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Attorney General's Speech at the Opening of the Caribbean Association of Law Libraries Conferences Port of Spain, Trinidad July 4th, 2011

Members of the legal community, executive members of the Caribbean Association of Law Libraries, Librarians from the Caribbean and North America, specially invited guests, ladies and gentleman, a pleasant good morning and welcome to the 26th annual conference of the Caribbean Association of Law Libraries or CARALL, as it is commonly known across the region.

I am pleased and gratified that I can continue the tradition of preceding Attorney Generals of the country who hosted the CARALL conference by delivering the welcome address and declaring the proceedings open. As some of you may know, the first CARALL conference was held in Trinidad in 1984 at the Hugh Wooding Law School. The primary aim of CARALL brings together participants from court, Ministry and Law Firm Libraries

together with persons from regional institution to discuss ideas, concerns, and developments, within the profession with the purpose of improving the service provided by Law Librarians to these various institutions. CARALL strives to foster greater cooperation and links between members of the profession to provide essential services that support the legal institution that heavily depend on legal research and other services.

Ms. Barbara Kingsolver, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, said **“I’m of a fearsome mind to throw my arms around every living librarian who crosses my path, on behalf of the souls they never knew they saved.”**

This comment is recognition of the immense value placed on the men and woman who strive diligently to support and develop the clientele that they serve on a daily basis despite the numerous challenges faced whether they be human resources, administrative and financial.

The role of the law librarian should not be undervalued as these are the well-trained professionals working behind the scenes on major court cases, for key corporations, and at law schools across the nation rendering services in, but not limited to, legal research including the use of online databases such as Westlaw and LexisNexis, legal information systems, selection of the

appropriate materials, and the organization of legal resources. Consequently, the law librarian must possess post graduate qualification in Librarianship as well as extensive knowledge of legal terms, citation, and abbreviation, in addition to general librarian skills. The Law Library which was once considered a reference library has been transformed into a major center of legal research providing legal practitioners and students with eBooks, cd-roms, online database services, and online reference services. Professional librarians are now challenged to modify their traditional role to provide clients with case law, legislation and journal articles as quickly and accurately as possible to meet the demands of attorneys, judges, students and members of the public through sound knowledge of electronic resources and database management.

As I understand, the 26th annual conference focuses on profiling competencies of the law librarian as manager, researcher, teacher and many others that fall within the ambit of the profession discussing various skills and expertise that are necessary.

Accordingly, I take this opportunity to encourage law librarians of the Caribbean to continue to seek avenues for professional development in legal education as an opportunity to expand their intellect and obtain an improved

understanding in the area of law whether through conferences such as this one, paralegal courses, diploma courses or even the bachelors of law degree. Legal education provides a solid foundation for the law librarian who will now possess a deeper understanding of law to improve upon the delivery of services, respect, and credibility among friends and colleagues and a deep sense of confidence.

Today, I congratulate and extend thanks and appreciation to the law librarians who have played an invaluable role in supporting members of the legal profession by providing them with the necessary tools to perform their roles and functions in the organization and wider society. **“Libraries are the wardrobes of literature, whence men, properly informed may bring forth something for ornament, much for curiosity, and more for use.”**

It is my pleasure to now declare the 26th Annual Conference and meeting of the Caribbean Association of Law Libraries, open.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen.

MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL