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BIALL Regional and Special Interest Groups

Abstract: As part of the 40th Anniversary Issue we are including information about some of the regional groups which have come into existence since the foundation of the Association, as this has been a particularly active area of our work. We have not included the City Legal Information Group in this article as we covered it in Vol.8 (4) 257–259.
Keywords: professional organisations; law librarians; social networking

ALLICE (Association of Law Librarians in Central England)

ALLICE began in the late 1980's and had small beginnings. Originally three law firm librarians and a university law librarian met at an Italian restaurant for lunch, meetings were ad hoc and were principally a networking opportunity. Today the group has about 45 members and is formalised with a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer and each member pays an annual subscription.

The group meets quarterly, with a member's institution hosting a lunchtime meeting. Law firms now dominate the group, although there are members from barristers' chambers and the academic sector. Meetings act as a forum for new product presentations and as social and networking events.

Training initiatives are undertaken. In Autumn 2008 there was a joint seminar with the European Information Association on European information and a current venture will focus on company information. Additionally ALLICE offers a bursary to the BIALL Conference for a younger member of the group.There is an ALLICE blog and a union list of journals and law reports is compiled.

In 1994 the BIALL conference was held in Birmingham, the first conference to utilise a number of hotels and ALLICE members had considerable input into the smooth running of the conference. However, most members see the group as a networking opportunity which was the aim of the group that met at the Italian restaurant over twenty years ago.

We now have a blog which you can visit here: http://allicelawlib.blogspot.com/

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B-LINE: Business & Legal Information Network

The Group was founded in 1990 and started life as the Newcastle Law Librarians Group. The initial focus of *NLLG* was that of creating a network for law librarians in the Newcastle upon Tyne area.

In order to reflect the growing membership and the diversity of the Group, the name was changed to *LINE*, *Legal Information Network* in 1992. To further demonstrate the Group's continuing commitment to its increased membership representing information professionals from all manner of special libraries within the region, the Group underwent a further name change in 2000 to *B-LINE, Business & Legal Information Network*.

The aim of *B-LINE* is to provide a forum for communication and debate on topical issues affecting information professionals working within small legal and business libraries and information units within the northern region. Members include information professionals from the academic institutions in the area, Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria and Teeside universities, as well as the major law firms and government institutions. The Group is currently made up of about twenty members. The Group maintains a union list of journals and law reports holdings. The Chair of the Group is currently Malcolm Large from Watson Burton.

B-LINE holds four meetings a year and members are encouraged to become involved in the organisation and running of seminars and conferences for the benefit of members and business and legal information providers throughout the region. Meetings act as a means for Group members to maintain contact with each other and as a

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forum for debate regarding professional issues and areas of concern to our profession. Meetings generally last a couple of hours over lunch and are held at member offices/libraries.

A number of seminars and conferences have been run by members over the years and include: *Byting the IT Bullet*, 1 day seminar; *Better the Devil you Know*, 2 day conference (in association with the Scottish Librarian's Group) in Edinburgh: *Information Matters*, 1 day seminar and *Computers & Law – Innovations in Legal and Commercial Information Provision*, 1 day conference and exhibition and a seminar on disaster planning.

Visits and tours of other libraries have been arranged. More recently meetings have included presentations by the main legal publishers, including Justis, LexisNexis Butterworths and Sweet & Maxwell, who use the opportunity to promote their new products/platform and to meet information professionals in the regions in an informal setting where users have the opportunity to ask questions.

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BIALL Irish Group

Members of the BIALL Irish Group are information professionals from a range of organisations, including professional societies, law firms, government organisations and academic libraries. The Group developed from informal meetings between a few law librarians in Dublin around 1979. At that time, the professional societies and academic sectors were the most prominent; just one solicitors' firm had a librarian. By 1990, four solicitors' firms employed librarians; now 12 do so, some of these employing two or more. The Group currently has over 70 members from Ireland, with about one fifth of these based in Northern Ireland.

We meet at least three times a year to discuss topical issues and to exchange information and ideas. While the majority of our meetings are held in Dublin, as this is where most of our members are based, we have held meetings in other cities, most recently in Cork, in the library of University College Cork. Issues discussed at meetings this year include copyright, currency of Irish online resources and customer service issues arising with particular suppliers. Short library tours often follow the meetings, always an enjoyable part of the day.

Occasionally, we invite publishers and other suppliers to attend part of a meeting. This opportunity has been used to demonstrate online resources, canvass views on possible new publications and of course, to discuss customer service.

Outside our regular meetings, discussions also take place by email. Group publications include a union list of periodicals, union list of law reports and a directory of members. The Group also runs occasional training courses. While this has fallen into abeyance in recent years, past courses have included one on Irish legal reference materials and a seminar on sources of US legal information. This is an area we intend to develop in the coming year.

Thanks to my colleagues for their assistance with this article.

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BIALL-Solos / Small Teams Group

The BIALL Solos/Small Teams Group (BIALL-SOLOS) was established in 2004 to provide a focus for those information professionals working within small teams and 'one person libraries'. BIALL-SOLOS provides a forum for the exchange of ideas for a range of members across the UK and beyond using monthly audios and regular training sessions using audio and web conferencing

BIALL-SOLOS members are constantly challenged to work smarter and faster without always the benefit of additional budget and staffing. The successful BIALL-SOLOS training programme has filled a real gap in the professional development of members.

Typical advantages of being a solo information professional include: independence, flexibility, variety, fewer staff problems (staff are often limited to members of virtual teams, temporary staff and part-timers) and direct control over processes. The most common disadvantages are: lack of regular interaction with fellow information professionals, lack of clerical/administrative support, the challenge of reporting to a non-librarian/information professional and frustration of work overload and lack of time for personal professional development.

Currently, BIALL-SOLOS consists of approximately 100 members working for all types of libraries, information centres, records management and knowledge management departments.

BIALL-SOLOS have in the past run sessions at the annual BIALL Conference but the focus is now on regular audios and web conferences. Topics covered have included marketing, working with suppliers, negotiating electronic licences and using social networking and web 2.0.

BIALL-SOLOS provide a network for members using the BIALL-SOLOS mailing list, LinkedIn and the BIALL-SOLOS blog. To join the mailing list, restricted to members of BIALL, you should send an email to: biall-solos-request@mailtalk.ac.uk

If you or any of your contacts wish to join the BIALL-SOLOS Group on LinkedIn please follow the following link: http://www.linkedin.com/e/vgh/1811987/

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You can visit the BIALL-Solos Blog at: http://biallsolos-omb.blogspot.com/

David Byrne

Bristol Law Librarians Group (BRILL)

BRILL is a non-constituted group that was formed in 1990. It has approximately 30 member organisations from Bristol, the South West and South Wales. Membership includes information professionals from the legal, academic and commercial sectors. BRILL meets twice a year in Bristol for the exchange of information and ideas. Members of BRILL also conduct benchmarking exercises on topics such as electronic products and salaries.

The group maintains a Union List of Holdings of Journals and Law Reports. Please notify **Emma Davies** of amendments.

Our List of Members is maintained by **Michelle Anderson** - please let her know of any changes. If you are planning to relocate to the South West, please feel free to get in touch with Christina Moneta. She is happy to forward CVs to members of the Group, in case they have plans to recruit.

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East Midlands Legal Information Professionals (EMLIP)

The East Midlands Legal Information Professionals group meets four times a year in different locations in the East Midlands. Members of the group are drawn from all sectors, including law firms, academic institutions and private sector organisations. During our meetings we discuss topics of interest, share experiences, offer support and view demonstrations of new products, and are currently investigating some purely social events. The meetings are chaired on a rota basis, by the host member. We welcome any new members from the East Midlands area.

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Freelancers and Solos Group

The history of the Freelancers and Solos Group is lost in the mists of recent time. As a group set up to network, it has never kept minutes of its activities, nor is it an official BIALL group, although most of us are BIALL members working in the private sector. However, it is believed that it started around 1999 when a group of freelance law librarians, most of whom worked in law firms or chambers, arranged to meet informally after work to discuss matters of common interest. Since then we have met in various pubs and wine bars in the law courts/Chancery Lane area, as it is easily accessible for those working in the City, West End and local law firms and chambers. More recently, membership was extended to solo employed librarians working in law librarianship and related fields.

There are now over 40 members of the group, not all of whom are London based – there are members from as far away as Devon and Dorset, as well as those who work in the south east. Usually, around 10–12 members can be found at our bi-monthly after work meetings where we network over a glass of wine and some bar snacks. We also communicate via an e-mail list – subjects vary from supplier problems, job vacancies and freelance opportunities and discussions about where next to meet. The group has proved a useful forum for discussing professional concerns in an informal setting and to exchange details of new opportunities for work. Most of us find that the best way of obtaining work is through personal recommendation, and the professional standing of members of the group has meant that members' recommendations carry weight with firms and other employers, thereby by-passing the lengthy process of using employment agencies.

With a relatively large informal membership, the type of work we do is very varied, with some people working on a regular basis at one firm or chambers, while others are covering a number of posts in different offices. Working in the main in 'one man bands' the meetings are a useful and welcome opportunity to meet up with colleagues to discuss common problems and learn of new ventures and ideas. Recently the group has been able to offer informal support to those who have lost their posts in the recession.

Further information about the group including the dates of the next meetings can be found on the BIALL website under Committees and Groups/Affiliate Groups. New members are always welcome whether or not they can attend our meetings.

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Liverpool Legal Information Group (LLIG)

The Liverpool Legal Information Group (LLIG) holds lunchtime meetings three times a year in Liverpool City Centre. Members of the group are drawn from all sectors, including law firms, academic institutions, government organisations, barristers chambers, private sector organisations and freelancers from all over Merseyside. Our meetings are used to discuss areas of mutual

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interest, to investigate new electronic products and services and to offer support to our members. For example, two representatives from Lexis Nexis Butterworths came to a recent meeting to demonstrate a new product, talk about future plans and developments and to discuss issues of concern. Later on in the summer, a visit to Liverpool University Library is to be arranged for members who are interested in seeing the changes to the University Law Library, which moved last summer. We welcome any new members from the Merseyside area. For more information about joining the group please contact **Lisa Hawksworth**

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Manchester Legal Information Group (MLIG)

The Manchester Legal Information Group (MLIG) meets four times a year in Manchester City Centre. Members of the group include law firms, academic, public and other legal libraries from the Manchester region. We currently have over 50 members. MLIG meetings are held at various locations in the City Centre of Manchester. During our meetings we discuss topics of interest, offer support and view demonstrations of new electronic products. We welcome any new members from the Greater Manchester area. For more information about joining the group, please contact Craig Gerrard.

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US Law Librarians Group

Guns 'n' Roses. Nirvana. The Killers. Three US groups you've almost certainly heard of. But there is another US group you might not be so familiar with. And it rocks! The name of this ensemble is the US Law Librarians Group, which was set up in 2001 with the aim of being a forum for sharing ideas and experiences unique to its members.

So who are these members? Well, they are mainly information professionals drawn from the UK offices of US law firms, but there are also some who work in international firms, or who specialise in researching US law.

The members of the US Law Librarians Group come across some interesting and unique issues, such as working in teams spread geographically, jurisdictionally and across time zones, whilst perhaps also working solo or in a small team in their local office. They also face dealing with the problems that can arise with global contracts within the firm - for example just last year a representative from the group met the Financial Times to discuss the issues of the new FT licensing structure, as we did not feel our particular needs had been taken into account.

The group meets infrequently, generally whenever a volunteer member calls a meeting. Sometimes the session features a product demonstration or Q&A with a vendor; other times we have a roundtable discussion focussing on hot topics of the time.

Incidentally, we also have an email discussion list which you can subscribe to at http://groups.yahoo.com/subscribe/BIALL-US - the list is maintained by Joanne Bond (jbond@mayerbrownrowe.com)

So that's who we are and what we do. If you like the sound of all this, then why not come along to our next gig which we hope to hold before the end of 2009?

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BIALL Academic Law Librarian Special Interest Group (BI-ALLSIG)

At the BIALL Conference in June 2008 there was a particularly successful session conducted by Peter Clinch involving issues relating to standards for academic law libraries. In order to carry on the discussions about this, and other issues which are specific to those of us in the academic arena, we put forward a suggestion at BIALL Council that we set up a mailing list for the academic group. This suggestion was accepted and the list has now been created. In part this list is to provide a sounding board for those colleagues who are sometimes the only law librarian in their institution, to allow them to ask questions and raise issues which are not of much interest to other sectors. It is not our aim for this to be an exclusive group which does not relate to the BIALL list. Whenever we have any issues of wider interest we will still turn to the BIALL list as our starting point. The name of this new list is BI-ALLSIG (British and Irish Academic Law Librarian Special Interest Group) and if you are a librarian who is involved in the academic sector, you are invited to join. To join the list, please send the following command in the body of the email to: **listserv@jiscmail.ac.uk**

subscribe BI-ALLSIG FIRSTNAME LASTNAME OR Go to the homepage of BI-ALLSIG (http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/BI-ALLSIG)Enter 'Join or leave list (or change settings)' and enter your details to join, or press the delete button.

Co-owner of the list: is Angela Donaldson, at Nottingham Trent University, and we look forward to welcoming you to the list.

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