

# NATIONAL CONVENOR'S NOTES

## *Highlights of 1993 - Prospects for 1994*

As law librarians we can look back on 1993 as a successful year for our section of the profession. The Conference at Broadbeach was the catalyst for a positive examination of our expectations in information exchange, ongoing self education and the role of the National Committee.

In summary the outcomes to date have been:

- 1 Suggested guidelines for future conferences agreed to by all State Convenors
- 2 Ongoing discussions with the National Library which is actively seeking our input into its Review of the National Library's Legal Collection
- 3 The National Directory will be available later this year, now that all members are on a database. It will be updated prior to publication to include 1994 members.
- 4 The establishment of a Publishers Liaison Committee which has begun to provide a national focus for problems and issues we often experience at a local level.
- 5 The decision to continue as an unincorporated group of professionals with a common goal to support each other in a cooperative, friendly and mutually beneficial way through our state groups.

For me, several highlights stand out. Catching up with interstate colleagues at Broadbeach, and meeting other colleagues for the first time; the successful meetings with the State Convenors in Melbourne; and discussions with Eric Wainwright and Averill Edwards of the National Library. There are many wonderful aspects to librarianship as a profession but surely the greatest asset we have is our ability to work cooperatively with each other, to network, and to always seek out the latest ideas and developments which allow us to enhance the quality of service we provide to our users.

I am looking forward to 1994 as a year in which earlier initiatives come to fruition. To the Sydney members who are planning the 1995 Conference, I wish you all the best in your planning and deliberations, and urge those of you with ideas and comments to ensure that you contact members of the organising committee with your suggestions at an early stage.

I am pleased to report that the BIALL exchange sponsored by Butterworths will take place again this year, and details appear elsewhere in this issue.

The ALLG will continue to prosper with the continued input and goodwill of its members. Let's work collectively to make 1994 a successful and fulfilling year for us all.

**RUTH BIRD - NATIONAL CONVENOR**

**Brief Report of Meeting with Averill Edwards**

**National Library of Australia, Canberra,  
2 December 1993**

I had a most rewarding discussion with Averill Edwards, Principal Librarian, Collection Development and Information Services, who was kind enough to give me three hours to talk about the ALLG concerns, ideas and suggestions. I gave her a copy of the ALLG discussions on the NLA Terms of Reference for the evaluation of the NLA's legal collection. These are included in this report. Averill addressed every item, and agreed to several of our suggestions. Visiting the library, being shown the extent of the collection, and being made aware of the overall enormity of the task being undertaken was most enlightening. I reinforced the ALLG's delight with developments in the past twelve months with the appointment of subject specialists especially in law, and the work being undertaken by Roy Jordan.

Averill emphasised that we should use Roy whenever possible for specific requests, as he is very familiar with the collection, and has been responsible for placing legal looseleaf services on open access. The physical changes to the NLA in the past two years have made the public areas much more user friendly, and using subject specialists has also assisted in this process.

I believe that the NLA is not only willing to hear our concerns, but wherever possible within their procedures and structures, will try to meet our requests to facilitate access to legal materials held by the NLA. In a library of 600-700 staff there are inevitably some procedures which we may not find amenable to our needs, but which must be enforced for the overall smooth running of the operation. I felt that the strides which have been made in the past couple of years have come a long way towards meeting the concerns expressed in the 1980s by the

ALLG. We are now at the stage where we can approach the NLA at any time for a fair and open hearing of any concerns we hold.

Rob Brian undertook the review in January. His experience, background and knowledge of legal materials will be invaluable in this process. We look forward to his suggestions and ideas which I am sure will address a lot of the concerns still held by some members of the ALLG.

All issues which were raised at the NLA meeting came from discussions held at the meeting of the State Convenors in Melbourne on 26 November 1993, as well as input from several university law librarians.



**ALLG National Committee Meeting held at Arthur Robinson & Hedderwicks in Melbourne on Friday 26 November 1993**

**Standing (L to R) - Barbara Coat (SA), Frieda Evans (NT), Lorraine Weinman (ACT), Ann Gardner (WA)**  
**Seated (L to R) - Jenny Wood (Vic), Kate Ramsay (Tas), Prue Jessep (NSW), Ruth Bird (National Convenor), Helen Routh (Qld) took the photograph**

### **GENERAL ISSUES**

- Concern was raised that standing orders are not routinely checked to ensure they are received regularly.

Currently many standing orders are on a Gift and Exchange basis. Some will be purchased in the future to ensure regular receipt. The NLA serials system is being automated and when this is completed, there will be automatic claiming of missing items.

- Discussions on the Distributed National Collection have not really started yet. David Toll is in charge of the DNC Office in the Director-General's Office. He will work with another librarian when the office is established
- Details of APAIS/AGIS indexing overlap may be sent to NLA by any concerned person. However many subscribers to APAIS do not subscribe to AGIS, and thus to cut titles out of APAIS could be detrimental to the service
- Some of the more exotic journals held by the NLA are not on ABN. Overseas serials are still in the old manual catalogue which covers 1902-1967. Only monographs have gone on to ABN. Serials entries will be redone. As items are requested, if they are held by the NLA they go on to ABN, from the card catalogue. Ring the telephone service (06 262 1434/266) if you know of any item which should be on ABN.

#### **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR REVIEW OF NATIONAL LIBRARY LEGAL COLLECTION**

The state groups had comments and observations on the Terms of Reference. I raised all the points with Averill, and she accepted several of the suggestions made.

- 1 Review and Content - Points raised by the National Committee:  
State groups found it hard to comment on the content, as they are not very familiar with the collection. There is a need for additional guides for the collection, such as the listing of overseas statutes recently published to inform users, before we can ask for additions to the collection.

Strong support was expressed for a "last resort" acquisition policy in the legal area. One weakness was the inability to ensure that items are on ABN, and that standing orders (ensuring continuity of serials) are monitored as a regular part of collection maintenance.

Rob Brian will be in a better position to ascertain gaps in the collection. It would interest the ALLG to know what percentage of law holdings have been added to ABN. We would also like to know what online, CD-ROM services are available and also what law related government publications are held.

The ACTI libraries may wish to pursue separately with the NLA the issues related to the collection which are more pertinent to them - e.g. provision of certain online databases such as LEXIS.

#### **NLA response**

In relation to content, all current holdings are on ABN, but 98% of all Australian materials may not be; the Rare Books collection may also have legal material which is not on ABN. Rob Brian will investigate this as part of his evaluation.

- 2 Cataloguing & Classification - National Committee

One problem with Dewey is the split collection between public administration and law. Although generally Moys would be more popular if used on ABN, this was not seen as an urgent/major priority, as the cost and time involved in reclassification could be better used in addressing access and other issues. The use of Dewey and Cutter numbers can mean that a run of legislation, for example, may not be shelved in the usual chronological order, or that consolidations may be out of sequence.

Another problem arises when titles change, e.g. *Queensland Acts* become *Queensland Statutes* etc

Cataloguers can be very specific. With law often it is necessary to look at what the material is used for and how it is used. Could we suggest that cataloguers consult the law specialist when dealing with legal materials?

#### NLA response

NLA is aware of the difficulties of Dewey for law, but it would be impractical to have a reclassification to another scheme. Because of the nature of the split collection, similar materials are being moved closer - e.g. public administration and legal materials are, where practical, housed in the same general stacks area.

The NLA acknowledges that problems arise from material being catalogued by librarians who do not understand how difficulty of retrieval will affect usage. The NLA hopes to encourage cataloguers to spend time on reference to assist in overcoming this problem.

#### 3 Access

Stack arrangement: Physical separation is a problem for those who wish to access the collection locally as well as for specialist librarians who use materials from the 350s and the 340s.

For future storage, material at the NLA will be shelved together, and runs have to stay together. Whatever goes off-site has to be readily accessible. (Would it be possible to have all legal material off-site and staffed by ILL staff and a subject specialist?)

Interlibrary loans: A user can retrieve a book but not borrow it because of these procedures - is it possible to have a review of these, including a reassessment for the law collection of specialised ILL/ photocopy provisions? It was suggested that local law libraries who are users should have six month stack passes rather than the current method of obtaining a new pass every time. Even if it were fee-based it would be both more convenient and preferable to current practices.

Fast track: Law libraries would like to be able to get material in a day if it is on the shelf. The UNSW service could be seen as a model. Superseded material will need to be kept.

#### NLA response

Averill was enthusiastic about having six month stack passes for local law libraries. ILL - a fax signature can't be accepted because of copyright. Document Supply is starting a billing account for big libraries to alleviate voucher delivery problems. ILL system will not be changed. Fastrack has a guaranteed 24 hour turn around.

The NLA has had discussions with the Parliament about being involved with the Parliamentary electronic databases. It was suggested instead that the ALLG might write to Parliament to encourage this type of cooperation.

Please feel free to contact Averill Edwards or Roy Jordan if you have any queries about aspects of the service or holdings at the NLA.

**RUTH BIRD - NATIONAL CONVENOR**