

Whilst Paul could sometimes appear to be a slightly formidable person, particularly when one was undertaking committee work with him, as he was well-known for his strongly-held views and his insistence on adhering to the principles which he believed were right, he was at the same time a true professional. His attention to detail was legendary and he always expected high standards in any projects he was involved in.

He was the first professionally qualified librarian to be employed at the Law Society and he started the tradition of

young law librarians cutting their teeth on legal information work in its comprehensive library. They then moved into the rapidly developing field of law firm information work, armed with excellent legal research skills.

He will be remembered with affection and he has left a lasting legacy in his early work for BIALl. We extend our condolences to his wife Tina and their daughter, in their sad loss.

Christine Miskin

With help from Diane Raper and Barbara Tearle

Legal Information Management, 9 (2009), pp. 155–156

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doi:10.1017/S1472669609990235

BIALL Present and Future

As part of our 40th Anniversary issue we asked the immediate Past President of the Association, Jackie Fishleigh, to tell us what she felt the most important activities of the Association have been over the past year. We also asked Daniella King, now the President, to write about what she considers are the challenges the Association immediately faces.

President's Report 2008–2009 Jackie Fishleigh

Following the implementation of the new governance structure, 2008–2009 is the first year that BIALl has had a President rather than a Chair. It has been an honour to be the first person to be elected to this office.

We have also changed the Constitution to allow the electronic delivery of ballots. This was agreed at the AGM last year and approved by a postal ballot of members. The process of reform started as part of the Strategic Review is thus complete. I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in carrying out these important changes which should make the Association fit for purpose in the electronic age.

This leads me on to the major project of this year which has been the new website. Web developers Fat Beehive were selected to work with the Web Committee to design this for us. The website is now live. The Web Committee have put a great deal of work into this for which we are all most grateful. I hope you agree that having a state-of-the-art website will be of great benefit to the membership as a whole.

As everyone is no doubt well aware, this has been a difficult year financially both for organisations and individuals generally. We have been fortunate at BIALl that the

great care taken with finances in previous years has left the Association with healthy balances in both our current account and reserve fund. This has enabled us to offer registration fees for our Manchester conference at even lower levels than 2006 and also to make available three times the usual number of bursaries to encourage attendance. Although numbers this year will undoubtedly be lower than last year due to deep cuts in training budgets at law firms, we are fortunate that very strong sponsorship and an excellent programme put together by an extremely hardworking conference Committee will see us through and make the event a success again this time.

The downturn has also led to a squeeze on active membership. This is understandable but we have made special efforts to maintain our traditionally high levels of member involvement. I am pleased to report that all the Officer and Council posts will be filled at the AGM. Committees have been the hardest hit but we have and will continue to undertake recruitment drives to address this.

I have been very impressed at the great range of skills and expertise amongst our members and at their level of commitment even when under pressure at work. We are very lucky to have such a pool of talent and we will continue to tap it vigorously!

The Future of BIALl.... Is there a Tarot Reader in the House? Daniella King

As a general rule, the most successful man in life is the man who has the best information.

– Benjamin Disraeli

If only we all had a crystal ball in which we can peer and see what life has in store for us. Wouldn't that be nice? Or maybe it wouldn't? Maybe it would only tell us bad news or things we don't want to face. It would definitely ruin the element of surprise that life can have in store for us all.

As I have no crystal ball I cannot predict what the future has in store for our organization, as well as our profession, especially during the next year during which I will be President. I can only think of the things that I would like to address during the time I hold the BIALL gavel.

Financially, the future seems bleak. The legal profession has been affected greatly over the last year, as have been many other sectors. Our budgets have been slashed and our workforce reduced. It has definitely been a challenging period for our members and it looks like it will continue for a little bit longer.

From speaking to other law librarians at our recent conference, everyone is feeling uncertain and unsure, but there does also appear to be a positive side effect. There seems to be more of a willingness to look out for each other – many are choosing to work reduced hours in order to prevent redundancies amongst their colleagues. Everyone I have spoken to seems to want our profession to work and pull together, so maybe there is now a camaraderie which may have been missing in previous times.

We do have to consider what we can do for our members who have lost their jobs, because it is affecting many people and you just don't know when it could also come knocking on your door. BIALL will continue to explore ways in which we can help. We already have a heavily reduced membership rate for those people who are currently without a job, while we will also be offering free places on some of our courses. During the conference, we also increased the value of the bursaries which we had on offer from £3,000 to £10,000 and we are hoping to do the same for Brighton in 2010.

It is a good opportunity for these people to become more involved in BIALL – to fill their hours and to keep their professional awareness up-to-date. We have various Committees that need new members (and BIALL pays all travel expenses to attend Committee meetings), while we are always looking for people to write articles in the *Newsletter* and *Legal Information Management*. It also offers a great networking opportunity which may just lead to that next job.

BIALL is called the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians for a reason – and a very good reason for that! We are here to help members of our profession in

all jurisdictions, whether you live in London, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Belfast or Dublin. Various emails have been included on BIALL Mail-Talk over the years and several questions asked at our conferences about whether BIALL is too London-focussed. In some ways this is true, but in many ways it is not true. Our conferences are always held outside London, and many of our committees hold their meetings elsewhere, while we are increasingly offering courses in alternative locations and also exploring potential on-line training solutions.

There is another question that needs to be answered and that is whether we address the interests of all people working in legal information. Are we providing as good a level of support to senior members of our profession as we offer to new members? Are our activities well-balanced between academia and the legal sector? And where have all the government librarians gone? I am sure a few years back they seemed to be more involved in BIALL activities. We also do not tend to include professional support lawyers (PSLs) within our membership and that is maybe something that we need to rethink. Many librarians may have feared the role of PSLs, so did not want to include them within our ranks, but perhaps we should embrace them. We could probably learn a lot from each other.

There have always been challenges to our profession and some have not gone away. The paperless office has never really arrived, so the death of libraries hasn't occurred and, although lawyers are becoming very familiar with using many of the on-line resources, they still seem to need us. And of course there are publishers! For so long we seem to have had a love-hate relationship with them. We can't live with them, yet can't live without them. I hope that maybe the current economic crisis can help redefine our relationship with the publishing sector.

And to end on some good news – we also have a party to look forward to. BIALL is hosting a party in September, which has been graciously sponsored by Justis to celebrate our 40th year. We even have a 60s theme – so please feel free to dress up if you wish. A lot has happened in this world over the last 40 years. 1969 saw man walk on the moon, the Beatles played their last live performance and of course BIALL was founded in the basement of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies. I wonder if our original founders would have thought that we would still be alive and flourishing all these years later.

Whatever life and the economy throws at us over the next 12 months, I am sure that BIALL will still be around in 2010. I even think we may be here for our centenary in 2069.