

Two decades & counting

As the International Law Book Facility celebrates 20 years of supporting the rule of law across the world, **Katrina Crossley** reflects on its achievements—and looks to the future

IN BRIEF

► The ILBF, now in its 20th year, promotes access to justice and the rule of law by finding new homes for law books no longer needed in the UK and shipping them overseas.

In 2005, the International Law Book Facility (ILBF) was launched, the brain child of Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd. The mission was to support the rule of law and access to justice by finding new homes for law books no longer needed by law firms, courts and barristers' chambers in the UK but of great value overseas. The demand for good-quality legal textbooks was clear, there was no shortage of books, and applications started to arrive within a few weeks.

This year we are proud to celebrate our 20th anniversary. The number of books shipped is over 95,000, to more than 285 organisations in 62 countries. This is a huge achievement for a small charity run almost entirely by volunteers.

The roster of supporters is long and the ILBF is grateful to its trustees and patrons, and its dedicated volunteers. It has benefitted from good will from across the legal community, including: the library team, clerks and facilities team at the Royal Courts of Justice; university student groups; librarians and information managers at law firms and chambers; individuals who have donated their law libraries; and work placement students from the University of Surrey.

Special mention goes to Clifford Chance and LexisNexis, which have supported us from the beginning. Here is what they say:

'What was striking about the ILBF from the outset was its simplicity—matching a very real need for law reports and textbooks with surplus books becoming available upon the publication of new editions and the switch to online books. What we perhaps didn't anticipate was the extent and geographical reach of the ongoing need for law books to help establish and protect the rule of law. The enduring determination among recipients to achieve the latter, in the face of real challenges, has been inspiring.' *Philip Hill, partner, Clifford Chance*

'Supporting the ILBF since its inception has been—and remains—a fantastic opportunity for LexisNexis...

The continued growth and expansion of the ILBF has been an incredible achievement, helping to advance the rule of law across the world, and it has been an honour for LexisNexis to play a small role in that.' *James Harper, head of legal, Global Nexis Solutions, Exec Sponsor, Rule of Law, LNUK*

Over the past seven years, we have also benefitted from the Ambassadors for Good programme run by Anglo American, which has provided much-needed funds. The in-house legal team has also packed books and worked with overseas colleagues to help distribute books.

'We are very proud to have been able to partner with the ILBF in the critical role it plays in supporting the rule of law... Through our collaboration, we have distributed more than 15,000 books to eight jurisdictions in Africa and Latin America... It has been very rewarding to know we have in some small way contributed to legal education, understanding and comparison of legal principles in each of those jurisdictions.' *Jonathan Hoch, head of legal—Commercial and Global Projects, Anglo American*

Funding has also come from many law firms and, in the past four years, through sponsoring our annual law undergraduate essay competition, this year sponsored by international firm Brown Rudnick. The winner of the 2025 competition, Sean Xue, was announced by the Lady Chief Justice at our 20th anniversary event earlier this month.

Few people would argue that without access to good-quality legal resources, consistency can't be maintained, education is flawed, legislation can't be adequately developed, and access to justice can't be guaranteed. The rule of law is under huge pressure in all jurisdictions. But faith in the considered exposition of the law, from the pens of judges and legal authors, remains robust. The wisdom of experts, carefully edited by legal publishers, is still a prize to be valued. The demand for books does not diminish. In fact, our work is expanding, now reaching countries in South America.



In Nigeria, magistrates' training by English judges has been followed by donations of books from the ILBF to federal and state judiciaries, and to the National Judicial Institute, in partnership with Africa House London. Advocacy training in Sierra Leone by the UK Sierra Leone Pro Bono Network has also been supported by books from the ILBF.

The ILBF is now firmly part of the legal ecosystem. Books from the ILBF have helped to improve pass rates at universities, informed legislative reform, boosted legal arguments, and assisted judicial reasoning.

'Child rights, child justice administration and child protection in Nigeria... [is] at its formative stage... This set of literature and law reports [from the ILBF] arrived at a most opportune time... The donation of books to the Institute Library is the kind of knowledge transfer that will have continued impact for many decades and, I dare say, for centuries.' *Olubo Umaru, principal research fellow at the National Judicial Institute in Nigeria.*

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'I have seen the ILBF grow from its first tentative steps into a successful and much respected organisation that is making a real impact around the world. Securing funding from across the legal community and beyond will enable us to ensure our impact into the future. We would be very grateful for any support you are able to give us.'



*Paul Lowenstein KC,
chairman of the board of trustees, ILBF.*



In our 20th anniversary year, we are as resolute as ever to continue the mission. If you would like to support our work, or talk to us about partnership opportunities, we would love to hear from you. You can donate here: [Cafdonate.cafonline.org/28291](https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/28291)

Katrina Crossley is chief executive of ILBF (ilbf.org.uk). [Newlawjournal.co.uk](https://www.newlawjournal.co.uk)