



Clare Cowling  
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Legal Records at Risk Project

## The Legal Records at Risk project

The Legal Records at Risk project, based at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, University of London, commenced in September 2015 to:

- Broaden the concept of "legal" records from their traditional definition as court records or deeds to the business records of private sector institutions specialized to law (ISLs), including arbitration and mediation services, barristers, insolvency practitioners, legal executives, licensed conveyancers, multi-disciplinary practices, notaries, patent attorneys, pro bono legal services, scriveners, solicitors, trade mark attorneys and providers of ancillary services such as law publishers and legal stationers.
- Identify and facilitate the rescue of legal records of potential value which may be at risk through globalization, digital obsolescence, physical neglect, lack of interest on the part of information owners or reduced archival resources to rescue records.
- All private sector institutions in the UK face similar information management challenges, but modern legal records (C20-C21) are particularly vulnerable due to recent developments which are transforming the nature, organisation, regulation and economics of legal services. If these changes are not captured for posterity by the systematic collection and preservation of relevant records our more recent legal history will continue to be government-centric, with obvious implications for the study of legal, social and cultural change.

The project will not collect records but will act as a conduit through which legal records of value (in all formats and media) are identified, preserved and made available for research. In doing so we hope to raise the awareness of the information owners of legal records as to the value of their records and assist them to unlock the potential of the records for both internal business reference and external research use. We will achieve this aim by:

- Creating a census of private sector ISLs in England and Wales, with details of what, if any, provision has been made to preserve their archives.
- Identifying legal records of research value and relevant repositories.
- Providing generic recordkeeping advice to information owners.
- Working with the archives community on a co-ordinated strategy for the identification and preservation of legal records of value.
- Working with research communities to understand their needs and to bring to their attention modern legal records of potential research value which may hitherto have been overlooked.

The project is being led by Clare Cowling, an experienced archivist and records manager; contact her at [clare.cowling@sas.ac.uk](mailto:clare.cowling@sas.ac.uk). For the latest project news see our website: <http://ials.sas.ac.uk/research/lrar/lrar.htm>, which includes a [questionnaire](#) for researchers - please contact us with your thoughts/suggestions.

## **Centre for Socio-Legal Studies**

### **Legal Records at Risk (LRAR) 1914-2014: the use of unpublished data in socio-legal research**

25 April 2016, 4.30-6.00pm

Seminar Room D Manor Road Building

Speakers:

- Professor William Twining, UCL
- Clare Cowling, LRAR Project Director
- Professor Peter Bartlett, University of Nottingham
- Professor Denis Galligan, CSLS
- Dr Bettina Lange, CSLS
- Dr Michael Reynolds, CSLS
- Marina Kurkchiyan, CSLS

Each speaker will spend c.10 minutes raising particular points of interest; it is hoped that discussion will be stimulated both during and after each presentation.