

PUBLISHERS LIAISON COMMITTEE

Fay O'Grady
Coordinator

Looking back over the last three to four issues of the *Australian Law Librarian* I realised that a number of problems put forward by members in this column have not really been debated fully. I would like to know whether members want the PLC to pursue these issues further. I list them below:

1. **The suggestion that INFO-ONE** turn their vague promises about future enhancements into reality. December 1993

2. **The cost of looseleaf services**

The doubt that the page being used is the most recent update. December 1993

The potential for excessive updating. February 1994

Do the Australian law librarians hold the same general opinions that are held by US law librarians - a preference for hard bound copies published more speedily. December 1993

3. **The suggestion for publishers** to provide the following options:

Loose parts and bound volumes

Loose parts only

Bound volume only

4. **The reluctance of legal publishers** to allow subscription agents to handle their publications. April 1994

5. **The precedent created** by Law Book Company in improving the frequency of the *Australian Case Citator* after subscriber complaints, but at the same

time levying an extra cost for that improvement. February 1994.

The *Australian and New Zealand Citator to the UK reports* noted by the publishers as being a consolidation of the bound volume (1558 to 1972) and the supplement (1973-1991/92) and superseding both works when the index for 1558 to 1972 is not included. February 1994.

6. **Overseas subscriptions**

The price difference between subscriptions available through Australian agents and those purchased overseas or through overseas agents. February 1994

7. **The criticism levelled** at Butterworths for their proforma invoice for annual billing of subscriptions. April 1994.

8. **The variation in the quality** of comprehensive indexing/or lack of it in legal journals. April 1994.

9. **Diskrom**

The charge for hot-line support. How popular is this?

Sometimes the letters I receive from members arrive right on the deadline date. This leaves me no time to contact publishers for their response. I hope that problems listed above will serve as a reminder to the publishing companies that we want their reaction.

Two letters this month bring up the important issue of standardisation:

That of a proposal for standard format electronic publishing and secondly a national standard for subject classification.

Letters

Co-operation Between Publishers

■ **Debra Fallon**

Pink Ribbon Publishing Co

Fay Smith

Butterworths

Pink Ribbon Publishing Co and Butterworths wish to express their support for the Publishers Liaison Committee in their aim 'to promote a spirit of co-operation' between legal publishers and law librarians. We also think that co-operation throughout the legal publishing industry should be another aim of the committee.

For our part, as legal publishers, it lies with us to ensure that the law is reported with the highest level of competence and efficiency possible. Whilst legal publishers are highly competitive, we still have a responsibility to our subscribers to co-operate with each other in areas where a common practice makes sense and is beneficial to all parties.

Pink Ribbon Publishing have recently adopted Butterworths' subject classification in their Digests and computerised service, CaseBase. Butterworths subject classification is widely used, particularly in their major publications, *Halsbury's Laws of Australia* and *Australian Current Law*. Their willingness to grant a licence to use their subject classification without fear of copyright problems, promotes the spirit of co-operation needed amongst legal publishers and is to be commended.

Pink Ribbon Publishing and Butterworths hope to encourage other legal publishers to adopt this subject classification throughout Australia as a national standard.

We would welcome suggestions relating to other areas where a national standard would be applicable.

Proposal for Standard Format Electronic Publishing

■ **Jacqueline Elliott**

Court Librarian, High Court of Australia

Auckland law firm, Bell Gully Buddle Weir, has recently sent a proposal for standard format electronic publishing to a number of law firms, librarians and publishers. They have asked for responses to their 5-page proposal which is aimed at eliminating the need to have particular text retrieval software for particular products. They believe publishers 'should offer to the market the data in a form which can be easily converted by the customer to be able to be read by whatever text retrieval system is most convenient to the customer'.

Electronic products using an ever-widening range of text retrieval software are becoming increasingly difficult to access.

The proposal suggests a solution that would require publishers to:

1. Provide data to customers in a common format (eg SGML (Standard Generalised Mark-up Language))
2. Convert it for use with particular text retrieval packages
3. Bundle the data with software.

Bell Gully Buddle Weir is taking the problem to 125 particular addressees in New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, England, Canada, Germany, and the USA in order to stimulate debate and to elicit responses. It is solely their initiative. They will collate and distribute the results of the survey.

Brooker's Adoption of SGML

■ Peter Davis

Marketing Product Manager

Brooker's, New Zealand

Brooker's, a privately owned company, is the first major legal and business publisher and annotator in New Zealand to produce electronic products and to make available SGML products. It has made a tremendous effort to provide its traditional hard copy publications in electronic format for its customers

It is a process that has been going on for many years but has been particularly developed in the last two years with a decision over a year ago to adopt the publishing standard, SGML. This apparently simple process, like all advance computer technology, is actually very complex, and requires absolute discipline and huge expenditure

The most important concept of SGML is the fact that documents stored using this International Standard are device-independent, applications-independent, and format-independent. It has therefore enabled Brooker's to offer publications that can be exported to different electronic text retrieval platforms. One of the reasons for adopting SGML is to allow its customers the freedom to choose the retrieval software best suited to the customers' requirements. The end result is a product that can be made available on any SGML compliant software

To Brooker's knowledge, not one of its customers has SGML compliant software. However, special programmes can be written to convert the SGML data to a format that can be imported by the customer.

Brooker's SGML initiative means that it is committed to providing up-to-date legal information on any platform lawyers choose, a strategy that will ensure that Brooker's continues to lead the New Zealand legal publishing market

Slow Distribution Service

■ Leon W. Ponte Jr.

Ponte & Co, Melbourne

We thought you and your colleagues may be interested in problems we encountered in purchasing a looseleaf service from one of the major Australian legal publishers

By way of background, we are a recently established boutique commercial law firm affiliated only with lawyers who were previously associated with one or more of Australia's top 10 law firms. Although most of our library purchases are now made on an 'as needed basis', there were a number of standard texts and services which were acquired in connection with the establishment of the firm

One of those services was a looseleaf service which we imagine would be held by just about every law firm in Victoria, with a large number of those firms holding multiple copies

It took about 3 weeks for the service to be delivered, during which time we received conflicting stories from the Victorian sales office and head office in Sydney about the delivery time.

We do not believe the service would have even been delivered within that period had we not, in frustration, been forced to contact the head office in Sydney directly.

At the time, we needed the service for a large client matter we were involved in and were seriously inconvenienced by being forced to borrow the service from other libraries. The publisher apparently did not have any office copies available for loan

[The service concerned is Butterworths *Civil Procedure* - Coordinator's note]

Legal Costs Victoria

■ **Judith Cummins**

Holding Redlich, Melbourne

Our firm subscribes to several copies of *Legal Costs Victoria* published by Butterworths, for which we pay an annual subscription. In our firm this service has just been known as *Ahern's* after the editor, who has now departed. I had always assumed that payment of an annual subscription charge covered whatever was necessary to update the service for 12 months, including legislative material, commentary and provision of extra binders.

At the beginning of May we received smart new binders, a separate compendium of superseded materials (which will be useful), and a large update for this service. We also received an invoice for \$95 for each of our subscriptions!

If an editor and publisher of a service part company, I think that the publisher should bear any resulting cost, not the subscribers. I would have been quite happy to receive a patch to put over the name of the editor on the spine of the binder. If the publisher decides to lash out on a new binder and issue superseded material separately, I think this should be included as part of the annual subscription.

I rang Butterworths after receiving the invoice and spoke to the contact person named on it before I reluctantly approved payment. Of course they can justify the charge from their point of view, but I still feel a subscription is a subscription, and this extra charge should not have been made. Now this has happened once, will it happen again? The whole concept of being able to rely on subscription charges in our library budgets will vanish. What do others think?

Victoria : Legal Costs Reissue

■ **Melissa Dunley**

Dunhill Madden Butler, Melbourne

You would have noticed that *Ahern on Legal Costs* has been reissued and all subscribers were charged \$95.00.

I understand that there is very little I can do in this situation and I have paid for the reissue, but as a subscriber, I am disgruntled with this extra fee on top of the annual subscription. I believe that in this case the publisher should bear the cost of reissuing the service, irrespective of the costs involved.

FOR SALE

AUSTRALIAN LAW JOURNAL & REPORTS

V 1-61 (LACKS V 38 & 43) WITH INDEX V 1-50

Excellent condition, bound in red to v 42, remainder in quarter bound maroon. \$2100 o n o.

CONTACT: ALLAN WAIT

Tel/Fax: (03) 383 2900

AUSTRALIAN DIGEST

3RD EDITION - COMPLETE \$3,500 NEG

HALSBURY'S LAWS OF ENGLAND

4TH EDITION - COMPLETE \$7,000 NEG

COMMONWEALTH LAW REPORTS

COMPLETE \$9,000 NEG

CONTACT: CHRISTINE HAWKE

Lionel Murphy Library

Attorney-General's Department

Tel: (06) 250 6566

Fax: (06) 250 5941