

Five-day law librarians' meet set to begin today

Swati Deshpande | TNN

Mumbai: A university is just a group of buildings gathered around a library, American civil war historian Shelby Foote had said once. The quote is still applicable to law universities, which necessarily revolve around a good law library. While no one thinks of law librarians as a separate breed, this relatively unknown entity in India is a specialised practitioner across the US and UK.

Law libraries, as the name implies, house law books only. The library in the Bombay high court, for instance, contains more than 1.3 lakh books and law reports. Take the Harvard law library. It has over 17.4 lakh books and law reports and that in Columbia has over 8.7 lakh books.

"Managing a law library is a specialised job," says Uma Narayan, the former Bombay high court librarian who had attempted to modernise the court library and is perhaps responsible for India's first conference of the International Association of Law Libraries to start in the city from Saturday. The 5-day conference, to be inaugurated by former CJI Y V Chandrachud, will have around 100 law librarians from around 25 countries, who have specialised in various fields ranging from academic law libraries to corporate law libraries and national libraries to court libraries.

To demystify their task and bring it as a professional career to those legally inclined, SNDT

THE BOMBAY JUDGES' LIBRARIES

AT THE HIGH COURT

● There are approximately over **1.3 lakh** books with a yearly addition of over **1,500** law reports

● There are over **12 foreign law reports**, including the Harvard Law review, English Cases and Law reports from England

● The judges library that was in the centre of the main court building has been **shifted** to the ground floor room at the entrance close to court room no. 2

● Every month, **35** copies of updates acts, one for each judge are added

● The city civil court library has over **50,000** books

● The HC library, however, experts say **needs modernisation**. Bar-coding needs to be introduced as well as an online catalogue so that judges from other branches can access information as well

University will introduce a three-month law librarian certificate course from the 2008 academic session. Chandra Krishnamurthy, the vice-chancellor of SNDT University, wants to introduce the court to essentially train law librarians as they also need a basic knowledge of law and legal terminologies. There is no such training in India at present, said Narayan.

The international association is a worldwide organisation of librarians, libraries and other persons and institutions in-

involved with the acquisition and use of legal information emanating from sources other than their own jurisdictions aimed at promoting all aspects of legal information and facilitate its use. Members of the organisation include leading legal institutions of the world like Max Planck Institute (Germany), Institute of Advanced Legal Studies London, Oxford Bodleian Law Library, Harvard Law School, Duke Law School, Law Library of Congress, Supreme Court of Victoria, High Court of Australia, Yale Law School. At NCPA, where the conference will be held, Justice D Y Chandrachud, Justice B N Srikrishna and other senior lawyers of the city like V T Tulzapurkar, Nishit Desai and Pawan Duggal as well as Supreme Court librarian Rakesh Srivastava are likely to address the audience. The experts plan to discuss the Indian legal system and few specialised fields of legal studies at the meet.

Jules Winterton President of IALL, who is the associate director and librarian of the Institute of Advance Legal Studies, University of London, is already in the city and looks forward to the prospect of visiting the libraries in Mumbai. In fact, the librarians will have special heritage library walks through the book racks of K R Cama Oriental Institute, Mumbai University library, David Sassoon and the Asiatic Library. Winterton is especially interested in the "first-hand" knowledge of the Indian situation.

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