

Formation of the “Law Libraries Group”

The beginnings of ELLA date back to 1977. A letter dated March 28 from Janet Darby, librarian at Milner & Steer, invites Edmonton “law and law-related librarians” to a meeting held at Milner & Steer. By August 1977, this informal group was referring to itself as the “Law Libraries Group”. Their first meeting was called for September of that year, and was held at Milner & Steer. The executive consisted of Janet Darby of Milner & Steer, Chairperson; Sandra Garvie of the Legal Resource Centre, Memberships and Arrangements; and Chris Backhaus of the Legislature Library, Programs.

Early years: the 1970s and 1980s

During 1978-79, “Law Libraries Group” meetings were held at various locations including the Law Courts Library, the University of Alberta Law Library, the Legal Resource Centre, the Edmonton Public Library, and various restaurants. Meetings would rotate monthly between Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

In 1979, a member of the executive and librarian at the Legal Resource Centre, Sandra Garvie, passed away.

By 1980, ELLA had still not been incorporated as a society. There was general discussion at that time on incorporating ELLA under the *Societies Act*, or acquiring Chapter status under the Canadian Association of Law Librarians, as it was then called. In 1981, the “Group” applied for incorporation. The Edmonton Law Librarians Association received its Certificate of Incorporation on April 29, 1981. At that time, the membership was surveyed regarding ideas for change, mainly due to the small number of members (there were 17 members in 1980-81) and the heavy workload involved in running the Association. Based on the results of the survey, the executive recommended increasing the executive from 3 to 4 members, increasing the executive term from 1 year to 2 years, creating a standing committee to arrange workshops, and rotating workshop committee members. It appears that the individual membership fee was \$5.00 in 1980 – 1981, and that there were about 14 members in 1981-1982 and 21 members in 1982 – 1983.

At the September 1983 general meeting, only two years after incorporation, a special resolution was put forward proposing that ELLA dissolve itself. It had first

been proposed at the August executive meeting that ELLA voluntarily dissolve itself as a society and continue on as an informal group. Retaining the required records and filing the annual return had been a problem, it was thought that ELLA was no longer as active as it once was, and there was a perceived lack of support from membership. Fortunately, the special resolution was defeated.

By 1986-1987, membership has risen to 28 and membership dues were still only \$5.00. At the first meeting of the 1989-1990 membership year, members discussed raising the dues from \$5.00 to either \$10.00 or \$15.00. The reasons given for raising the dues were to keep up with inflation and to cover operating expenses. There was some support for the \$15.00 option, but in the end it was voted to raise the annual dues to \$10.00.

ELLA made an application to have the AALL conference in 1987 held in Edmonton. However, Chicago was awarded the conference.

The 1990s

In 1990-1991, ELLA produced its first membership directory. It included 36 members: 10 from academic libraries, 6 from Courthouse or Law Society libraries, 7 from government libraries, 9 from private law libraries, and 4 other.

Also in 1990-1991, the executive asked members how they would like to spend excess funds that the association had accumulated. Some suggestions were: bring in paid speakers; make a contribution to Sandra Garvie Fund or other scholarship funds; provide funds for members to attend a CALL conference; provide a free luncheon once per year. At the October 1991 meeting, members decided that surplus funds would be used to continue with donations to the Sandra Garvie Fund, and to purchase gifts for guest speakers. The Chair reported that it was decided not to offer a travel grant or conference bursary using excess funds.

In 1991- 1992, a current awareness service for ELLA members was instituted on a trial basis. Members could receive a regular mailing of the tables of contents from various journals and law library association newsletters. This service continued into 1992-1993. Also in 1991-1992, ELLA considered creating a union list of holdings of ELLA member libraries. Although the possibility of creating a union list arose again the following year, it appears that no progress was made on the issue.

In 1992, ELLA members began taking advantage of the recent extension of LRT service across the North Saskatchewan River from Downtown to the University. It provided easier access to ELLA meetings, and made it possible for the first time to travel from the Law Courts to the University's Weir Law Library without going outside.

New business in 1993 proposed amending the bylaws to change the name from Edmonton Law Librarians Association to Edmonton Law Libraries Association. This amendment was passed, and the new name officially registered February 2, 1993.

In 1994-1995, the review of the Law Society Libraries by Lillian MacPherson, entitled "The Interim Report of the Law Society Libraries Review", was released.

Membership dues were increased to \$15.00 from \$10.00 in 1995-1996.

In 1995-1996, a bylaw revision added an "Honourary Lifetime Member" category for long-term retiring members. This was precipitated by the retirements of Shi-Sheng Hu and Lillian MacPherson.

Fall 1999 was the inaugural issue of umbrELLA, "a highly irregular newsletter" produced by ELLA members. It appears that there were only a few issues before publication ceased.

ELLA and computerized legal research

Computerized legal research has been an topic of interest to members throughout the existence of the Association. The first technological wave to influence ELLA members was the introduction of high-speed terminals enabling computerized legal research. The first ELLA session introducing these terminals appears to have been in February 1978, when Muriel Lefebvre gave instruction in the techniques and procedures of computerized legal information retrieval using the only computerized legal information retrieval system in Canada, QL Systems. Two Vucom terminals were set up at the law library at the University of Alberta with a telephone line to the QL computer centre. Although the primary audience for the instruction session was lawyers and law students, ELLA members were also invited to attend.

At the January 1981 general meeting, Chairperson Janet Darby reported on the high-speed terminals available on a rental basis from QL. To make possible installation of the "High Speed Terminals" in Edmonton, a minimum of four customers were required.

In 1982, a workshop on “Law and Law-Related Dialog Databases” was held at the University of Alberta. This full-day workshop, presented by Ulla de Stricker, attracted 15 attendees.

An important legal database in the early 1980s was SPIRES, which included the Alberta Acts and Regulations available from the Alberta Queen’s Printer, as well as the Alberta Gazette. It was searchable by keyword. Over the years, it appears that SPIRES continued to grow, as evidenced in a 1988 session on “Law Related Databases on SPIRES”. This session covered the following databases, all of which were apparently available on SPIRES: the Alberta Case Locator, Charter Cases, the Health Law Institute, the Labour Relations Board Decisions Index, and the Alberta Department of Labour Grievance Arbitration Awards Index.

By the mid-1980’s, Lexis and Nexis had made their appearance in Edmonton. In 1985-1986, Mead Data Central presented ELLA with a slide show and hands-on demonstration on Lexis and Nexis.

In 1989-1990, Muriel Lefebvre, Alberta Director of Operations for LAW SEARCH, spoke to ELLA about “Computer Assisted Legal Research”, giving “an overview of computer assisted legal research systems presently available in Canada”.

By 1991, the electronic version of the *Canadian Abridgment* was on the horizon. In October of that year, Thomson Electronic Publishing hosted a session on “Canadian Law Online”. Members were treated to a preview of the new *Canadian Abridgment* online service, which would provide “...digests and judicial treatment...for over 40,000 (Canadian) cases dating from 1803.” It was intended that *Statutes Judiciously Considered*, *Words and Phrases*, and the *Index to Canadian Legal Literature* would be added within the next 2 years. Canadian Law Online would run on the STM system that offered INSIGHT, Financial Post, Infomart, CAN/LAW and Canadian Tax Online and utilize “...a unique pricing system referred to as “information given” rather than online charges by time...”. Thomson Electronic Publishing hosted another session on Canadian Law Online in 1992-1993.

CD-ROMs enjoyed a brief hey-day in the mid 1990s, and many legal databases were available on disks and CD-ROM. In 1994-1995, there was a session on the role of the Queen’s Printer and searching with the Statutes of Alberta “disk”. At the May 1996 meeting, “...members discussed the advantages and disadvantages of CD-ROM publications and how they might be used in their organizations.” In 1995,

Carswell gave a presentation to ELLA on CD-ROM research using Folioviews, and “Getting the Most Out of Folio” was presented by Canada Law Book as a session in 1996-1997.

The internet started appearing in law libraries in the mid-1990s. In 1994-1995, Pat Nelson, from the Canada Department of Transportation, presented a session on the Freenet/Internet, entitled, “The Internet – What Is It and Why Do I Spend So Much Time Using It?” By the late 1990’s, use of the internet was becoming more important in law libraries. In 1999, ELLA had a session on the Alberta Courts’ Website, demonstrating the main features and search capabilities of the Alberta Judgments Database. In 2001, CanLII officially launched.

Advocacy

ELLA has always been an important advocate for law libraries and library users. Some of the issues of concern to ELLA in the past are remarkably similar to the concerns of today, but some are very different.

At the 1978 CALL Conference, CALL members brought up several issues that were important to ELLA members as well, including: inadequate indexing of federal statutes and regulations; access to a KWIC Index held by the Department of Justice; and objection to a proposed Canadian Government Publishing Centre staffed with only one person and with no inventory as being “totally inadequate” to provide access to federal government publications. The concerns from law librarians were paired with claims from the federal Queen’s Printer and the Department of Justice that they never received feedback from librarians about their products or services. Regarding the issues brought up at CALL, Chairperson Janet Darby called on ELLA members to “...write a letter, whether brief or detailed...expressing your opinions, ideas or concerns on the points outlined.”

A major concern to ELLA members was the Revised Statutes of Alberta 1980, especially its indexing. ELLA wanted to ensure that there would be wide dissemination of the Index, and that the index would be of a high quality. In October 1978, ELLA sent a letter to Chief Legislative Counsel Graham Reid, providing suggestions on the upcoming RSA 1980. A more detailed position paper (undated, but likely from spring 1979) was prepared for submission to Mr. Reid and to Attorney General James L. Foster, urging complete review of the current indexing procedures.

The paper made three main recommendations: 1. that the indexers involved in the indexing of the Revised Statutes of Newfoundland be consulted about indexing the RSA 1980; 2. that an advisory committee of index users be struck to provide informed suggestions; 3. that consideration be given to adding cross-references. In addition, the paper suggested that careful consideration be given to the layout and typography of the index, and that an efficient way of updating the index be instituted.

ELLA has often advocated for better library services and better services from publishers through letter-writing. At the December 1978 general meeting, there was a call for a letter writing campaign to the federal Department of Supply and Services, protesting budget cuts that would reduce the number of, and supply to, depository libraries in Canada. At the April 1979 meeting, it was reported that the Chair sent a letter to Hansard regarding the inconsistent reporting of the Progress of Bills table.

In 1989, the Vancouver Association of Law Libraries (VALL) wrote to Carswell expressing disappointment in the Canadian Abridgment, and in March of that year ELLA sent a follow-up letter to Carswell endorsing VALL's position and adding their own strongly worded disappointment in the Abridgment. Issues mentioned in the VALL letter included concern about the large number of volumes to consult to achieve currency, plus inconsistency with the numbering and indexing amongst those parts; a suggestion that Canadian Citations give both the case name and the cases considering it; a suggestion that all Carswell reports, digests and the Canadian Abridgment be entered into a database for easier reference; and a complaint about the rising cost of the Abridgment. In 1989, ELLA sent another letter to Carswell detailing members' concerns about the Abridgment, which included general inconsistencies in the publishing style of this title (poor labeling on the spine, missing information in the revised volumes and divergence in publication formats), and the rising cost. ELLA suggested that updating be simplified by changing the format to looseleaf or an electronic format. ELLA also asked that Carswell provide projected annual costs to librarians, provide a 'help line' that librarians could phone, and establish a liaison committee with CALL to act as an advisory body.

In 1993-1994, ELLA President Muriel Lefebvre sent a letter to the Department of Justice responding to their notice of the possibility of discontinuing the Canada Gazette Part III, stressing its value to law libraries in Canada. In 1994-1995, ELLA wrote to Chris Dean at the University of Alberta's Faculty of Law, expressing ELLA's

“shock and dismay” at plans to abandon the Alberta Case Locator. In 1998, President Wanda Quoika-Stanka and Secretary/Treasurer Valerie Footz sent a letter to the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alberta, which was to be undergoing accreditation in 1998/99. The letter conveyed the importance of offering a course in law librarianship.

Publishers, vendors and the government have often asked ELLA for input on products and services. In 1985-1986, Peter Pagano, Chief Legislative Counsel, asked ELLA for comments on the RSA 1980 (e.g. any problems with the format or the tables). In 1987-1988, Mr. Pagano asked ELLA for input on a study undertaken by his office and the Queen’s Printer on the Alberta Gazette, Part I. Concern had been raised, for instance, that perhaps informational notices to the public, though valuable and necessary by law, would be better placed elsewhere in the Gazette. In 1994-1995, ELLA received a Letter from Maritime Law Book asking for feedback on their proposal to charge a royalty of 20 cents per page for photocopying of print MLB reporters.

Development of an ELLA web presence

With the increasing importance of the internet in law libraries, it was only a matter of time before ELLA had a web presence. At the 1997 AGM, the issue of an ELLA ‘homepage’ was discussed. CCH had mentioned they would offer use of their internet services to city associations. An ELLA listserv was also discussed but it was noted that “not everyone has access to Internet facilities at this time.”

During 1997-1998, the possibility of an ELLA website was seriously investigated. There was discussion of policies regarding content of the site and a possible server, a draft web site policy was created, and research into finding internet providers was undertaken.

ELLA’s web presence commenced on February 2, 1999. As of that date, ELLA was found on the Edmonton Community Network (Edmonton FreeNET). The website has been redesigned since that time, and since 2006 has featured an award-winning blog.

Collaborations with other organizations

As an integral part of the library and legal communities in Edmonton, Alberta, and Canada, ELLA has, from its inception, formed collaborative relationships with several library and law-related organizations. In 1979-1980, the idea was raised that ELLA contact the Calgary Law Librarians to propose an informal information exchange. Also in the 1979-1980 year, it was resolved that ELLA seek information from LAA regarding the acceptability of ELLA affiliating with LAA (LAA aimed to act as an umbrella organization for all library-related organizations in Alberta). Around the same time, there was discussion on acquiring Chapter status under the Canadian Association of Law Librarians (as it was then named). It appears that the issue of whether ELLA should officially join with CALL came up as an issue again at a later date: in 2000-2001, members directed the Chair to report to CALL that ELLA did not, at the time, see the benefits in participating in the local chapter proposal.

ELLA frequently joined with other organizations to present educational workshops and seminars. The December 1978 general meeting discussed an upcoming workshop on immigration co-presented with LAA. Around 1979-1980, ELLA contributed to "Alberta Culture Library Services", which had a program called Calendar of Library Education. Thirteen library organizations posted information on their upcoming workshops in a calendar of events, and ELLA was invited to post their workshops there as well. In 1980, ELLA received a grant from the LAA to present a session on motor vehicle law. In 1981, ELLA presented a full-day workshop on Labour Law with \$500 in funding from the Alberta Foundation to assist with costs. The workshop cost \$30 to attend; it generated \$1,280 for ELLA, with expenditures of approximately \$800. The panel of guest speakers included the Deputy Minister of Alberta Labour, the Chairman of the Public Service Grievance Board, a representative from Energy & Chemical Workers Union and a labour lawyer.

ELLA has received invitations from other members of the library and law communities to collaborate and share. In 1987-1988, SLIS invited ELLA members to a series of open lectures by Dr. Margaret Beckman of the University of Guelph. Law librarians were invited to the reception for the CBA Mid-Winter Meeting in January 1993. Law librarians also entered into a mentorship program with library students at the University of Alberta in 1992-1993. The program was called Partners in Education, and ELLA sponsored in with a donation of \$100.00.

ELLA frequently provided financial support for the activities of other library organizations. For instance, CALL held their conference in Jasper in 1988 and ELLA contributed significant funds to the conference (with several ELLA members on the Conference Planning Committee). ELLA sponsored the 1999 CALL Conference, which took place in Banff, for \$550.00. ELLA donated \$1,000 to the 2006 CALL conference, which was held in Edmonton. Many ELLA members volunteered on the conference planning committee.

In 1993, NEOS (Networking Edmonton's Online Systems) was the new collaborative venture for ELLA members to learn about. A spring barbeque and luncheon was held, with guest speaker Doug Poff from NEOS explaining the new consortium to attendees.

People and Places

ELLA held a Summer Solstice Barbecue June 21, 1996 at the University to honour the distinguished career of Ms. MacPherson. There was a retirement reception for another honoured member, Shi-Sheng Hu, in 1996. Sadly, Ms. MacPherson, a much-admired member, passed away in 2005. ELLA made a donation to the University of Alberta in her memory.

Over the years, ELLA members have had the privilege of touring numerous libraries and other institutions in the Edmonton area, including the University of Alberta, various Law Courts libraries, the Alberta Legislature, the Provincial Archives, various private law libraries, the Legal Resource Centre, the Environmental Law Centre, and the Department of Justice library. In 1982-1983, ELLA took a tour of the Queen's Printer building, including the printing plant. In 1988-1989, a tour of the Provincial Court Libraries and the Law Society Libraries was one of the scheduled events. Also in 1988-1989, Deirdre Grist, Librarian/Indexer with Alberta Hansard, presented an overview of Hansard operations and a tour of the Hansard office. In 1991-1992, David Leonard of the Provincial Archives of Alberta spoke on judicial records and legal archives, and toured ELLA members around the Archives.

The not-too-distant past: 2000- 2010

The beginning of the new millennium brought about the implementation of neutral citation in Canada. The very decision of the Supreme Court in the year 2000, rendered on January 13, bears a neutral citation for the first time.

The RSA 2000 came into force January 1, 2002. The set was available for purchase in bound format (\$700), looseleaf format (\$1,535) and as a CD-ROM (\$150).

In recent years, ELLA has often had surplus funds. In 2000-2001, a Windfall Committee was struck to find ways to disburse the excess money. The Committee presented five suggestions for disbursement of funds, and asked members to rank those suggestions. An August 31, 2008 statement shows a balance in the ELLA general account of \$3,528.98 and in \$5,568.21 in the Headstart account, money accumulated due to a combination of money from HeadStart, lunches sponsored by publishers, and diminished expenses for HeadStart. In 2008-2009, potential ways to spend excess funds were discussed, and a survey was conducted.

By 2002-2003, membership fees were still \$15 for individuals and \$5 for students. In 2004-2005, membership fees were raised to \$25 in order to accumulate a surplus to support the CALL Annual General Meeting in Edmonton in 2006, and to support the rental of an ELLA post office box and website hosting fees. The executive stated that the fee could be returned to previous levels in following year. In 2005-2006, members voted to maintain \$25 membership fee; the student membership fee was raised to \$10 with a \$5 lunch fee (instead of the \$10 fee for regular members).

In recent years, ELLA HeadStart, a legal research program for articling students, has become a major activity of the Association. The first ELLA HeadStart committee was formed in 2001-2002, consisting of Jane Parkinson, Eve Poirier, Shaunna Mireau, Michael Storozuk, Kathy Fisher, Kim Nayyer, Gail Higham, Cathy Woodside, Beth Millard and Josette McEachern. The program name was "Finding the Law: A Head-start Program". Headstart has been held every year from 2002 – 2011, and has gained national press in the law library community for its innovative approach in teaching legal research skills to articling students.

In recent years, there have been changes to the ELLA bylaws. The bylaws were revised in 2001-2002 to add the position of Web-Master, change the executive term to biannual from annual, and remove the requirement for the AGM to be held in May.

In the same year, a bylaw subcommittee was formed to look at the revising the entire bylaw to improve the language and the layout. In 2002-2003, revised bylaws were released that changed the layout and format, but left the content intact. In 2008-2009, issues related to voting by email were investigated; it was ultimately decided that the process was too complicated to pursue.

In 2001-2002, ELLA begin having lunch catered at every meeting, with a fee of \$10 being charged to each attendee. An ELLA letterhead and a logo were introduced in 2002-2003. In 2006-2007, the ELLA logo was redesigned.

In 2008-2009, excitement over the new Alberta Rules of Court began to develop. Sandra Petterson of the Alberta Law Reform Institute held a session explaining the details and process related to the major revision of the Alberta Rules of Court. The new Rules of Court came into force November 1, 2010.