

EDITORIAL COMMENT

With each annual *IALL Course on International Law Librarianship* coming to a close, the general consensus among participants seems to be that the most recent one was the “best ever,” with the joyful expectation and conviction that the next one will be even better... The bar is constantly being raised. One of the reasons for the success of the Conferences is the authenticity and uniqueness of each experience, the total immersion in a new country and culture. Thanks to the caliber of our worldwide membership, the Board has been able to consciously target new cities, new countries, new Continents, where we hope to expand our professional contacts, to learn and to teach. These colleagues who, in close cooperation with an *IALL* Board liaison, offer their time, energy and local expertise are instrumental in developing programs which not only highlight the strength and uniqueness of the host country, but which also are of relevance to the *IALL* membership. Instead of using convention centers or hotels, the *IALL* settings are always distinctive and contribute significantly to the atmosphere, whether we meet in a 16th century palace, in a modern law school, or, as in 2003, in a former prison turned building for the Graduate Business School of the University of Cape Town, right on the Waterfront at the foot of the Table Mountain, not far from Cape Point, where the two Oceans meet.

What made the Cape Town Conference so extraordinary was the fact that the topic, “**New Rights – New Laws: Legal Information in a Changing World**,” was not presented from a theoretical and purely academic standpoint: we had the incredible opportunity to meet in person and listen to those who actually had taken part in peacefully changing the course of history in South Africa. The speakers all, in various ways, had played and were still playing important roles in attempting to transform their society from injustice and bigotry to equality and democracy. The immediacy and vibrancy of their presentations and experiences in using the law as an agent of change is what gave us in the audience the sense of being “present at the creation.”

The coordinators for the *Twenty-Second Course* were **Amanda Barratt**, Law Librarian of the *University of Cape Town School of Law*, chair of the Local Organizing Committee, and *IALL* Board liaison **Jules Winterton**, Librarian of the *Institute for Advanced Legal Studies* in London. They both deserve

tremendous credit and kudos for having organized an outstanding Conference, the Association's first on African soil. Jules' *Introduction* gives an in-depth description of the educational programs and excursions, with fond acknowledgements of the many colleagues and volunteers behind the scenes who contributed to making the meeting successful. Amanda's *Opening Remarks* serve as an excellent overview and summary of the purpose and content of the Course. Together with **Hugh Corder**, Dean of the *Cape Town University School of Law* and one of the Drafters of the first South African *Bill of Rights*, she was able to assemble a truly stellar faculty of those who, with legal means, were taking an active part in fundamentally reshaping South African society.

President **Holger Knudsen** frequently refers to our *Courses* as one of the "pillars", on which the Association rests, the other one being this *Journal*. It must then follow that the *Proceedings* constitute the link, that perfect arch, uniting these two pillars. They serve, no doubt, to document and preserve the Association's intellectual and educational achievements for posterity, but also, importantly, to be made accessible to the entire legal community, as part of the current dialogue. At a time in history when *democracy-building* is a concept, the efforts and lessons from South Africa's continuing struggle to build its democracy, with its *Public Participation Program* and initiatives in encouraging the general public to speak up, could serve well as a manual and inspiration for other nations.

Besides the papers and presentations, the *Proceedings* issue also reflects the various goals and achievements of the *IALL*. The reports by the two 2003 scholarship recipients, **Emily Alemika** from Nigeria and **Mondli Sibanda** from Zimbabwe, confirm that there is a healthy give and take: the meeting in Cape Town was a very positive experience and an eye-opener also for the ca 40 participating African law librarians, many of whom were able to meet each other for the first time. If the outcome of the meeting in Cape Town is an impetus for the creation of an *African Association of Law Libraries*, then an important *IALL* goal will have been fulfilled.

It is a privilege to present this substantive and substantial record of another unforgettable *IALL* Course.

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