

GUEST EDITORIAL – Key sources for international law research

Over the past five years the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (IALS), the British Library and the Socio-legal Studies Association (SLSA) have successfully collaborated in organising a popular series of national socio-legal training days for the UK legal research community. The training days offer attendees presentations by experts on the key library and archive sources and research methodologies used in particular academic fields. Research topics covered in previous training days include legal biography (2013); law, gender and sexuality (2014); and criminology and criminal justice (2015). The audiences for these training days are academics, researchers and postgraduate research students based at universities across the UK.

The ongoing difficulties for researchers in identifying the key library and archive sources for certain research topics and the often bewildering choice of socio-legal methods that can be employed when undertaking scholarship in a particular field are the two main reasons why the IALS, the British Library and the SLSA want to organise these national socio-legal training days. Between us, we feel that we can identify a range of stimulating speakers who will be able to answer these questions for researchers. At the same time we are keen to highlight and promote often hidden specialist library and archive collections across the UK and provide a forum for interested academics and researchers to discuss the merits and challenges of using particular qualitative, quantitative, comparative and feminist approaches in their research work.

A selection of articles deriving from the presentations given at previous training days have been published in academic journals and made available in pre-print format on the IALS website: <http://ials.sas.ac.uk/study/research-training/socio-legal-research-national-workshops-ials>.

The most recent joint socio-legal training day was held at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies on Friday 25th November 2016 with Professor Rosemary Hunter (Chair of SLSA), Jonathan Sims (Curator for law and socio-legal studies at the British Library) and myself selecting the speakers and organising the programme. The topic this time was the socio-legal sources and methods in international law. The day again proved to be popular with many questions and much discussion throughout the programme. The following four articles on the key sources for international law research derive from this interesting training day.

Firstly Hester Swift, Foreign and International Law Librarian at IALS, writes very interestingly about the extensive international law collections available at IALS Library taking us right back to the establishment of the IALS in 1947. Lesley Dingle, Foreign and International Law Librarian at the Squire Law Library at the University of Cambridge also puts their prestigious international

law collection into the wider history of the Squire Law Library and shows how certain key academics and librarians helped to champion its growth and development. Jeroen Vervliet, the distinguished Library Director at the Peace Palace in The Hague, in the Netherlands, writes illuminatingly about their “Special Collections” which include the wonderful Hugo Grotius Collection and the Peace Movement Collection. Jeroen also explains the crucial role of one of the previous Library Directors, Dr Jacob ter Meulen, in the development of their international collections. Finally Dr Ruth Frenco, Archivist at the IALS, explores and explains the recently-catalogued treasure trove of archives and records from the International Law Association (ILA) which are held in the IALS Archives.



David Gee
Deputy Librarian
Institute of Advanced Legal Studies
School of Advanced Study
University of London