

Law librarians treated to chapter of Asiatic history

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Mumbai: These visitors to the library did not have to be told to switch off their cellphones as they ambled into the majestic portals of the Asiatic Society Library. For they were all law librarians and law professors from across 25 countries and were as distinguished as they could get in their specialised field of being the custodian of lakhs of law books, law journals and law records.

On Tuesday as Jerry Dupont, associate director of LLMC, a non-profit law library from Hawaii, Sherry Luthuli from the Constitutional Court of south Africa, Sarah Spells from SOAS, the University of London and Holger Knudsen from Max-Planck Institute and former president of the Association of Law Librarians (IALL), along with other international librarians, rode inside the campus, they were more than impressed with the grand facade of the Society.

Law librarians were in India, almost 100 of them, with the president of their association, Jules Winterton, for their annual conference organised by Uma Narayan, former Bombay high court chief librarian. For most, it was their first visit to India and they were happy to get a lowdown on Indian laws from experts like Justice D Y Chandrachud, Nishit Desai, Virendra Tulzapurkar and



THE WORLD MEETS HERE: Law librarians from across the world visited the over 150-year-old institution during their annual meet

Pawan Duggal.

The librarians were like children on a visit to an ice-cream factory. They browsed through the records and as a special treat, they got to see the 'special collections room' that stored rare books dating back to the 17th century. The law librarians poured over the rare gems even as they discussed ways to treat 'worm holes' and other threats to preservation of historical books with the deputy librarian, Madhu Upadrasta, in the underground strong room.

Librarians from Yale Law university S Blair Kauffman, Stuart Basefsky and Clair Germain of Cornell Law University, Trinie Thai-Parker from the Harvard Law School library,

too, had a good dekho at rare books at David Sassoon library where lithographs from late 1700s and early 1800s of the Seine and other parts of Paris were specially put on display.

The library director of Max Planck Institute, Knudsen, told TOI that his library has private laws' collection from 200 countries and nearly 4,50,000 volumes of legal literature. "Every year, we add another 10,000 volumes," said Knudsen. Petal Kinder of the High Court of Australia has a volume comparable to what the Bombay high court has, about 1.4 lakh. The difference perhaps lies in the fact that their library is spread across three floors.

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