

Editorial

We are this year celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the founding of BIALL and this issue has a special section devoted to both the past and the present, as we celebrate the Association's achievements over the past 40 years, but also look forward to the immense challenges facing our profession in the near future. We are sad to report the death of one of our extremely active early members – Paul Richardson – but this also gives us the opportunity to reflect on the huge contribution made in the past to the Association by committed professionals like him.

40th Anniversary articles

I am pleased that Tim Buckley Owen, whilst not a law librarian, but a prominent member of the wider profession, has agreed to write an article for us on the challenges facing legal information professionals in these times of recession. Academic law libraries face their own particular challenges and Diane Raper, who has wide experience of almost every type of law library, and who is currently law librarian at Kent University, takes the experience of that university also reaching its 40th Anniversary, to consider the changes that have taken place in the services offered to staff and students in such institutions.

Jackie Fishleigh, the outgoing President, writes about the achievements of BIALL over the past 12 months, giving us a snapshot of our activities in a fairly typical year. Daniella King, our incoming President, faces up to the formidable issues which will almost certainly affect us in the year to come.

One of the more notable areas of expansion over the past 40 years has been the growth of regional and special interest groups and we have asked members of each group to write a short summary of their aims and activities. We have also included a brief chronology of the most important milestones in our history. Much of the information has been taken from Mary Blake's excellent history of the Association.

Looking forward, three of our members have written about topics relating to the growth of the internet which are of great current interest to all legal information professionals. Natasha Choolhun, of the College of Law, together with numerous colleagues, discusses the potential uses and abuses of Google in legal research. James Mullan writes about the potential of social networking within the professional environment – a very hot topic at the moment, and Kate Stanfield considers the role of the so-called "hybrid professional" in the context of working in a law firm library.

Finally in this section, I am grateful to Nick Holmes for allowing us to reprint the article he originally wrote in *Internet Newsletter for Lawyers*, January/February this year, on how he sees the future for legal publishers, which is another topic close to our hearts in these days of budget constraint.

Islamic law

Mashood Baderin, a professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, has written an immensely informative article on understanding Islamic law and Sarah Spells, the law librarian at the same institution, has provided a practical guide to researching this very complex area of law.

Current topics

I am grateful to Nigel Broadbent from Lupton Fawcett in Leeds for explaining what is involved in the multiple types of alternative dispute resolution which are now so important in preventing litigation. Michelle Celik, of the Editorial Board, who has wide experience as a commercial law librarian, has provided a practical guide to arbitration law sources to accompany Nigels article.

Once again, Peter Clinch has compiled the immensely useful SLS/BIALL Academic Law Library Survey 2007/2008 and this section finishes with the second part of Lesley Dingle's interview with Professor Sir Bob Hepple, an outstanding lawyer who has been intimately connected with many of the most important developments in employment and equality law in the UK in the last 40 years.

And finally...

We say good-bye and thank you to Janice Edwards as she finishes her stint as Chair of the Editorial Board. We are also very sorry that due to pressure of work, Michael Oberwarth has resigned as Book and Product Review Editor and also Proof Reader in Chief. He has done a sterling job in both roles and we wish him all the best for the future. Julie Doran has kindly agreed to take over the Book Review role and Claire Groom and Wendy Lynwood are assuming the proof-reading role.

I am grateful to all three

Christine Miskin