

## *The ALLG - Twenty-Five Years Old!*



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### *How We Began*

Jannis Young, then Librarian in the Parliamentary Draftsman's Office in Melbourne, should perhaps be credited with planting the seed of the Australian Law Librarians' Group. Her letter of 29 April 1969 to me is the first letter in the archives of the ALLG. She wrote in response to a brief note I had published in the *Australian Law Journal*, v 42 p 276 on the Fifteenth Biennial Conference of the Library Association of Australia to be held in Adelaide, 25-29 August 1969. Her letter contained a comment that I was hearing from many others: "As I have had no formal training in law the difficulties in this regard are constantly arising, particularly, with regard to the selection of a suitable classification scheme and provision of general reference services. I would be most interested to meet any other librarians in this field to discuss any similar problems and seek possible solutions. The idea of the establishment of the law library section of the Library Association is also of particular interest."

Since becoming the first Librarian of the High Court of Australia in March 1967 I, too, had felt the need to meet other law librarians. In a sense the Australian Law Librarians' Group was born out of ignorance - my ignorance of law and how to run a law library. I had completed my Diploma in Librarianship a mere fifteen months prior to this, and law and the peculiar needs of lawyers had not featured significantly in the course. Shortly after arriving in Darlinghurst, where the High Court was then located, I began to seek out those experienced law librarians like Leone Glynn, Stephen Budavari, Lynn Pollack and Gwenda Fischer - quite frankly to pick their brains! I had no choice but to be a fast learner. What intrigued me was that on almost every visit a comment would be made something like: "Gee, I really enjoyed our discussion; we ought to meet more often like this." My persistent questioning had made my very busy colleagues reflect on what they were doing and why they were doing it, a process that was mutually beneficial.

In my response to Jannis Young on 7 May 1969 I wrote among other things: "I am sure that law librarians have much to learn from each other and that they need to get together. For too long they have been isolated. You will be interested to know that Mr. Budavari of the Sydney University Law School Library and Miss Leone Glynn, Librarian of the Supreme Court of N.S.W. and myself intend to get together very shortly to discuss a few things mainly concerning cooperation between law librarians. I rather hope that this will be the beginning of what we shall for the present call a law librarians' group."

The ALLG - Twenty-Five Years Old! - ROB BRIAN

On 28 October a meeting was held over lunch in a cafe on the ground floor of the Temple Court building in Elizabeth Street, Sydney (now a TAB!) attended by Dr Stephen Budavari, Law Librarian, University of Sydney Law School, Gwenda Fischer, Deputy Librarian, Law Society of New South Wales, Leone Glynn, Librarian, Supreme Court of New South Wales, Lynn Pollack, Librarian, Department of the Attorney General and Justice, and Rob Brian, Librarian, High Court of Australia (then located in Sydney and Melbourne). We decided to call a general meeting of librarians and others in any way connected with law libraries. At this meeting we hoped to discuss the formation of a group of law librarians to promote cooperation and joint projects of interest in the field of law.

*The First Meeting*

The first meeting was actually held in the University of Sydney Law School Library on Tuesday, 2 December 1969, from 12 00 noon till 2.00 p.m. People were invited to bring their lunch and eat it during the meeting. The meeting was widely advertised and personal invitations were sent to 40 known law librarians. The invitation, dated 5 November 1969, began: "Many law librarians around Australia have lamented the fact that so many activities of the Library Association of Australia do not really have any bearing on their library situation. Law librarians tend to feel isolated, perhaps passed by. Their problems are great and sometimes unique. It has been admitted that the solution lies in our own hands. We should get together, talk things over, cooperate, share the results of our work, and so on. We have been talking about it for years, but we did nothing." Then followed a report of the meeting of 28 October which intended to change the situation. And change it, it certainly did.

The enthusiasm that was aroused by the announcement of this first meeting was quite tremendous. John Brudenall, then Chief Reference Librarian in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, wrote on 14 November 1969: "I would like to congratulate you and the other members of the provisional committee who are doing something positive to get an "Association of Law Librarians" off the ground ... I send my best wishes for a successful meeting with plenty of ideas and enthusiasm coming from those who attend ... I ... hope that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library will be able to contribute and participate in the future".

Eight letters of support were received. Mr M.L.W. Bevan, Librarian, Supreme Court Library, Adelaide, expressed his regret at not being able to attend, continuing: "I too have now and then noted that condition of law librarians which you so happily euphemise as "isolated, perhaps passed by". Sometimes I have described the condition as "snubbed, held for pariahs". Yet I have been little disturbed by these sardonic reflections. Perhaps it is because my weight of years and general background make me feel that law librarians have some little warrant for holding that they "are not as other men" (It was also a time when we were not yet sensitive to the need to use inclusive language!).

Twenty-four people attended the first meeting. We ought to remember them (in the order and fashion in which they signed the attendance sheet):

Robert Langker	University of NSW
F.R. Beasley	Consultant to National Library of Australia
P. Biskup	A.N.U.
W.D. Thorn	National Library of Australia
R. Finlay	University of Adelaide
A.S. Budavari	University of Sydney. Law Library
G. Lewinscis(?)	Supreme Court Library, Sydney
Lynn Pollack	Attorney General's Library, Sydney
Leone Glynn	N.S.W. Supreme Court Library
Robert Watt	Law Reform Commission Library
Thurles Thomas	James Bennett Pty. Ltd
Ian McKay	High Court Library
Karen Davis	Commonwealth Attorney-General's Dept Deputy Crown Solicitor's Office
Marian Goodrum	Waverley Municipal Library
Michelle J. Rai	Reference Librarian, Waverley Municipal Library
Gwen Outteridge	Readers' Services Librarian. Law Library, Uni. of Sydney
Gwenda Fischer	Law Society of NSW
Sheila Wickenden	Freehill, Hollingdale & Page, Sydney
G.S. Old	Law Society of N.S.W. Library
R.L. Cope	NSW Parliamentary Library
Elizabeth Meakes	Australian Police College
C.E. Slinning	NSW Dept. of Labour and Industry
R.F. Brian	High Court
J. McKenzie	Law School

The tone of the meeting was deliberately kept low key. This was to be the *law librarians'* group - not Rob Brian's or anyone else's group. Peter Biskup was to write on 5 December 1969: "I'd like to express my appreciation of the 'goal-oriented' manner in which you conducted the Tuesday meeting. Frankly I did not expect much but how wrong I was!" Having "been promised all the secretarial assistance I shall need" Peter was now able to offer his services as "guest editor" of a special issue of the *Australian Library Journal* dealing with the various types of law libraries. This was one of the many suggestions that emerged from the first meeting and thanks to Peter's magnificent efforts and Jean Whyte's (Editor of the *Australian Library Journal* at the time) ready acquiescence, the whole of volume 19 no.6 (July 1970) of the *Australian Library Journal* was devoted to law libraries.

The first meeting decided many things. We agreed not to elect a formal executive, but to rely on the provisional committee and on a convenor. Almost inevitably, I suppose, I was asked "to continue as Convenor" - a position I was to hold for the

following seven years until I refused to be reappointed<sup>1</sup> The whole purpose of the group was to involve all the members and to maintain its existence through the sheer momentum of mutually beneficial activities, rather than by means of a small clique playing musical chairs every year for the top positions. We did not want power seekers - we wanted people willing to serve.

We undertook some definite projects. The principal one agreed to at the first meeting was the compilation of a list of subject headings - a project that was not to be realised until the publication of *Australian Legal Subject Headings* (Sydney: ALLG, 1987)<sup>2</sup> Robert Langker, then Technical Services Librarian at the University of New South Wales, was the first convenor of the Subject Headings Committee, which included Gwenda Fischer and Jean McKenzie. Russell Cope, Richard Baker and Peter Dobrovits also attended the first two meetings of this Committee on 22 December 1969 and 27 January 1970. People were not wasting any time getting on with their projects.

Another project was the compilation of a directory of law collections in Australia and its territories. Leone Glynn was the convenor of this Committee. She undertook to find a representative from every State and Territory to serve on this Directory Committee. Other topics suggested for attention by the Group were: noting-up; cooperative acquisitions; nominate reports union list; and classification problems in the draft of Dewey, 18th edition.

### *The Second Meeting*

At the second meeting of the Group on Tuesday, 3 February 1970, attended by sixteen people, topics discussed included: *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, nos. 20-26; classification; and the 16th Biennial Conference of the Library Association of Australia. At this meeting "it was decided that the Group should not seek formal affiliation with any other body". It was reported that George Alcorn, Librarian of the Supreme Court of Victoria, had called a meeting of Victorian law librarians to be held on 10 February 1970. I was asked to invite the Victorian Group to take up a noting-up project. The Subject Headings Committee was renamed the Cataloguing and Classification Committee "to be responsible for keeping in touch with developments in law classification"

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- 1 On 8 September 1972 I wrote to Muriel Anderson, then Committee Liaison Officer of the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians: "Our Group does not have a Secretary as such. I keep on being elected year after year as convenor with the result that we have a sort of benevolent dictatorship to conduct the affairs of the Group. I hope that one day we shall be in a position to establish a more formal structure"
  - 2 The ALLG archives provide enough material for an article on the history of *Australian Legal Subject Headings* - an eighteen year project!

### *The Third Meeting*

The third meeting on 7 April 1970, attended by 12 people, raised the matter of a publication for the Group: "the convenor was appointed editor of such a journal"<sup>3</sup> The Cataloguing and Classification Committee, in the meantime, had met on 27 February 1970, and had asked Enid Roberts "to convene a small group to study rules 20 to 26 of the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Code*, 1967 ed. and draft recommendations". Specific rules were allotted to individual members of the Sub-Committee: Dorothy Ramsay (Rule 20), Peter Dobrovits (Rules 21-22), Lynn Pollack (Rules 23-24), Enid Roberts (Rule 25) and Rob Brian (Rule 26).

A Seminar on Cataloguing Problems in Special Libraries was held at Basser College in the University of New South Wales on 15-17 May 1970, and the Group had been asked to provide a panel of speakers. Enid Roberts spoke on Rules 20-26 of the *A-A Code*; Gwenda Fischer described the subject headings project; and Rob Brian explained the Moys *Classification Scheme for Law Books*.

### *The Fourth Meeting*

While there was a lot of activity, there were also some tensions. The fourth meeting on 2 June 1970 had been rather tense. Perhaps I was being too impatient. On 4 June 1970 I wrote to Peter Biskup: "I am afraid that we are not achieving much at the moment. There is a lot of talk, but nothing is decided. I am not quite sure what the solution is. I feel that the lack of a structure for the group and a lack of communication channels are at the root of the problem".

The focus of the dissension was the "suggested legal bibliography course for the University of New South Wales". The minutes of the meeting record: "After some discussion and disagreement as to the content of such a course, it was decided that a formal approach should not be made requesting consideration by the Dean of the Law School and the Head of the Library School of such a course, but any opportunity offered to members of the Group for informal discussion of such a course should be taken". Peter Biskup wrote on 9 June 1970: "I hope I did not upset Gwenda too much by being over-critical of her proposal re legal bibliography, but it seems to me that the whole proposal has to be thought out more carefully before we make a formal approach".

My role had to be that of conciliator. On 17 June 1970 I wrote to Peter Biskup: "About the legal bibliography question I am trying to understand both Gwenda's and your point of view. As I see it, Gwenda feels we should simply make a suggestion to Professors Wootten and Radford that a legal bibliography course might now be developed at UNSW, leaving them to work out the details should

<sup>3</sup> An early suggested title was: *LLB: Law Libraries Bulletin*. In December 1973 Robert Watt, then at the NSW Law Reform Commission, published issue no. 1 of *Australian Law Librarians' Group Newsletter*. It is very pleasing that this modest publication has now grown up into our current *Australian Law Librarian*.

they accept the suggestion. You, it seems, would prefer to present the profs with a more detailed proposal. I know that some of the others feel that we should only make a suggestion offering to assist in working out details should either professor feel favourably disposed. I am not taking sides, but I think the whole thing should be talked out". The 16th Biennial Conference of the LAA proved a good place for further discussion.

### *16th Biennial Conference of the LAA*

The ALLG managed to persuade the organising committee to set aside a day for law librarians and we had suggested a number of speakers and topics. The *Proceedings of the 16th Biennial Conference held in Sydney, August 1971* of the Library Association of Australia, with the theme: *Progress and Poverty*, give ample evidence that it did not take long for the ALLG to make its presence felt. Gwenda Fischer, Librarian, Law Society of NSW, reported on "the first meeting of law librarians as an interest group at a Conference of the Library Association of Australia". Various people reported on the activities of the Group. After some lively discussion "the sense of the meeting was recorded that the Group should continue as at present within the Association, to some extent under the wing of the Special Libraries Section, whose interest and support have been invaluable. It was felt that unless the work of the Group came to be hampered in some at present unforeseen way by its present arrangement, there was no reason for change. It was also felt that airing the question at this early stage should help to prevent the smog which sometimes chokes interest groups".

Rob Brian, now Law Librarian at the University of New South Wales, gave a paper on the "Moys" Classification and D.C. 18, arguing that Moys was superior to Dewey (Moys is now the most widely used classification for law collections in Australasia!) Dick Finlay, Law Librarian, University of Adelaide, gave a paper on "Education for Law Librarianship (Notes Towards a Discussion)" and Rhoda O'Shea, then Law Librarian, University of Tasmania, spoke about "The Content of a Course in Law Librarianship". These were perceptive and far-sighted contributions to the subject of law librarianship. Nevertheless, it was to take another decade before the University of NSW School of Librarianship invited me to teach a subject: "The Literature of Law". In an expanded form this is still one of the most popular elective subjects in the course. It has always been taught by practising law librarians.

Peter Biskup, then Law Librarian at the Australian National University, spoke about "Rationalization of Acquisition of Law Materials in Australia", a topic that would continue to be hotly debated.<sup>4</sup> While the debate appears to have ceased there has never been a satisfactory conclusion to it.

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4 At the 29th Annual Conference of the Australasian Universities Law Schools Association (AULSA), held at Monash University in August 1974, Ted Glasson, Law Librarian, Monash University, gave a paper, entitled: "Preliminary Thoughts on the Rationalization of Law Library Collections", (published in *Australian Law Librarians' Group Newsletter*, no. 17, October, 1976, pp 3-9, and in AULSA Conference Papers, 1974). At the 31st AULSA Conference held in Christchurch, New Zealand, in August 1976, I delivered a paper, entitled: "Rationalisation in Law Libraries - a Real Possibility or Pipe-Dream?" (published in *Australian Law Librarians' Group Newsletter*, no. 18, December 1976 pp 1-4 and in AULSA Conference Papers, 1976).

Enid Roberts, then Cataloguing Librarian in the University of Sydney Library, gave a most informative paper on "The Work of the Study Group on Descriptive Cataloguing and Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules 20-26". An appendix to this paper contained the ALLG's Study Group on Descriptive Cataloguing's *Recommendations on Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules 20-26*, followed by two unpublished papers: "The Cataloguing of Legal Materials" by Dorothy Ramsay, then cataloguer in Macquarie University Library, and "Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules Rule 26: Court Decisions, Cases, etc." by Rob Brian.

### ***The ALLG - a Recognised Identity***

Simply by its many activities, the Group had quickly attained an identity that has never waned. As early as May 1970 we were asked to review books of interest to law librarians. Having failed to "con" anyone else into doing so, I reviewed for *Australian Special Libraries News*, *Legal Research: Materials and Methods*, by Enid Campbell and Donald MacDougall (Sydney: Law Book Co, 1967) and *A History of the New South Wales Bar*, edited by J.M. Bennett (Sydney: Law Book Co, 1969), as well as *The Law Librarian: Bulletin of the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians*, vol 1, no.1, April 1970.

With the assistance of Leone Glynn I tried to start a Question and Answer column for legal queries in *Australian Special Libraries News*. The first column was published in the July 1970 issue.

We were invited to nominate a representative to the Special Libraries Section Committee, and at the fourth meeting on 2 June 1970 Peter Biskup was unanimously elected. On 5 June 1970 the Group also received \$20 from the Special Libraries Section to cover our petty cash expenses.

### ***A National Group***

From the beginning it had always been the intention to make the ALLG a truly national group - not just a Sydney group. On 10 June 1970 I sent copies of the minutes of the third meeting to representatives in every State and Territory, as well as to Judith Waterer in the University of Papua and New Guinea Library and to Wallace Breem, the Hon Secretary of the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians. At the end of 1970 we could count 80 members of the ALLG.

On 8 March 1971 I wrote to the Convenor of the Programme Committee of the 16th Biennial Conference of the LAA: "This will be the first time that we shall have a gathering of law librarians from all over Australia and we want to take this opportunity to make the Law Librarians' Group truly national".

## Conclusion

This article was intended to provide an insight into the origins of the Australian Law Librarians' Group on the occasion of its 25th anniversary. I have drawn on the archives still in my possession, which cover the period 1969-1976. I hope that subsequent archival material relating to the Group has also been preserved. Only such archival material will allow for the definitive history of the Group to be written at some stage

I hope I have given some glimpse of the enthusiasm and spirit of collaboration that inspired the first members of the Group. The ALLG has had significant successes over the years. It is my fervent wish that this momentum will continue. It can if every member gives some of his or her time to our common cause. There is no one who does not have something of significance to contribute. We are now a large Group of some 518 members. We are 25 years old and the best is yet to come.

*Carpe diem!*