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Network Members Promote Knowledge and use of GLIN

By: Janice Hyde



The 16th Annual Meeting of Directors of the Global Legal Information Network (GLIN) was held at the Library from September 1-3, 2009. Representatives from twenty one different GLIN member governments assembled to discuss initiatives undertaken over the past year and to plan for the future development of the database and the network. In addition to directors from current member jurisdictions, this year's meeting was attended by observers from potential GLIN member nations including the People's Republic of China and Uganda. JoAnn Jenkins, Chief of Staff for the Library of Congress, welcomed the attendees, noting that "GLIN has grown and thrived admirably in the years that you have been working and meeting together.... By working in concert, you have created a dynamic resource for research and understanding across legal cultures and language barriers." Roberta Shaffer, who began her tenure as Law Librarian of Congress the day before the meeting, offered opening remarks and reminded the participants that the three hallmarks of law—that it be authoritative, accurate, and authentic—are also the hallmarks of GLIN.

As in previous years, GLIN directors were given the opportunity to pro-

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UK Data Transferred to GLIN

By: Charles Dove

Several GLIN members have expressed an interest in learning more about the automated process by which legal information from the United Kingdom was transferred into the GLIN database and continues to be updated. This is a brief account of the pilot project to develop and test a method to electronically transfer the Acts of Parliament (Acts) and the related Explanatory Notes of the United Kingdom directly to the GLIN database with as little handling of the individual record as possible with the expectation that the lessons learned could be readily applied to other data sets.

Before turning to the discussion of this project I should highlight those specific conditions that make a jurisdiction a good candidate for the electronic transfer of data to GLIN. First, the metadata must be in a format that can be mapped

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Field Focus

GLIN Has a New Associate Central American Court of Justice

By: GLIN Costa Rica, Translated by Francisco Macias



Recently, GLIN Nicaragua-Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ, in Spanish) signed an agreement with the Central American Court of Justice (CCJ, in Spanish) and by virtue of that agreement has provided us with the judicial decisions it has issued since it started its operation in Managua, on 12 October 1994, so that these may be included in GLIN. The CCJ is the permanent judicial agency of the “Sistema de Integración Centroamericana” (Central American Integration System), whose permanent headquarters are in the City of Managua.

The jurisdiction and competency of the Central American Court is a Regional one and its decisions must be ineludibly obeyed by the member States. The Legal Statutes of the CCJ, form part of the Central American Community Law. It was created upon the interpretation and implementation of the Protocol of Tegucigalpa to the Charter of the Organization of Central American States (ODECA, in Spanish) and its complementary instruments or acts derived from it. The Protocol of Tegucigalpa provides for the creation of the Central American Court of Justice in article 12, and also refers to its Status to regulate the integration, operation and Powers of the Supranational Judicial Organ.

In the Status Agreement of the Central American Court, its powers and jurisdiction are expanded and it is made an International Court, an Arbitration Court, a Consultation Court and (with some restrictions) a Constitutional Court. Article 1 of the referenced Status Agreement provides that this Court is hereby constituted and shall operate according to the provisions of the said Statute, Ordinance, Regulations and Resolutions that it issues. We believe that the legal resources that have been provided us by the members of the Central American Court of Justice are of great important and will serve to enrich the GLIN database.

The team of GLIN Nicaragua-CSJ, is contributing Legal Literature by our country’s renowned author: Dr. Iván Escobar Fornos, former President of the National Assembly of Nicaragua, currently Justice of the Supreme Court of Justice and member of the Chambers of Civil and Constitutional matters, and Chair of the Iberoamerican Institute of Constitutional Law, Nicaraguan Division—who has written more than fifty texts on the subjects of Constitutional Law, Human Rights, Civil Law and Registration Law, which will soon be available in the GLIN database to be consulted.



From right to left) Dr. Iván Escobar Fornos; MSc. Ana Rosa (Chavarría, Director GLIN Nicaragua-CSJ; Licda. Linda Grijalva Álvarez, Legal Analyst; and Ing. José Antonio Pereira Technical Specialist. Receiving texts to be included in GLIN

GLIN Costa Rica: Meeting with the Minister of the Treasury Jenny Phillips

By: GLIN Costa Rica, Translated by Dante Figueroa

The Director of the GLIN National Station for Costa Rica, Isabel Zúñiga Quirós, accompanied by Julieta Volio Guevara, Assistant to the GLIN Executive Committee, and Virginia Vargas Ayales, Director a.i. of the Legislative Library, met on November 17, 2009, with the Minister of the Treasury of Costa Rica, Jenny Phillips, with the aim of presenting the work developed by the GLIN Network at the national and international levels. In this respect, the Minister indicated her satisfaction with the effort, and declared that GLIN “is a database that provides assistance to the legal work of the institutions, and that requires of more support to expand the public’s knowledge of it.”

In this context, Zúñiga Quirós thanked the support and emphasized that GLIN-Costa Rica is an effort of the National Assembly to offer, gratuitously, via Internet, national normative, legislative records, judicial decisions, and national doc-

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vide reports on the status of their respective GLIN stations and to highlight new and/or special initiatives. The presentations revealed a range of activities intended to expand the legal information content of the database. Isabel Zúñiga Quiros, Director of GLIN Costa Rica reported on her success in negotiating agreements with various institutions including the Supreme Court, the Technical Services Department of the Legislative Assembly, and the University of Costa Rica Law School. These “affiliate” GLIN stations have, respectively, started to contribute Supreme Court decisions, legislative records, and law journal articles to the GLIN database providing more comprehensive coverage of Costa Rican legal materials. An update was provided by Renán Pascal, Director of GLIN Uruguay, on GLIN-Uruguay’s work to incorporate sub-national information into the database. Over the past year, the 19 different regional departments of Uruguay (representing urban, suburban, and rural areas of the country), began submitting their laws to the GLIN database providing the citizens of Uruguay, and all GLIN users, with one centralized source for both national and sub-national law. The participation of the departments in the GLIN effort has led some to develop better legal publishing practices. The report from the United Kingdom, offered by Carol Tullo, Director, Controller and Queen’s Printer, Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI), described the successful collaboration between OPSI, whose policies encourage re-use of legislative materials, and GLIN. As a result of a one-time, bulk transfer of information, GLIN now includes Acts of Parliament dating back to 1988 and associated explanatory notes since 2000. A web-services tool allows continuous updating of the information in the GLIN database. The lessons learned from work with the U.K. will help GLIN apply similar techniques for automated ingestion and update to incorporate the legal materials of other jurisdictions in the future.

Promoting knowledge and use of GLIN among legislators was a theme touched upon by several members. Thalía Rodríguez Soria, Coordinator of GLIN Mexico, described a monthly online bulletin she has developed for members of the Chamber of Deputies of the Mexican Congress that includes sample summaries of laws from various GLIN jurisdictions on topics of current legislative interest such as election law and freedom of speech. She was pleased to share the contents of letter of thanks received from a Congressman for this effort. Both Mexico and El Salvador are making use of closed circuit television available for members of their legislatures to offer “GLIN spots” that fill the spaces between broadcasts of legislative sessions. In Saudi Arabia, a brochure has been produced that has been circulated to members of the Shura Council (legislature) and a link to GLIN has been added to the Shura Council’s intranet. Finally, the Stella Chenu and Li-Min Chang, Directors of GLIN Paraguay and GLIN Taiwan respectively, reported on their provision of interactive workshops (Paraguay) and instructional programs (Taiwan) for legislators and legislative staff to promote the use of GLIN.

Looking to possible future developments, Dan Chirita, the director from GLIN Romania, who also serves as the Chair of the GLIN Technical Committee, gave a presentation focusing on making GLIN accessible through mobile devices such as Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) and cellular telephones. Although much of the GLIN interface and content is currently available through mobile devices, Mr. Chirita explained that the adoption of certain standards and best practices can facilitate such access and make it more user-friendly. He provided examples from their experience creating mobile access to the website of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of Romania. While most documents can be provided via mobile devices, they found that it was not currently advisable to try and offer photographs, videos, or links to external websites. The issue of mobile access to GLIN will be further discussed and refined by the GLIN Technical Committee for consideration by the members.

The Charter signing is the final step required to become a voting member of the Network. At this year’s meeting, Marie Doudou Kolomeni, GLIN Director from Cameroon, signed the Charter signaling that jurisdiction’s formal accession into the Network. A closing event featured a keynote speech delivered by Dr. Mohamed Mattar, Executive Director of the Protection Project located at the School for Advanced International Studies of Johns Hopkins University. In his remarks, Dr. Mattar suggested that by providing access to a wide-range of laws from numerous countries GLIN can assist in efforts to harmonize laws, establish international standards, and develop model laws.

Following the speech, several awards were presented to recognize ongoing excellence and special achievements. GLIN stations in Argentina, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mexico, Paraguay, Taiwan, and Uruguay earned Exemplary Performance Awards given to previous recipients of the GLIN Model Station award that continue to maintain all standards for timeliness and quality of information contributed to the database. The Special Achievement Award was given to Costa Rica in recognition of its inclusion of all four categories of legal materials GLIN. Sandra Sawicki received the 2009 Outstanding Service Award for working on a special project to improve the GLIN thesaurus. Finally, the 2009 GLIN Model Station award was presented to GLIN-Kuwait to acknowledge that its performance as a GLIN station should serve as an example to other members.



GLIN Global Legal Information Network

16th Annual GLIN Directors' Meeting

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directly to GLIN. Second, there should be data located in the same place in each record that can serve as an English summary. Third, each record should be indexed by subject terms that are selected from a thesaurus that can be mapped to the GLIN Thesaurus. Fourth, there must be a web services available to update the initial load with new contributions to the OPSI database. Finally, there must be sufficient financial resources to develop the required computer programs (API) for the initial transfer of data and to connect to OPSI web services.

When the United Kingdom joined GLIN as contributing member it seemed that the best way to load the laws for the UK would be through a laborious manual copy and paste procedure. While this was still under consideration Carol Tullo, the Director of the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI), informed GLIN Central of the decision of her Agency to republish the entire contents of the OPSI website. GLIN Central, therefore, decided to put the data transfer project on hold until completion of the republishing efforts. By the end of June 2007 John Sheridan, Head of e-Services, Public Sector Information Directorate, The National Archives and GLIN Central determined that the now republished data provided formats that could easily be utilized for electronic transfer of data. The plan that evolved by February 2008 used the XML formatted files for the metadata mapping. The plan permitted mapping the metadata elements for title, instrument class, instrument number, issuance date, publication name, publication date, and publication number from OPSI directly to reciprocal fields in GLIN. The OPSI option to output files in both HTML and PDF formats provided the full text in a format utilized by GLIN. The programming and data analysis for data transfer to GLIN were a requirement of the existing GLIN development contract.

By February 2008 although the major contours of the plan had been shaped a variety of tasks remained to be accomplished before the data exchange could occur:

- Obtain the URLs for the files to be transferred;
- Identify a data element to provide an English summary for each Act. The Explanatory Notes proved too time consuming to condense for this purpose;
- Selection of the actual method for the data transfer from the available options (copy to a portable device, ftp, or directly from the web site server);
- Identify the web services that would be used to refresh the data;
- Establish an author for the Explanatory Notes;
- Identify the source of publication for the Acts;
- Map the Integrated Public Sector Vocabulary (IPSV) to the GLIN Thesaurus.

Over the next few months a series of emails and conference calls resolved almost all of the remaining issues:

- John provide a spreadsheet that listed the URL for each Act from 1988 to the present;
- The title for each Act would function as the summary in the GLIN metadata record;
- The data transfer would operate directly from the OPSI mirror failover backup server to avoid any chance, however remote, of degrading the performance of the OPSI web site;
- The Atom feed was the web service selected to periodically refresh the data;
- United Kingdom Government was established as the corporate author for the Explanatory Notes;
- Since the United Kingdom does not publish an official gazette the source of publication for the Act become the Queen's Printer of Acts of Parliament and the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office;
- Each of the IPSV terms used by OPSI to index the Acts was mapped the broadest reciprocal term in the GLIN Thesaurus.

In October of 2008 GLIN Central announced to the Network that the Acts of Parliament for the United Kingdom from 1988 to October 2008 along with their related Explanatory Notes were now accessible through GLIN. Two issues, however, came quickly to the attention of GLIN Central:

- The mapping of IPSV subject terms to GLIN reciprocals was not a good match;

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- The Atom feed was not consistently available.

GLIN Central resolved the first issue by manually re-indexing all of the Acts with subject terms selected from the GLIN Thesaurus. At present this is an ongoing process as additional Acts are loaded. OPSI is still in the process resolving the second problem. In the meantime updating GLIN requires periodic manual searches of the OPSI to determine if either any new Acts or Explanatory Notes have been added since the last upload.

To summarize, the elements that made working with OPSI optimal were the following:

- An extremely knowledgeable and cooperative staff;
- English is shared language;
- OPSI metadata was highly compatible with that of GLIN;
- Text that could be used as a summary;
- Availability of web services to update GLIN;
- Availability of resources to support the work.

Even with all of these positive elements the two conditions that were not met--subject terms that map to the GLIN Thesaurus and a fully available web service--could have delayed or terminated the project if the United Kingdom was prolific in the passage of new Acts of Parliament. Therefore, the most important lesson to come from this effort is that any decision to automatically transfer the legal resources of a jurisdiction must involve careful evaluation to determine if all of the conditions have been met and if not whether can they be resolved with the available resources

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trine, and that the support provided by the current president of the Legislative Assembly, Representative Francisco Antonio Pacheco, has been key to sign cooperation agreements, and for the creation of stations affiliated to GLIN in Costa Rica (EAGLIN), at the Supreme Court of Justice, as well as at the Department of Technical Services of the Congress, the University of Costa Rica and the Office of the General Attorney of the Republic.

Costa Rica GLIN officials advocated with the Minister for a continued support of Costa Rica at the meeting of the governors of the World Bank, and for obtaining loans from financial entities to strengthen the database in Costa Rica and Central America.

GLIN Costa Rica: Welcomes the new Director of the Affiliated Station at the Technical Services Department

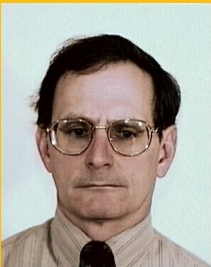
Gloria Valerín Rodríguez, director of the Technical Services Department at the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica, assumed, on November 1, 2009, as Director of the Affiliated Station in Technical Services at the Legislative Assembly. This EAGLIN includes the legislative registries performed by the Legislative Assembly and constitutes an important input in decision-making by Costa Rican Legislative Assembly members.

Valerín Rodríguez is assisted Gustavo Rivera Sibaja, legal analyst and translator, who also has broad experience in the field of parliamentary assistance. The new collaborators received training by officials of the Costa Rica GLIN Station during the months of October and November of this year.



From left, Licda. Virginia Vargas Ayales, Director of the Legislative Library; center, Minister of the Treasury Licda Jenny Phillips Aguilar; and to the right, M.Sc. Isabel Zúñiga Quirós, Director of GLIN-Costa Rica.

From the Editor's Desk



With this issue of the GLIN Global Journal the editorial responsibilities pass from the very capable hands of LeeAnne Buckley to mine. I can only hope to maintain the high standards that LeeAnne set with the inaugural issue of October 2007. The attractive design of each issue along with the selection of articles and photographs

of interest have consistently captured the attention and kept the GLIN membership informed of Network activities. Thank you LeeAnne for the enthusiasm and talent that you brought to the GLIN Global Journal as its first editor.

For those of you who may not know me I have been with GLIN since 2001. My responsibilities as GLIN Project Manager have been largely technical and have focused on the development of the GLIN data system. More recently, however, I have been involved with the daily operational work of GLIN Central.

To be successful as editor I will need your continued support in the form of reports on jurisdictional activities. I intend to publish the GLIN Global Journal quarterly with the next issue in March 2010. This will provide you with time to prepare and send me your articles for the next issue. Also please email me your comments on this and future issues of the GLIN Global Journal at cdove@loc.gov.

Charles Dove