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Margaret Collins

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February 23, 1993

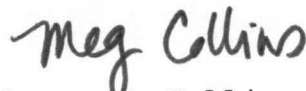
Ms. Mary Smith Furman
Director of Library Services
Chair, SEAALL Scholarship Committee
Akerman, Senterfitt & Edison, P.A.
Post Office Box 231
Orlando, Florida 32802-0231

Re: Lucile Elliott Scholarship -- Report

Dear Ms. Furman:

I would like to thank SEAALL again for its generosity in awarding me a scholarship to attend the 1993 AALL Winter Institute. The Institute was excellent, and I am very happy that I could attend. As you requested, I have prepared a brief report on the program and its value to me.

Sincerely,



Margaret Collins

AALL WINTER INSTITUTE -- FOREIGN LEGAL SYSTEMS
February 3-6, 1993
Washington, DC

I received a Lucile Elliott scholarship which allowed me to attend the AALL 1993 Winter Institute held at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. The Institute was an introduction to foreign legal systems and featured a variety of speakers including law librarians, legal scholars, and practitioners.

The first day of the Institute featured an introduction to the changing nature of foreign legal research. Kathy Price, the Law Librarian of Congress, spoke on the future of foreign law research; this was followed by a demonstration of the law library's International Legal Database. This innovative project is a database of English-language abstracts of selected foreign legislation. When official gazettes are received at the law library, an abstract record is created and added to the database. The database can then be searched to find relevant legislation on a given topic or in a given country. In addition to the abstracts database, the law library has just begun a new experimental project which involves electronically scanning the official gazettes of foreign countries. At this time, Mexico is scanning its official gazette, which is then sent via the Internet to the Library of Congress where it is received, abstracted, and added to the databases. A researcher can then search abstracts of the legislation and retrieve a full text image of the document. This system will allow greater access to foreign legal materials and speeds the process of getting current legislation to the law library. The law library expects add more countries to the database in the future.

The second and third days of the Institute were devoted to learning about different types of legal systems, including civil law and the legal systems of Asian, African, and Islamic nations. Specialists in French, German, Mexican, Asian, African, and Islamic law discussed each system's historical foundations and legal institutions, and described the country's legal publications. Two hours each afternoon were devoted to "hands-on" group research problems using the legal materials for the various countries. One common theme running through all the presentations was that most legal systems are not purely one type or another, but blends of various influences. Several of the speakers cautioned us on difficulties associated with foreign legal research, both due to language problems and different approaches to and perspectives on the law and legal institutions.

On the final day of the Institute, we heard from speakers involved in foreign law collection development, acquisitions, and classification.

The materials prepared by the speakers at the Institute provide an excellent resource for beginning research in foreign law. Included in the Institute materials were copies of relevant articles, outlines of presentations, bibliographies and other finding aids, and sample documents.

The Winter Institute provided me with background information on the major legal systems of the world, an introduction to the primary legal materials of several different countries, and a solid foundation to learn more about foreign legal systems and legal research.