Preserving Australia's legal history

ALIA member awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study institutions involved with the preservation of legal history

Mr Aladin Rahemtula, librarian at the Supreme Court of Queensland, has been awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study the activities of institutions engaged in the preservation of legal history in the United States of America, Canada and the United Kingdom.

Aladin is responsible for the Queensland Supreme Court History program, the first of its kind in Australia. The program aims to raise community awareness of Queensland's legal heritage by acting as a depository of legal memorabilia and ensuring that acquired material is conserved appropriately and made accessible to the wider community. This is achieved by way of exhibitions, an oral history program, seminars, lectures, publications and digitisation of historical material.

Aladin hopes to draw on the experience of overseas organisations which have developed excellent funding and resource infrastructures to support high quality programs. His proposed schedule includes visits to the Tarleton Law Library at the University of Texas; the Supreme Court History Society in Washington, DC; and the Social Law Library in Boston. He then plans to visit the Law Society of Upper Canada in Toronto. Aladin will then travel to the United Kingdom to visit the Galleries of Justice in Nottingham, and the Royal Courts of Justice in London.

He expects to commence his study tour in 2003.

What is a Churchill Fellowship?
Administered by the Winston Churchill Trust, the Churchill Fellowships provide financial support to enable ordinary Australians to undertake a period of overseas study, or an investigative project, that cannot be readily undertaken in Australia.

The story of the Churchill Trust is the success story of its Churchill Fellows — now numbering more than 2500. Their projects are extremely diverse but they do have something in common — 'light in the eyes and fire in the belly'. Their projects are invariably innovative, the result of extra endeavour, or a striving for excellence.

The Fellows themselves are ordinary Australians, but with extraordinary goals. What distinguishes a Churchill Fellow is that he or she is invariably talented, has the ability to go that little bit further, and has the determination to share the results of their Fellowship with the community upon their return to Australia.

In essence, Churchill Fellowships are acts of faith in the resourcefulness of individuals, highly motivated in their own work and perceptive of present gaps within the social structure. An overseas study may often reveal a better alternative or example to be used as a model in Australia. Churchill Fellows increasingly find that in some areas Australia has something to teach the world — so the benefits of the fellowships are not always one-way only.

Other librarians have received Churchill Fellowships. Val Moon received a fellowship in 1986 to investigate library services for the disabled, and Lynette Quince received the Blakeney–Miller Foundation Churchill Fellowship to study the delivery of library services to rural communities.

If you are interested in applying for a fellowship, visit the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust website at http://www.churchilltrust.org.au/. The site includes information about how to apply for fellowships, application forms, and reports from previous fellowship winners. Fellowship applications open 1 November and close 1 February each year. ∎

Your feedback sought

First draft of the COUNTER usage reports now available for comment

COUNTER (Counting Online Usage of NeTworked Electronic Resources) is a new, multi-agency project whose objective is to develop a single, internationally accepted, extendible code of practice that will allow the usage of online information products and services to be measured more consistently.

One of the most important features of the code of practice will be the usage reports that vendors will have to supply to customers in order to qualify as 'COUNTER compliant'. Draft 1 of the COUNTER Usage Reports is now available, and librarians are invited to participate in an online survey that will collect their comments on the draft. The online survey and the full text of the usage reports are accessible via the COUNTER website: http://www.ProjectCounter.org.

The absence of a code of practice has meant that suppliers and purchasers of online information services have had no common standards for the recording, analysis or sharing of usage data. COUNTER will provide guidance on data elements to be measured, definitions of these data elements, data processing, report formats, methods of delivery, methods of combining usage reports from direct use and from use via intermediaries.

Release 1 of the code of practice will be available at the end of 2002. An organisational framework for implementation and compliance will also be proposed at that time.

COUNTER is actively supported by the international community of librarians and publishers, and by their professional organisations. A steering group chaired by Richard Gedye of Oxford University Press is supervising the development of COUNTER. Contact the project director responsible for day-to-day management, Peter Shepherd (pshepherd@projectCounter.org), for further information. ∎