

Editorial

The Autumn issue concentrated on the Sweet & Maxwell takeover of Lawtel and whilst it is still early days for the merger to settle down, what are the results so far? As we were going to press the Office of Fair Trading announced that the takeover would not be referred to the Competition Commission because it has been decided that it would not lead to a substantial lessening of competition. Further information on this decision is available in the November *Newsletter* (p.9).

The new platform which was due in September is now being rolled out, only slightly delayed, and quite prompt in terms of normal delays in delivery on technology projects and has so far been very well received. There have been no complaints on LIS-LAW about any drop off in the quality of the data received by Lawtel subscribers and Wendy Beecham is certainly keeping to her promise that Sweet & Maxwell did not buy Lawtel to close it down.

However, the acid test will take place over the next few months, as Sweet & Maxwell begins to integrate its own internal data capture, data manipulation and data output systems with those of Lawtel. Let us hope that the best Lawtel features will be retained. Similarly, there is no doubt intensive work currently being done on the people integration aspect of the deal and this is an area which we will watch with interest. There has already been a dissenting Lawtel voice heard on LawZone about "a village in Yorkshire with three pubs" and it will be interesting to see how many of Lawtel's people will survive the chill northern winds.

This issue has four strands. We begin with the two remaining June Conference papers from Tim Owen and Michael Maher. Tim gave us the keynote address and he concentrated on the skills challenges which face the profession in the electronic era. He focussed on the role which he perceives Cilip will play in introducing a programme of compulsory continuing education in the future. As a Library Association member of long-standing, I feel quite strongly that we have fallen behind in ensuring that we all benefit from some form of continuing education programme – most other professions have introduced such requirements and it is vital that we should keep our skills updated to cope with the electronic information world.

Michael gave a very interesting talk on how Eversheds have linked up with a leading publisher, Butterworths, to provide a repository combining internal and published data for clients with the initial dataset being employment law, and the promise of a further five areas. This is a ground-breaking project in that it combines these particular types of information for the benefit of paying clients. Of course, Linklaters were first in the field with their Blue Flag subscription service, but as far as I am aware it contains only data amassed by Linklaters and legal publishers are not involved. Certainly the model outlined by Michael in his talk has echoes of Richard Susskind's forecasts in *The Future of Law*.

Our second theme relates to the various working environments within which we find ourselves. I bet there weren't any chambers librarians at early BIALL conferences, and yet Alison Million, who has written a most informative article on the subject, is in the process of setting up a networking group as there are now sufficient people involved in this area to make it useful for them to meet together to exchange experiences and knowledge (and probably also to marvel at how the Bar seem to manage to have increased their earnings over the past year by £100m and 42 per cent of sets have grown by more than 10 per cent – hot news from the 2002 BDO Stoy Hayward report just out but not soon enough to be included in Alison's article).

Moira Greenhalgh enlightens us on what to do when you meet new people at parties and there is a silence when you inform them that you are an indexer, and even worse, a legal indexer! I have to say that based on my own experience, librarians actually make first class indexers and our best current awareness editors at LIR were all librarians in a previous life, so never mind the embarrassing silence, Moira's article makes really interesting reading. She talks about what an index actually is, the methods of construction and the other techniques employed by skilled indexers. The late Betty Moys is a shining example of librarian turned indexer as she had an extremely successful second career as a legal indexer.

To round up this section, Yemisi Dina tells us about law libraries in the Bahamas.

Our third theme is devoted to data protection and questions of ethics and Jonathan Gordon-Till, Chair of the Editorial Board, who is also well-known to those of us who read *Information World Review* as their regular commentator on philosophical issues within our profession, has contributed an article. He looks at topical issues relating to whether the fact that it is compulsory for all eligible electors to be included on the electoral register has any implications under the data protection and human rights legislation. He reviews recent cases and government activity in this area. We also have a contribution from Malcolm Kendall who was responsible for setting up the data protection compliance policy at the Information Services section within the University of Birmingham. He offers useful pointers on what information you need to include in your data retention policy and how to go about ensuring that your staff are familiar with the eight Data Protection Principles.

Our fourth theme takes us to the IFLA meeting held in Glasgow last August in which several of our members participated, both as speakers and attendees. David Byrne is an advocate of IFLA and has contributed an article on its aims and purposes. Simon Jones has kindly given us permission to reprint his experiences of attending the Conference. These were first published in *ICLG News* Autumn 2002 and in fact this latter issue contains some

reasonably negative feedback on the conference from other delegates, so although IFLA has its proponents it would seem there is work to be done, even as David is exhorting us to get more involved!

On the people front, the Editorial Board would like to express its grateful thanks to June Tomlinson, who is stepping down from the job of Current Awareness Editor with effect from this issue, as she has recently been appointed as Deputy Chief Cataloguer at the London School of Economics Library. June has performed her current awareness task with the exemplary skill and accuracy which we now take for granted from IALS staff. We are delighted to report that Lesley Young, also a member of staff at the Institute has very kindly agreed to join Gillian Sands in producing the column.

By the time you read this the International Online Conference and the festive season will be behind us and we will no doubt be looking forward to the next round of the *Lloyd's Law Reports* saga and whether Butterworths have finally got its act together on access to its databases by students – the current hot topics on LIS-LAW. Will Sweet & Maxwell have taken over the rest of the legal publishing world by this time next year and will the Statute Law Database finally become a reality or still be a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow as the free public access to the law debate continues? And finally, implementation of the Copyright Directive has been delayed again, of which more in our next issue...

Christine Miskin