

Editorial

Law Librarianship in the 21st Century

I am very grateful to all our authors, who have put in a huge amount of work and research to produce some excellently argued articles, whilst trying to predict how our profession and legal information will develop and change over this century.

Barbara Tearle opens the batting with a wide-ranging review of law librarianship as it was back in the sixties when she went to university to study law. She subsequently joined the legal information profession when it largely consisted of academic law librarians. She traces the rise in law firm librarianship from the opening of the solicitor's branch of the profession to partnerships of more than 20 lawyers in the early seventies, which resulted in a staggering growth in law firm librarianship. Susanna Winter looks more closely at this branch of our profession in her article on law firms.

Barbara then analyses what she considers will be the key factors affecting us in the future, including working with a wider range of legal material, both electronic and hard copy. This point is neatly illustrated by Lesley Young's article on the use of print and electronic resources at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies library.

Barbara also mentions IT developments which of course have had a major impact on all of us. In her article on law firms, Susanna Winter develops this theme and in their article on Blogging, James Mullan and Jenny Vass give us a blogger's view on the century to come, whilst Ann Hemming considers e-learning.

Derek Law, whose paper caused great interest at our Conference last June, considers in some detail whether libraries as we know them are still necessary and suggests that we need to do a lot more adapting to the information needs of "digital natives", or the Google-generation. He also looks at both the application of social networking and Web 2.0 possibilities, a common theme amongst our contributors.

Emily Allbon and Nicola Wakefield continue the theme of academic libraries, but their article is limited to law libraries. They believe the key factors to be aware of are how training and, in particular, legal skills training will develop in the e-learning environment; how the physical environments of libraries will change; the increasing importance of our role as communicators; our role as guardians of quality information, and coping with potential financial pressures on our budgets.

Guy Holborn contributes an interesting review of the rise and fall of Inn libraries and believes that even though the term "law librarian" might be thought to be outmoded, the Inn libraries will still have a valuable service to offer in the 21st century.

Professor Richard Matthews, who was a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies in 2006–2007 and who was Chair of the AALL's Access to Electronic Information Committee and Editor-in-Chief of their state-by-state authentication report, has written a thought-provoking article on why authentication procedures matter for US and UK public legal resources on the internet. He examines key features of the Statute Law Database

and the US Government Printing Office's future digital system (FDsys) and also reports on the results of the survey.

Current Topics

Beyond the call of duty, Nicola Wakefield has contributed two articles to this issue. She has been in the lucky position of designing a brand new law library from scratch for the University of Salford. You can read all about her experience and see photos of the new faculty, plus consider her conclusions on what went right and what wasn't so successful.

We have included Ruth Bird's report on the IALL Conference in LIM as it follows on from the article which we published in our Summer 2007 issue by Uma Narayan on sources of Indian legal information. We also include two more Conference papers – Amanda McKenzie on supplying current awareness services to lawyers and an interesting article from Edward Hart on his experiences as a distance learning student when he undertook the LLM in European Law offered by the University of Northumbria. He makes suggestions for improving the teaching of legal research skills on such courses and compares the situation here with the current status of distance learning in American legal education.

Rachel Brett compiled a survey of classification practices in law libraries for her dissertation for the MA in Library and Information Studies at City University and we publish her findings in this issue. Her results show that only 3% of law libraries in her survey do not have a classification scheme, but this growth in subject classification, noted since Ian Sainsbury's surveys in 1983 and 1988, has not resulted in an increase in use of published schemes but rather a growth in home grown schemes, particularly in law firms.

From Our Own Correspondent

Jessica Sambrook from Maples and Calder in the Cayman Islands reports on life as a legal information professional on an idyllic island, and also supplies some useful information about sources of legislation and cases, and the legal system and companies regulation.

Checklist

Claire Groom and Dunstan Speight have produced a comprehensive checklist on organising courses, based on their experiences as members of BIALL's Professional Development Committee. There are lots of practical tips, including standing at the back of the room to make sure the speaker can be heard!

Correction

Sara Batts' name was misspelt in Vol 7 (No. 4) Winter 2007

Christine Miskin