

**CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIES(CARALL)
23rd ANNUAL CONFERENCE
ADDRESS BY MINISTER OF JUSTICE, SENATOR THE HON. DOROTHY
LIGHTBOURNE
Hilton Hotel, New Kingston
Monday, July 7,2008**

THEME: VIABLE, VITAL AND VIBRANT: BE PREPARED TO SUCCEED

It is indeed a pleasure for me to be able to deliver my first address to a conference of Caribbean Association of Law Libraries in my capacity as Attorney General and Minister of Justice.

As a lawyer, myself, I am quite familiar with the importance and relevance of law librarians, although I must admit that we have somewhat failed to give you the recognition that you really deserve.

But, to be honest, your profession is so important to the legal system that, there are actually countries where people are interchanging between law and law librarian without any serious loss of salary or esteem.

So, it is really a privilege to be here today and to express my heartfelt wish for the success of your conference, and my hope that when you leave you

here, you will leave much better informed and better prepared for the increasing demands on your profession.

I have often heard that law librarianship is a field that people turn to after doing something else.

I don't know how true that is, but we all know that there are law librarians who actually started out at law school and even practiced law for a while before finding this higher calling of law librarianship.

Unfortunately, in Jamaica, we have a very limited number of fully trained law librarians, and our lawyers depend mostly on library assistants some of whom have no formal training in this area of law.

This is certainly a cheaper and easier way to get the work done but the question is, is it appropriate?

I think that this is the question that has to be addressed in terms of your theme: Viable, Vital and Vibrant- Be Prepared to Succeed.

We all have to be concerned about the quality of the service that is currently available to the legal fraternity, because this is very important to our system of justice.

Here in Jamaica apart from the Norman Manley Law School, the Supreme Court and some of the wealthier law firms, we cannot be sure of the quality of legal information available to lawyers.

I think this is unfortunate because, information has become so important in today's society that every critical source of information has to be recognized and nurtured.

All forms of librarianship are fundamentally service professions because libraries provide an essential informational service to the society. But, there is a particular importance in having qualified law librarians in terms of the growing need for legal research and the dissemination of that information.

Your training has to focus on locating the information, then disseminating that information in a manner that your clients and customers can appreciate, because you are really delivering a service to them.

In fact, I would suggest that a great deal of patience and selflessness is needed, because so often, it is on the spur of the moment that you are called upon to help source information.

In addition you also have to juggle your duties: Today you are a reference librarian, tomorrow you are the researcher, another time you may be editing a newsletter and you have to accept that all of this comes with the territory.

One of the important aspects of your job is that you have to be organized, and those of you who deal with law firms on a regular basis know how important it is to be well prepared at all times.

Also important is the fact that law is dynamic, it is essential for you to devote substantial effort to continue your education, including reading professional publications, monitoring discussions and attending training sessions.

But, most importantly, you all have critical roles to play in national and regional issues relating to justice, security and trade policies.

And as we seek to deal with more and more laws, including those covering intellectual property rights, labour laws, morality, sexual crimes and human rights, as small nations, we need information on precedents set in other jurisdictions.

We have to study the legal implications of new regional policies.

The fact is that we cannot continue to rely on untrained or unqualified persons to provide the kind of legal information to support the region's legal machinery.

In my capacity as Attorney General and Minister of Justice in Jamaica I am fully aware of the importance of your profession, as well as the need for more recognition of the services you provide and for increased access to professional training to make you better able to meet these challenges.

I look forward to discussing these issues with your local representatives, to see how we can work together to improve the treatment of law librarians, to increase training opportunities and to make the profession more attractive to young persons who may have an interest in training in law or library services.

I understand that one of the main problems affecting us here in Jamaica has been the failure to attract more young librarians not just to the service, but also to serve in the local and regional bodies representing your interests, and that is a concern that I share.

Succession planning is one of the subjects that are listed on your programme for this conference, so I know you all recognize this problem and will be paying a lot of interest to the subject. I hope that we can work together in terms of identifying the areas in which we can collaborate.

I hope that my participation in this year's conference will signal a new era in terms of cooperation between my ministry and your association

I am convinced that we need each other and that we must work together to identify the areas of mutual support.

I wish you every success in the staging of this conference and I hope that our guests will not only leave satisfied with what they have learnt, but also with our warmth and hospitality and that it will encourage them to come back and

to pass on that message to others that despite our varied problems we are still a nation of warm, hospitable, loving people.

It is indeed my pleasure and a honor to declare this conference open.

God bless you.

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