

## **The use of unpublished documents in socio-legal research**

(William Twining, Quain Professor of Jurisprudence Emeritus, University College London & Clare Cowling, Director, Legal Records at Risk project, Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, University of London)

This session will demonstrate the importance of using primary source material in socio-legal studies. Records were not usually created for the purpose of research so they often provide a less biased account of events than secondary sources. The session will show how the study of the recent past (using twentieth and twenty-first century legal records held in archives) informs our analysis of the relationship between present day law and society, provides evidence of activities, tells us more about individuals, institutions and cultures and can even ensure justice.

The session will give practical examples of how to locate and use archival records and dispel some of the myths around the selection, extent, subject matter, availability and accessibility of legal records in archives. It will also briefly describe the work of the Legal Records at Risk project, the main aims of which are a) to raise awareness of the variety and extent of modern private sector legal records in the UK and b) to rescue those of value which are at risk, ensuring that the socio-legal researchers of the future are given a balanced picture of the developments in legal services and processes over the past two centuries.

### **Reading:**

Neil Rickman, "The Use of Unpublished Data in Socio-Legal Research", in W. Twining and E. Varnden Quick (eds.), *Legal Records in the Commonwealth*, Dartmouth Publishing Co., Aldershot (1994)

Attendees are also expected to briefly familiarise themselves with the following:

- The National Archives Discovery portal: <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>
- The Archives in London and the M25 area (AIM25) website: <http://www.aim25.ac.uk/>
- The Archives Hub website: <http://archiveshub.ac.uk/>
- The UK Data Archives website: <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/home>
- The Legal Records at Risk project website: <http://ials.sas.ac.uk/research/lrar/lrar.htm>