

The Scottish Law Librarians Group

Abstract: This article by Gill Black of Biggart Baillie LLP, the current Convenor of the Group, describes its membership and activities.

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The Scottish Law Librarians Group (SLLG) represents those working in legal libraries and information services based in Scotland and anyone otherwise with an interest in Scottish law librarianship. We have over 100 members who come from professional bodies, government, publishers, law firms and academic institutions. We provide a professional and social networking forum, online and in person, which can be a necessary lifeline, as a significant number of our members are one-man-bands.

Our two general meetings form the backbone of our events calendar: the AGM, which always plays host to a guest speaker, plus our ever-popular Christmas networking event. The Christmas meeting takes the form of “speed networking” (possibly not quite as fun as speed dating, but certainly with less potential for embarrassment) and ends with plenty of mulled wine and mince pies to get the festive period off to a good start.

We fill the rest of the year with a varied programme of visits, talks, training courses and networking events.

Being based such a distance from the training hub that is London, we at the SLLG consider one of our most important roles to be the provision of local, quality training opportunities for our members. Courses range from the practical basics (such as Introduction to Cataloguing and our regular Introduction to Basic Scottish Legal Research Materials), to management and personal development courses (such as presentation skills, train the trainer, etc), all the way to meeting really specific training needs (such as a recent course on building contracts). We provide bursaries for members who would otherwise be unable to take advantage of such training opportunities.

These bursaries are also available for any type of relevant professional development, so, for example, we usually send one or two members each year to the BIALL Conference. In the current financial climate, these bursaries are even more important, as they allow members to continue with their professional development, where the money would otherwise simply not be available.

The majority of SLLG events, however, are free to our members and one of the free services that the SLLG can provide is to arrange for speakers to venture north of the Border to talk on topics of interest (such as a



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recent popular talk given by James Mullan on Web 2.0). While most of the talks highlight a professional issue (such as changes to copyright licences), we like to mix in some just for interest and invite local speakers, such as lawyers from Scottish firms, to present on their chosen field of expertise.

One of the most enjoyable events in the SLLG calendar is the annual visit to the Edinburgh International Book Festival. Each year we scour the programme of the Festival and select an event that we think will be of interest, and then buy tickets for any of our members who wish

to attend. Not only do we get a fun (and free to members!) afternoon out of the office, but it means that we at the SLLG can “arrange” for world class speakers to present to our members. I can’t imagine that there would have been any other way that we could have had discussion on the future of libraries with, among others, Margaret Atwood! As an aside, I would urge anyone reading this article who has never been to the Edinburgh International Book Festival to go along, as it is a wonderful experience and you are certain to find something on the programme that is up your street.

Of course, not all the members of the SLLG will be able to attend all of our events, so we also have an online presence, an email list and publications to help keep members in contact with the whole of the group. Our website (www.sllg.org.uk) has been recently redesigned to include secure members’ pages, so that we can post publications, job adverts, course slides and messages between members. The email list keeps everyone in touch and the Newsletter is a fun way for the Committee to let the whole group share what we’ve all been up to.

One other role played by the SLLG is to provide our members with a single voice in advocacy for the profession. Whether it be responding to the Law Society of Scotland consultation on training of solicitors, or placing articles in journals to explain the changing role of the law librarian, we aim to help the voice of the Scottish law librarian be heard.

Membership of the SLLG costs just £15 per year and, I personally think that that’s a bargain... but then, as Convenor, I would say that, wouldn’t it?