



Inner Temple Library



Law Libraries: London Bar

Inner Temple and Lincolns Inn Libraries: From the 14th Century to the 21st Century

Lydia Craemer, Johannesburg Bar Library

On 9 June 2015, I had the privilege of visiting the Libraries of Inner Temple and Lincolns Inn, as part of my attendance at the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians (BIALL) Annual Study Conference. I was keen to see how the libraries functioned, what similarities and differences there are with the Bar Libraries in South Africa, and to learn about best practices to improve our Library services.

All four Inns of Court are very close to each other and the libraries of the Inns each house specific collections, which complement each other. The Library services offered by all four are similar: loan of materials is on an overnight basis, photocopies of

material may be made in the Library, books may be loaned to be taken to Chambers if such a need arises and Pupils have specific loan privileges. Members of each Inn are welcome to use the collections and services of all the libraries, especially with each library housing different collections of legal materials. They all have access to commercial databases such as Westlaw UK, Lexis Library, ICLR Online and HeinOnline. Barristers can search online databases to which the Libraries subscribe, as well as their own online catalogues and the catalogues of the other three Inns. Library services are offered on a rotation basis on Saturdays so that barristers have access to the libraries over the weekend.

I first visited Inner Temple. Inner Temple was rebuilt in the 1950's after being destroyed in WW2, so the building in which the Library is housed is more contemporary. The Library occupies the second and third floors of the building. Their print collection is extensive, consisting of over 70 000 volumes, and is well-used. It includes material from England, Wales and Scotland and some Commonwealth jurisdictions, including South Africa. They also have a manuscript collection, an archive and a non-law collection which includes English history and genealogy. The main floor is equipped with Wi-Fi access so all electronic devices can be used. The Library has 23 PC's, which are located on both floors at various points, for the barristers to use for research and word-processing purposes. A very useful free resource that Inner Temple created, and maintains, is the AccessToLaw portal (www.accesstolaw.com). It is categorized by jurisdiction, subject area and general materials, giving access to UK, Irish, Commonwealth, EU, US and worldwide legal websites. The Library has created a daily Current Awareness blog which records new developments in case law, legislation and

legal news. The coverage is restricted to England and Wales. Licence restrictions on commercial databases, such as Westlaw, prohibit barristers accessing the databases from locations other than at the libraries, which resulted in the provision of free resources. Not all barristers who are members of Inner Temple are based in London, so the Library has a document supply service and enquiry service for those members. It also supplies copies to the other Inn Libraries of material they don't keep. They run an overnight loan system for legal materials for members and pupils of Inner Temple, and a three-week loan period for the material from the non-legal collection.

I then visited Lincolns Inn Library. Lincolns Inn was the only Inn of court that was spared in the bombings of WW2, and the building that houses the Library opened in 1845. The Library is housed in the North Wing and has three levels: ground floor, and two gallery levels. Their collection consists of approximately 150 000 volumes. It focuses primarily on England's legal materials with basic coverage of other UK jurisdictions. The Library specialises in legal materials from the Isle of Man and



Inner Temple Library open house

Paul Clarke



Lincolns Inn Library

Mariusz Kluzniak

Channel Islands, and has a large collection of Parliamentary materials. Commonwealth materials consist mainly of legislation, law reports and materials from jurisdictions that are not kept by Inner Temple. The Library also has its own non-legal, rare book, manuscripts and archive collections. The Library is equipped with Wi-Fi access so all electronic devices can be used. The Library has 15 PCs, which are located on the ground floor and Upper Gallery, for the barristers to use for research and word-processing purposes. The barristers can search online databases to which the Library subscribes, as well as the Library's own online catalogue and catalogues of the other Inns. They also have access to the AccessToLaw portal. The Library is primarily a reference library so their loan policies are more restricted than other Inn libraries.

Neither Library has any e-books in their collections, which reflects the preference for printed material and the use of online databases. Some of the databases to which the libraries subscribe can make full text available as part of the service but at a prohibitive cost, so this option isn't well utilised. Some barristers choose to have their own subscriptions to commercial da-

tabases, which is a trend we have in South Africa. Inner Temple Library is unusual in that the Inn's IT department forms part of the Library, which ensures that the Library does not lag behind when it comes to ICT needs. Lincolns Inn is reliant on their Inn's IT department for support, but they are well-supported and their ICT needs are met. The Libraries have very informative websites, and a presence on Facebook and Twitter. They use Facebook as a useful medium for keeping members informed about events happening at the Inns, operating hours, and for sharing interesting postings on the collections and history of both the Inns and the Libraries.

South African Bar Libraries face challenges. We are geographically dispersed, hampering collaboration. Our access to commercial databases is restricted due to exchange control restraints, so we should promote "free access to law" portals. We should have websites and presences on Facebook and Twitter to be more visible to our users. Inner Temple and Lincolns Inn show us the way; all we need do is follow their examples as best we can. **A**