

Paralegals Face Similar Issues Worldwide

Foreign associations work to unite the profession.

By Jon Matsumoto

As paralegals in the United States continue to strive to advance and support their profession through national and local associations, so do legal assistants from abroad. The Swiss Paralegal Association, the first organization of its kind in continental Europe, is preparing to celebrate its second anniversary.

With membership already at 80, the organization's mission is to protect and promote the reputation of the profession in Switzerland. It's also a support system for members and allows for the exchange of ideas and experiences among its members.

During its first year, SPA created a Web site (www.swissparalegal.org) to serve as the primary information platform for the organization, which now provides publications and a job bank. The association's second year goals include educating the legal community about the capabilities of paralegals and building a positive relationship between legal professionals and paralegals, SPA President Laurence

Community-based Paralegal Association in South Africa, which represents the needs and interests of paralegals both on a national and provincial level in South Africa. Located in Johannesburg, the association develops and designs standard and uniform curricula for paralegals; makes it possible for paralegals to receive a qualification certificate; ensures that trainers and courses are accredited; develops training materials and a code of conduct for paralegals; and

tions, such as the Professional Paralegal Association of Ontario and the Paralegal Society of Ontario, serve to address ongoing issues such as paralegal regulation. According to the PPAO's mission statement, the organization is "committed to uniting all professional paralegals whether supervised or unsupervised."

The Institute of Law Clerks of Ontario also serves Ontario-based paralegals. Incorporated in 1968, the associ-

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encourages future government financial support for paralegals.

Also in South Africa is the National Paralegal Institute. Facing similar debates as its U.S. counterparts, NPI-SA wants to address paralegals' inability to formally represent clients in South Africa, the lack of a

ation provides continuing education, networking opportunities and a network to promote cooperation among law clerks.

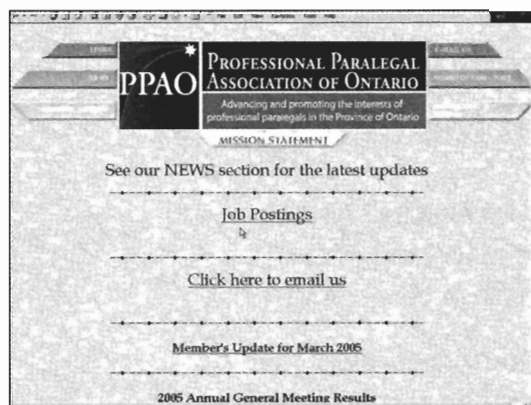
The Montreal-based Canadian Association of Paralegals was established in 1980, and is designed to provide an information and communication net-

work for paralegals, and to promote the profession. Currently, CAP has 478 members across the country.

According to Jerena Tobiasen, a CAP director in British Columbia, the organization has grown significantly in the past eight years. During this time, CAP has made a concerted effort to increase its membership beyond its previous Eastern Canadian

focus in Ontario and Quebec.

"CAP was established so that all paralegals in Canada can benefit from an association that encourages the exchange of thoughts, ideas and knowledge in order that the legal community in every city can be made more aware of the necessity and expertise of paralegals," Tobiasen said. ■



Worldwide, paralegal associations, such as the Swiss Paralegal Association (www.swissparalegal.org), left, and the Professional Paralegal Association of Ontario (www.ppaao.on.ca), right, strive to advance and support the profession.

Zehnder Lauterburg wrote in an article for the National Federation of Paralegal Association's magazine, *Paralegal Reporter*.

Several other paralegal organizations also exist abroad, each catering to the unique needs of paralegals working under the laws of their countries. For example, there is the National

national standard for paralegal certification, curriculum development and accreditation of trainers, and the lack of regulation of paralegals.

Several paralegal associations also exist in Canada, where some paralegals (also referred to as law clerks) work independently, without the supervision of attorneys. Most of these organiza-