

IALL 2012 Conference Report: 31st Annual Course on International Law and Legal Information: Canada, the Cultural Mosaic and International Law

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Background

In April 12th, 2011, Teresa Miguel from Yale Law Library called my office in the Library Max von Buch (Universidad de San Andrés) in Buenos Aires, Argentina to tell me I was the recipient of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) 2011 Schaffer Grant for Foreign Law Libraries. This recognition allowed me to attend the AALL Annual Meeting in Philadelphia in July of that year.

This was my first attendance at an international conference, and I was particularly excited because since it was the first time someone from Latin America won the Schaffer grant. It represented a huge opportunity to talk about Latin American issues at a Law Library conference. At the conference, I gave a presentation about the role of libraries and archives in the reconstruction of cultural and political memory in Argentina after the return of democracy.

Thanks to the Schaffer grant, the interest in the topic of my presentation and the support I received from the entire group, I was invited to multiple events, one of which allowed me to meet Jules Winterton from the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (University of London). Jules was the former president of the International Association of Law Libraries (IALL) and we had a great talk about the human rights in Latin America and my personal experience as an immigrant in Latin America.

The talk with Jules was very entertaining and fun. It also gave me an idea of what the IALL was and its work with law librarians around the world. One of the things I found most exciting about the IALL was the fact that the

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IALL has over 400 members in more than 50 countries, which made possible the exchange of experiences working on comparative law.

Since then I have closely followed the activities of the IALL. In July 2012, I met Petal Kinder, Director of the Law Library for the High Court of Australia and current president of the IALL, in Boston, when I was giving a presentation about legal research in the Inter-American Human Rights System. Along with Petal, I met Mark Engsborg, Director of the Emory Law Library, and Bård Tuseth from the University of Oslo Library.

I decided then to apply for a Professional Development Bursary, which provided financial assistance to attend IALL's 31st Annual Course held in Toronto, Canada. On August 3rd Ms. Barbara Garavaglia, Director of the Law Library at the University of Michigan, contacted me to inform me that had been selected as one of the recipients of a scholarship to attend the 2012 IALL conference in Toronto. After the email, I rushed to get all the requirements for my trip to Toronto, including a visa, an issue that, for a Latin American person, is always stressful.

The Way to Toronto

Travelling from Buenos Aires to Toronto was a challenge. First, the 6000 miles of travel usually take about twelve hours. But my flight with connections took about 16 hours to get to Toronto. Once there, I found out my luggage was delayed and would arrive two days later. However, this incident did not overshadow the experience. It gave me the opportunity to talk with other IALL delegates at the conference hotel and they even offered me their own clothes.

To avoid the high costs, I shared a room with Judith Gerencser from the Curia of Hungary. She was also one of the winners of the Professional Bursaries that year. This was a great bonus. Judith was nice, funny and we had a fantastic time together. Since then, we share a good friendship and we keep contact.

Toronto is a fantastic city. It was not my first time there; however, this visit allowed me to rediscover it. Toronto is the center of the Canada's industrial, financial and cultural life and the subject matter of the conference was perfect for exploring the vast cultural riches that the city has to offer. *Canada: The Cultural Mosaic and International Law*, was the conference's theme and it included the participation of some of the most important representatives of the academy, legal practice and law libraries of Canada,

covering most of the perspectives of the Canadian scholars on international and domestic issues.

The Conference

The IALL conference was held at the Faculty of Law, University of Toronto and Osgoode Hall Law School, York University and offered over a dozen sessions related to the Canadian law and its approach to International Law. The program opened with a welcome ceremony in Osgoode Hall, a beautiful building, preceded by a tour of its library, the Great Library, Law Society of Upper Canada.

The meeting in Toronto brought together about 160 delegates from over 20 countries, something not very strange in Canada, where –according to Ayelet Sachar from the Faculty of Law of University of Toronto, 49% of the population are immigrants.

In my immigrant status in Argentina, and the immigrant status of my family in the United States, the lecturer of Professor Sachar was particularly hopeful when she referred to multiculturalism and citizenship in Canada.

The presentation of Professor Faisal Bhahba from the Osgoode Hall Law School York University was also very interesting. It related to the Canadian approach to International Human Rights. His presentation was very stimulating because I know a little bit of the Canadian cases in the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. After his presentation, during lunch, I had the opportunity to discuss with Professor Bhahba my own opinions about his exposition. This was one of the greatest things about the organization of the IALL Conference: the possibility of socializing during the lectures and the breaks, even with the speakers.

After a long discussion, Professor Bhahba invited me to participate in his class of International Legal Partnership the next day at Osgoode Hall. I took advantage of the visit to the library that the conference had scheduled and attended his class. I presented two Latin American cases (from Chile and Costa Rica) in the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. It was fantastic! The exchange with the students was a very good opportunity to explain public interest litigation in Latin America and the Inter-American Human Rights System, especially since Canada and the United States do not recognize the jurisdiction of the Court or the Inter-American Human Rights Commission.

Other conference presentations were related to specific fields of law in Canada like Aboriginal Law, Same Sex Marriage, Polygamy, Domestic Implementation of International Law, Environmental Law and Anti-terrorism Law. Each lecture had a lot to offer, not only because of the knowledge of the speakers, but also because the possibility for the audience to ask questions at the end, and the feedback that format permitted.

Personal Experience

On a personal level, the Conference allowed me to build personal and professional relationships with librarians from around the world. Some of these I already knew from my past attendance to the AALL Annual Meeting in 2011 and 2012. Others I met for the first time and exchanged experiences and knowledge. Second, I could also further develop contacts with vendors who had the opportunity to share with conference delegates at social events and also at special times to present their products.

I encourage every law librarian to do his/her best to attend the IALL Conference. The value of the program on offer and of the exchange of experiences with librarians from all over the world is huge! And after my attendance at the Toronto conference, the contacts I gathered helped me grow in my profession and assists me now in my everyday work.

I will work very hard to make sure that the 2014 IALL Conference, which will be held in Buenos Aires, will be at the same or higher level as the conference in Toronto. And for sure, the best thing about the IALL conferences held in different countries is the possibility that they help us to know our world beyond mere stereotypes and teach us about law libraries from around the world.