

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

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As previously announced, volume 26 (1998) follows volume 25 (1997) as a cumulative issue, in order to catch up and quickly regain a regular production schedule. With volume 27 (1999), *IJLI* will resume its normal publication of three issues a year. The expected distribution date of the Spring issue of volume 27 is May 1999.

"*Here Today - Gone Tomorrow? The Archivability of Electronic Records*" is the name of **Diana Frazier Miller**'s bibliography as well as the title of a program held in July 1998 at the Annual Meeting of the *American Association of Law Libraries (AALL)* in Anaheim, California. Three contributions from this panel discussion are included in this volume to bring attention to one of the most serious issues currently facing the library community: the problem of long-term access to digital information. There is currently not only a proliferation of electronic journals in law but a tendency to publish authoritative, primary source legal documents, including court decisions and legislation, directly in electronic format only. While there are many advantages to electronic dissemination of legal information, it is not at all clear how best to preserve electronic documents. Due to the fluidity of the medium, we risk permanent loss of essential primary records. As **Jeff Rothenberg**'s article makes clear, the issue of archivability does not concern only the legal community. These matters are of special concern, however, to law librarians in their roles as custodians of primary legal sources, as are the, as yet unresolved, related issues of authentication and citation.

In North America, the Canadian legal community was first to call national attention to these issues through a symposium held in November 1997. One of the initiators of this effort, **Anne Crocker** of the University of New Brunswick and former President of the *Canadian Association of Law Libraries*, describes the background and outcome of this conference.

Independently, but about the same time as the Canadian "Summit" meeting, a group of American law librarians met in Washington, D.C. at the joint invitation by **Rubens Medina**, the Law Librarian of Congress, and, **Judy Meadows**, State Law Librarian of Montana and then-President of the *AALL*. A *Taskforce* was created with **Claire Germain**, Edward Cornell Law Librarian and Director of the Cornell University Law Library, as the *primus*

*motor*. Under the continued joint leadership of the *AALL* and the *Law Library of Congress*, members of the *Taskforce* met after the *AALL Anaheim Conference* in Ithaca, New York; in Washington, D.C.; and in New Orleans, Louisiana, to make plans for a U.S. "Summit Meeting" seeking dialogue with the industry and agreement on standards for the long-term preservation of electronic records.

Other contributions constitute a link to our institutional past: both the two substantive, topical bibliographies by **Jean-Marie Henckaerts** and **Howard Gensler**, as well as the interview with **Ralph Lansky** had originally been accepted for publication by the prior Editorial Board of *IJLI*, **Igor Kavass** and **Bernard D. Reams**. To veteran *IALL* members, the names of **Igor Kavass**, **Arno Liivak** and **Ralph Lansky** immediately bring to mind also the names of **Adolf Sprudz**, **Ivan Sipkov**, **Joachim Schwietzke**, and **Klaus Menzinger** all of whom came individually or as a group to embody the *IALL* and to whom we owe the growth and development of the *Association* as an organization and the *International Journal of Legal Information* as a scholarly publication. It is, therefore, natural to strongly support Professors Kavass and Liivak in their original intent of making the interview with Dr. Lansky "the first of a planned series of informal 'conversations with colleagues' to gather the thoughts, impressions and concerns on a range of topics by our fellow law librarians around the world" and encourage "those who would like to contribute to this series through either real or imaginary conversations with their colleagues to submit them for publication within these pages of the *IJLI*."

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