.

As we recognise the advantages of being part of a collaborative Irish group, we also recognise the benefits of being part of the wider BIALL organisation and contributing to its development.

Currently we have members of the BIALL Irish Group on the Professional Development Committee, the

editorial board of Legal Information Management, and acting as one of the Membership Co-ordinators. The recently established Knowledge Management SIG has active Irish involvement. In the recent past Irish members have also played a role on the Conference Committee and the Publications Committee. We have contributed to the Legal Research Packs, reviewed the BIALL skills benchmarking framework from an Irish perspective, partake in the various member surveys and contribute articles to newsletters. We may initially attempt to tackle eg. supplier issues unique to Ireland at a local level, but are aware that we can call upon the expertise of the Supplier Liaison Group to assist in our endeavours. There's always an Irish contingent to be found at Conference, engaged in the activities and networking.

As President Elect for 2018–2019, and previously as a member of Council, I have had an opportunity to gain first-hand experience of the work that goes on behind the scenes in providing the services and organising various events for BIALL members. I have been an active Irish voice at Council meetings, taking every chance to bring an Irish perspective to discussions, this perspective often having been garnered at BIALL Irish Group meetings, identifying the similarities between our jurisdictions and the challenges we face, and occasionally highlighting the differences as well. I have encouraged Committee Chairs to draw on the experience of their Irish members as well as identifying their alternative needs. In turn I have been able to keep the members of the Irish Group up to date with how BIALL as an organisation is developing and striving to meet the changing needs of all members.

Footnotes

¹ Mary Blake, *A History of the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians 1969–1999*. [Warwick]: BIALL, 2000.

² Dublin had been considered for the Conference in 1974 but was rejected.

³ Irish Parliaments, English Parliaments, United Kingdom Parliaments.

⁴ Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000.

Biography

Jennefer Aston is a former Chair of BIALL and now a life member. She held several offices in the International Association of Law Libraries and was awarded life membership in 2013. She worked with the Bar Council of Ireland as librarian and consultant librarian from 1979 until 2010. She now provides training in legal research and is owner manager of LawBooks Ireland.