



Pictured during a visit to the IALS last year (left to right): Peter Hansen, American Society of International Law; Professor David Clark, Vice President, ASCL; Jules Winterton, Librarian, IALS; Peter Winship, Southern Methodist University.

The American Society of Comparative Law

Members of the American Society of Comparative Law agreed at their annual meeting in New Orleans last November to grant the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies corresponding member status of the Society.

The American Society of Comparative Law (ASCL formerly the American Association for the Comparative Study of Law, Inc) was founded in 1951 in order to reflect the importance of the emerging fields of comparative and foreign law and private international law. Within a year *The American Journal of Comparative Law* (AJCL) was launched, and remains a highly respected publication. A recent US survey of the top 25 comparative and international law journals rated the AJCL among the top two.

The ASCL is an organisation of almost 100 institutional members devoted to study, research and writing on foreign and comparative law in the US. Members range from the American Foreign Law Association to the Law Library of Congress and practically every leading American law school. Also significant for the ASCL's international role is its collaboration with corresponding institutional members elsewhere in the world. In the UK, the ASCL's foreign institutional members are the British Institute of International and Comparative Law and the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies.

The President of the ASCL is George A Bermann, Charles Keller Beekman Professor of Law and Director of the European Legal Studies Center at Columbia University School of Law. He has commented that comparative law is appealing to a vastly wider group of scholars than in the past, with people seeking to employ it in a range of


approaches including law and economics and legal history. Comparative law is also challenged by the rapid development of the various branches of international law, taking in problems of international trade, international contracts, and international arbitration. In a letter to members he said:

'These developments should provide the impetus for an ever more robust comparative law, the challenge of critically "marrying" comparative and international law is not to be underestimated. We are long past the world when the field of conflict of laws could, by itself, be thought of as constituting the essential hinge between comparative and international law.'

'A moment's reflection will tell us though that the purposes lying at the core of the comparative law discipline intellectual respect for differences, support for cross-border developments and facilitation of cross-border processes the impetus for law reform are timelier than ever.'

From the beginning the ASCL coordinated American participation in the congresses of the International Academy of Comparative Law (IACL). In 1952 the national committee planned for the United States national reports to the Fourth International Congress of Comparative Law, which was held in Paris in 1954. The ASCL has played that role in all subsequent congresses, which take place very four years (the 1998 meeting was held in Bristol). This includes planning for the Sixteenth International Congress in Brisbane, Australia, to be held in 2002.

In November last year the ASCL and the IACL co-sponsored the Centennial World Congress on Comparative Law, which was organised jointly by the International Association of Legal Science and the Eason Weinman Center for Comparative Law at Tulane University. The year 2000 event was held 100 years after the first World Congress.

The ASCL's success has enabled the Society to plan ahead and put measures in place which include strengthening the scholarly contributions to the ASCL's annual meetings and forming an Executive Editorial Board for the *American Journal of Comparative Law*. Scholarly projects being considered for the future include a Society monograph series, the publication of translations of foreign materials, and additional book publishing in both comparative law and subject areas such as criminal law or family law which draw together foreign and comparative materials. The possible appointment of an editor to expand and maintain the Society's web site is also under consideration. 

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