

EDITORIAL COMMENT

With the Eastern seaboard of the United States at a standstill due to a blizzard and the world divided and aflame due to the issue of weapons of mass destruction and the threat of war, it is somehow reassuring to shift focus to legal information, the *raison d'être* of the *Journal* as well as of our profession.

The first issue of volume 31 contains research guides to some of "new Europe." Background information on an essential database to bookmark, and an exhaustive legal bibliography covering the countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean. The eloquent tributes to the memory of **Jan Stepan**, former Foreign and International Law Librarian at *Harvard Law School* and the creator of the Library of the *Swiss Institute of Comparative Law*, amply testify to his extraordinary achievements and contributions to the profession, and to the personal legacy he left through his superior qualities as a human being, his humility, generosity and courage.

The nations that arose from under the Soviet yoke have not only made great strides towards restoring or building true democracies since gaining independence, but have also demonstrated their desire for transparency and willingness to adopt best practices from other democratic systems. In the 1990s, parliamentary delegations and organizations, such as the *Soros Foundation* and *CEELI (the American Bar Association's Central and Eastern European Law Initiative)*, rushed to help these "emerging democracies" draft their constitutions, write new legislation, and streamline and organize the governments. The simultaneous advent of the internet and new technologies contributed to the speed with which the new nations caught up. "New Europe" tended to adopt English as the second language, and it is frequently easier to find the text of their legislation in translation than is the case with "old Europe."

Many of our colleagues have taught and continue to conduct seminars and workshops for the legal community on both sides of the Ural mountains. One of them is **Mirela Roznovschi**, Reference Librarian for Foreign and International Law at *New York University Law Library* and Co-Editor for

LLRX.com. Mirela has inspired her students to turn their subject expertise into publications in print and electronic format to serve the larger good. Five of her students in countries stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea credit Mirela for the three research guides featured in this issue: **Myroslava Kryvonos**, Librarian at the *Legal Library of the Ukrainian Legal Foundation*, compiled her research guide to Ukrainian law with support from the *U.S. Department of State* and the *New York University Law Library*. The Latvian research guide was prepared at *Riga Graduate School of Law* by **Iona Čeiča**, the Administrative Protector, and **Ligita Vasermane**, Head of the Library and Lecturer on Legal Research. Ligita is familiar to *IALL* members as a frequent participant in our annual Courses. The Moldovan research guide was produced by one of the *Association's* 2002 scholarship recipients, **Marjana Harjevschi**, Director of the *Public Law Library of Chisinau*, and her colleague, **Svetlana Andritch**, Chief of the Digital Information Department of the same institution.

Declining book budgets have led to increased cooperation among libraries worldwide. It is therefore crucial to share information and spread the word as much as we can about the various initiatives and services available through the ingenuity and hard work of our colleagues. **Peter Clinch**, Information Specialist in Law at *Cardiff University Law Library*, introduces the U.K. FLAG (=Foreign Law Guide) project through which we all can access the major foreign, comparative and international law collections in the national and university libraries in the United Kingdom free of charge.

Last, but not least, 31:1 features a comprehensive bibliography on the laws and legal systems of the Caribbean, compiled as part of a research study on the provision of legal information in the Commonwealth by **Joan Brathwaite**, Senior Librarian II and Head of the Acquisitions Division of the *University of the West Indies Faculty of Law Library*. Joan, an active member of the *IALL* Board of Directors, is a prolific author and a former President of the *Caribbean Association of Law Libraries (CARALL)*.

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