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High Court of Australia Library

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## ***Computerised Retrieval of Legislation***

The advent of full-scale computerised information resources such as AARNet and the Internet immediately poses for us the question of the utility or application of such resources in our work practices. Will they confuse and complicate or enrich and broaden our knowledge base and capacity to satisfy requests with a minimum of delay?

Yet to tackle a reference query is always a question of understanding the nature of the information sought. Secondly, it is an understanding of the most efficient, and perhaps, cheapest way to source that information. It is this second facet which always confronts us when we evaluate the need to grab at an online/electronic resource, and is becoming increasingly more difficult to evaluate given the proliferation of computerised resources offered.

A case (or a Statute!) in point. Statutory material is, I believe, the most unwieldy to search in any electronic form. No database that I am aware of is capable of accurately retrieving a particular statutory provision, far less academic commentary, legislative amendments or rule-making attached to the relevant provision. The ugliness of the SCALE legislative databases well illustrates this point.

It has been announced that Californian legislation is now available free on the Internet. The Internet, in this instance, has become a document delivery tool rather than

a reference resource, and must be recognised as such with all the limitations this entails. Instead it is the user-friendliness of the printed indexes to legislation which appeals; the *Subject Index of Victorian Legislation* being one such excellent work. Yet they suffer for lack of "up-to-dateness". So too, our strategy suffers when we search for regulations, rules and orders, as all our Australian jurisdictions pose their own challenges. We chase gazettals for subsidiary legislation through indexes which provide access by act, portfolio, organisation or subject. But I am always left with the feeling that it is almost a miracle when I find what I am looking for!

My point is that legislative searches are clumsy. It is quite a maze to track down amendments to scheduled fees listed in court rules for example. The amendments to a schedule in the *Supreme Court Rules (NSW)* are not found in the *New South Wales Government Gazette* under "Orders", but under the "Legal Fees and Costs Board of New South Wales" (not mentioned in the Act or Rules, but thank goodness for looseleaf services!) The trail becomes unwieldy. Can we not have a legislation database which pulls together all the mess of the legislative and administrative maze? With clear and obvious search software to complement?

We focus on reaching for databases with more and more on offer, but what of their access and utility? One of the first email messages we received upon joining the INT-LAW discussion list on the Internet was, "Can anyone tell me if there are any sources on international environmental law on the Internet?" It begs the question, *why* could they not be found?

## *New Reference Titles*

COMPILED BY **ROY JORDAN**

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This list of recent reference items is a by-product of the compiler's scanning of the National Library's daily intake of incoming material. Titles of ready reference value in the subject areas of law and government documents have been included. General material has been listed when there is substantial law content. "Back of the book" bibliographies are included where these are major, i.e. more than 200 items or about ten pages.

To help the reader the list has been divided by country. The titles of publications included are usually self-explanatory. Annotations have been made in some cases where the subject or legal content is not clear.

Prices and ISBNs appear only if they were easily ascertained. Full addresses have been provided for minor publishers.

### *International*

*Environmental change and international law: new challenges and dimensions* Tokyo : United Nations University Press, 1992. 493 p. ISBN 9280808184. UN sales no E 92 III. A 5

Pages 479-490 contain a chronological index of selected international environmental legal instruments, with sources of publication in the various treaty series.

*Foreign armed intervention in internal conflict* Antonio Tanca. Dordrecht : Nijhoff, c1993. 234 p. ISBN 0792324269

Pages 197-227 contain a detailed bibliography.

*Guide to official publications of foreign countries* American Library Association, Government Documents Round Table [Bethesda, Md] : CIS, c1990. 359 p.

An annotated bibliography with a useful note at the beginning of each country outlining acquisition procedures for government documents. Each country's major government publications are listed with annotations under the following headings: Guides to official publications; Bibliographies and catalogs; sources of general information on the country; Government directories and organization manuals; Statistical yearbooks; Laws and regulations; Legislative proceedings; Statements of government policy; Economic affairs; Central bank publications; Development plans; Budget; Census; Health; Labor; Education; and Court Reports.

*Zivile Satellitennutzung in internationaler Zusammenarbeit*. Kai-Uwe Schrogl. Koln : C Heymann, 1993. (Studies in air and space law ; no. 11). 280 p. ISBN 3452227308.

Pages 253-280 contain a detailed bibliography.

### *Australia*

*ANGAM I the Australian national guide to archival material Part I [microform]* Canberra : Australian Archives, 1992. 555 microfiche. Updated by *ANGAM II*, 1993-

ANGAM is generated from the Records Information Service (RINSE) database. It contains indexes to, and descriptions of, more than 600,000 Commonwealth government agency records, held by the Australian Archives, the Australian War Memorial, and some still in agency custody. Two examples in the accompanying booklet are for records from the Crown Solicitor's Office (CA 554) from 1903-1984 and from the High Court Principal Registry (CA 624), 1903 to date.

*Asking the law question* Margaret Davies. Sydney : Law Book Co., 1994. 308 p. ISBN 0455212422. \$69

A detailed bibliography on legal theory is listed on pages 277-303.

*Butterworths AXS 1994* Sydney : Butterworths, c1994. 73 p.

Butterworths annual listing of its publications, including a very useful table of legislation reproduced in its looseleaf services.

*Australian and New Zealand citator to UK reports 1993*. Adelaide : Butterworths, 1993. 1412 p.

This is a consolidation of the bound volume (1558-1972) and the Supplement (1973-1991/92) and, according to the publisher, supersedes both of these works. However see the note in (1994) 2 *AustLL* 46 concerning what is really being superseded.

*Native title legislation with commentary by the Attorney-General's Legal Practice*  
Canberra : AGPS, c1994 1v (various paging) ISBN 0644329866. \$24.95.

A handy compilation of the text of the *Native Title Act 1993 (Mabo Act)*, with commentary, the second reading speech from the Parliamentary Debates, together with the text of the National Native Title Tribunal Regulations and the Native Title (Notices) Determination No 1 of 1993, and an index.

### **Germany**

*Following up on the final settlement Germany's post-unification treaties with Poland, the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation : a bibliographic guide* Yitzhak Teutsch and Johanna Brigitta Reischer (1993) 21 *International Journal of Legal Information* 132-153 ISSN 0731-1265.

### **Iceland**

*Sources of legal information in Iceland.* Halvor Kongshavn. (1993) 21 *International Journal of Legal Information* 167-173.

This is based on a paper presented at the IALI seminar "Sources of legal information in Nordic countries", 22nd August 1990, Swedish Parliament, Stockholm.

### **Norway**

*Sources to [sic] legal information in Norway* P. A. Bertnes (1993) 21 *International Journal of Legal Information* 154-166.

### **Russia**

*Sources for post-Soviet law in Russia and the other republics: an annotated bibliography of books and articles in English, 1992.* Igor I Kavass (1993) 21 *International Journal of Legal Information* 207-319.

### **United States**

*Electronic style a guide to citing electronic information* Xia Li and Nancy B Crane Westport, Ct : Meckler, c1993 65 p ISBN 088736909X. \$US24

A substantial part of this work is devoted to methods of citing US government documents and legal materials from full text databases such as LEXIS and Internet sources.

*Glossary of environmental and regulatory terms and phrases* Tulsa, OK : PennWell Publishing, c1993. 213 p. ISBN 0878144099.

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## **Law on the Internet**

### **United States Legislation**

Following the addition of Californian legislation onto Internet (reported in (1994) 2 *AustLL* 51), the legislatures of New Jersey and Nebraska have both introduced bills to make their legislation available on Internet.

The California legislation database is very user friendly, with all commands at the bottom of the screen. The user is taken through titles of Codes and their contents pages onto specific sections, which can then be transferred into your email space for storage. This is essentially a browsing database. For sophisticated searching users will still need to access LEXIS or Westlaw.

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## **Law Review Articles**

When a free database on Internet bills itself as "the world's largest article index and your single source for document delivery", you just have to try it out! The database is UnCover, developed by the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries and marketed and supported by CARL Systems, Inc of Denver, Colorado.

UnCover contains over 4 million articles from 20,000 English language journals in several subject areas. Most journals are indexed from 1989 to the present. Searchable fields include author, title, source and abstract. Controlled subject access is not available, although the lack of subject indexing appears to have the advantage of rapid loading of data. Australian journals, such as the *Australian law journal*, are indexed.

A search on the term "Mabo" on 25 March revealed 59 articles, fewer than would be available on Australian databases but still a respectable number for an international database. Sources retrieved included the *Asia Pacific Law Review*, *Denver Journal of International Law* and *Harvard International Law Journal*, as well as an issue of the *Australian Business Monthly* dated 1 March 1994. An interesting article retrieved was that by law professor Garth Nettheim in the non-law journal *Anthropology Today* dated 1 February 1994.

Once an article is retrieved it can be ordered online and faxed to the user within 24 hours.

The average cost is usually about \$US12 and method of payment is by credit card number. Apparently there are plans to provide delivery by FTP (File Transfer Protocol) and email.

The Internet address of the UnCover database is:

pac.carl.org

Just Telnet to this address and follow the onscreen instructions.

The National Library is planning to locate a public access Internet terminal in its Main Reading Room, probably during the next financial year. Until then, however, law librarians in Canberra may arrange for their staff or patrons to use a terminal in the staff area, in order to access free law databases. To make an appointment to do this, or for more information, contact Roy Jordan, Information Services, National Library of Australia.

INTERNET: [rjordan@nla.gov.au](mailto:rjordan@nla.gov.au)

Tel: (06) 262 1608

Fax: (06) 273 5081

## *Legislation in Looseleaf Services*

2ND EDITION, 1993

By Linda de Nicolai

*Legislation in Looseleaf Services* indexes the legislation reproduced in all of the major Australian looseleaf service publications, including those published by Butterworths, CCH and Law Book Company. Each entry is arranged alphabetically within jurisdiction, and contains the name of the Act / Regulation, the name of the looseleaf service(s) where it is reproduced, and also lists the section / regulation numbers if only reproduced as an extract. This is an essential reference tool for any library.

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