

PUBLISHERS LIAISON COMMITTEE

Fay O'Grady

Coordinator

It was suggested at the Court Librarians' Conference in Perth last August that the ALLG should let the profession know about matters raised by the Publishers Liaison Committee. Accordingly, I have sent the following letter and article to the Editor of *Australian Lawyer*:

22 May 1995

Mr Barry Virtue
The Managing Editor
Australian Lawyer
GPO Box 1989
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Sir

I am writing to you in my capacity as National Coordinator of the Publishers Liaison Committee of the Australian Law Librarians' Group. It has been suggested that the issues we have taken up with legal publishers would be of interest to lawyers and perhaps more importantly to explain the response we have had and hope that it might spur the lawyers on to complain if they see problems in the legal publications they use.

Please publish the information I'm sending as you see fit, either in a letter to the Editor or as a small article. Please feel free to do so.

Yours sincerely

Fay O'Grady
National Coordinator
Publishers Liaison Committee
Australian Law Librarians' Group

The Publishers Liaison Committee came into being in August 1993 at the Australian Law Librarians' Group's annual general meeting.

The objectives of the PLC are threefold:

1. Encouraging constructive communication - dialogue between legal publishers, both print and electronic media, and the law librarians.
2. Monitoring price structure.
3. Investigating complaints and assisting in a satisfactory resolution of problems.

Our primary purpose is to assist members in the problems they face in the day to day operations of their libraries. The publishers understand this and have expressed a willingness and enthusiasm to operate through the PLC to help us achieve these aims. Each publisher has nominated a national representative with whom we can liaise. The publishers understand that this is not a venue for them to advertise their products.

If a member is unable to resolve a problem or a complaint at a local level it is passed on to the Publishers Liaison Committee to deal with it at a national level. Both the original problem and the publisher's response are published in the next issue of the *Australian Law Librarian*. If members feel that the issue has not been dealt with satisfactorily further discussion takes place. Publishers welcome the opportunity to make appropriate responses and we endeavour to acknowledge when those publishers make changes in line with suggestion from the Publishers Liaison Committee.

Some of the issues we have dealt with in the last 12 months have been:

1. Overseas Purchases

The price difference between subscriptions available through Australian agents and those purchased overseas or through overseas agents. In our February 1994 edition, 17 English and UK subscriptions were listed with the prices paid in Australia and those paid to overseas agents. If

all subscriptions had been taken out overseas a saving of \$5,100 would have been made. This may not be the case today given the exchange rate. It would pay to monitor this closely.

2. Hotline Charges

Many complaints were received regarding the charges for the use of hot line assistance for Diskrom's (now Computer Law Services) CD Roms. To Computer Law Services' credit this charge has now been dropped.

3. Loose Parts/Bound Volumes

The suggestions for publishers to provide the following options - loose parts and bound volumes, or loose parts only or bound volumes only. We are beginning to see instances of these options being offered by publishers for several legal publications.

4. Price Increase - IPR

One of our members noticed that the *Intellectual Property Reports* published in loose parts and bound volumes had increased in price but decreased in the number of issues per volume since 1990 when there were five issues per volume. In 1992 there were three issues per volume 22 and the price had gone from \$205 to \$265 for volume 22.

Butterworths' response to this has been that they measure the content by the number of pages per volume. Since 1989 each volume has contained a minimum number of 672 pages whether it be five parts or three parts. Because reporting is so much faster these days the publishers prefer to print rather than wait for five parts to be printed. Secondly, the cost of producing a mailing list part has risen dramatically so the conclusion the publishers have pointed out is that subscribers to *Intellectual Property Reports* are receiving exactly the same in terms of number of pages at a price that is only marginally higher than it was in 1989.

5. Electronic Search Instructions

We have received a number of complaints regarding the inadequacies of search instruction manuals for online and CD products and services. We are still working on this one.

6. Subject Classification

It was heartening to see two legal publishers, Pink Ribbon Publishing and Butterworths, cooperate by using the same subject classification in their digests and computerised service case base. Butterworths' willingness to grant a licence to Pink Ribbon Publishing without fear of copyright promotes a spirit of cooperation needed among legal publishers and is to be commended.

We the librarians have made a start in promoting a spirit of good will and cooperation between legal publishers and ourselves and we are well supported by the publishers. We still have a long way to go to reach a more effective standing as is enjoyed by the American law librarians. We are plagued by the tyranny of distance and need all the support we can get from the legal profession, the publishers and the librarians if we are to succeed. We would welcome your support.

Fay O'Grady

Coordinator

Publishers Liaison Committee

Letters

BIALL Project

■ **Lesley Young (Ms)**

Institute of Advanced Legal Studies
University of London

I am writing to you in your capacity as Coordinator of ALLG's Publisher Liaison Committee having obtained your name from the *Australian Law Librarian*

The British and Irish Association of Law Librarians have set up a working party to look at the problems of looseleaf and to try and produce some recommendations. I know from reading the journal that problems with looseleaf often come up and would be interested to know if your Group has done any detailed work on the subject. I know it is one dear to our hearts!

I look forward to hearing from you

Dear Lesley

I was delighted to receive your letter and am most impressed with the formation of a BIALL working party on problems with looseleaf service.

The Australian Law Librarians' Group has not done any detailed work, surveys or discussions on looseleaf even though it is continually written about in our column.

With your permission I intend to put your letter in the next *Australian Law Librarian* issue looking for expressions of interest for similar work here in Australia and will suggest that the national convenor, Ruth Bird, be the contact person in the first instance.

The Australian Law Librarians' Group has difficulty overcoming the 'Tyranny of Distance' whereby each state branch operates separately although they make up the ALLG. The state

convenors meet 2 or 3 times per year. All state branches come together at the AGM held at the national conference every 2 years. The *Australian Law Librarian Journal* is the only way we can communicate with each other in between times. Your suggestion of a working group may well appeal to our members, although it may throw the publishers in a loop. I will let you know the outcome.

Yours sincerely

Fay O'Grady

Coordinator
Publishers Liaison Committee

From Western Australia

■ **Helen Wallace**

ALLG (WA Branch)

Since the beginning of 1995, especially after the Online Conference in Sydney, the hot topic at meetings of law librarians in Western Australia has been the cost of electronic publications, and in particular the varied subscription rates from library to library. Through the Internet and other contacts we know that the feelings of dissatisfaction are Australia-wide. To try to get to the heart of the matter, the ALLG (WA Branch) decided to survey members to gather some hard facts to determine if there really is much disparity in subscription prices and to identify any other factors which might be involved.

The questionnaire was sent to everyone on the mailing list for our newsletter, but out of 64 addresses we calculate that only about 26 libraries are represented. Therefore the response of 17 replies to our questionnaire is a considerable sample that includes academic, private and government libraries. Among the private libraries are a range of law firms from a small one with a library covering 6 clients to a large firm with a library serving 150 primary clients, a law firm serving a country town, and law firms based in the city.

We have not finished analysing the results in time for this issue of *Australian Law Librarian*, but when we do we intend to send our findings to the publishers and to summarise them for this column. First impressions are that there is some variation in prices, but a measure of the relative cost benefits of the electronic publications may only be obtained through comparison with the hard copy publications, which we have yet to do. Responses only clearly indicated that as well as the cost of subscriptions, potential customers are deterred because the products are not sufficiently developed, and for some libraries the lack of appropriate hardware and software is a major problem which is compounded by the need for a variety of software.

Cost of Electronic Subscriptions

■ **Joanne Pentony**

Convenor, ALLG ACTI Division

As representatives of Law Librarians in the ACT we would like to express our concern at the cost of electronic legal information. A copy of this letter is being sent to all suppliers used by law librarians in the ACT and to the Publishers Liaison Committee of the ALLG. As the cost of pressing disks is now quite negligible the two issues that need to be addressed are the cost of the information supplied and the pricing schedules for network licences.

COST OF INFORMATION

Legal information in electronic form presently available in Australia falls into two broad categories:

- 1 Primary materials - legislation and judgements
- 2 Reproduction of hard copy services

The creative input for disks containing primary materials is minimal. The cost we are told lies in royalty payments to the courts and government although New South Wales no longer enforces copyright. It is difficult to understand how small companies such as EUROFIELD and Aunty Abha are able to produce reasonably priced legislation disks for single users while

the products of the larger companies are inaccessible to small agencies and firms because of the high price charged.

Royalties are also paid on the hard copy sets of authorised reports, yet the yearly subscriptions costs are substantially lower than the electronic versions. Courts still require a copy of the authorised report. Case law disks of reported judgements are used to search and locate cases and citations but it is the hard copy which is read and taken into court. It is difficult to justify the high cost of the electronic products.

A large number of products are electronic versions of hard copy services. These services are now produced in machine readable form so that the cost of producing an electronic version is not high. The pricing of multi-volume works such as digests and encyclopaedias is difficult to understand. Where an office holds a hard copy version of a multi-volume work, an electronic copy will usually be purchased as an adjunct for searching, the hard copy being used once the relevant sections have been located. Most offices would not consider buying a second hard copy of a multi-volume work. The purchase of an electronic version is to assist users in locating material and the pricing should reflect this. The cost to subscribers for an electronic version when they already subscribe to the hard copy should be free or a small add-on fee.

NETWORK LICENCES

The second issue of concern is the method of charging for network licences. An article in the US journal *Computers in Libraries* of February 1994 comments at page 50 that US publishers have at last come to their senses with respect to network licencing. "The smart ones figured out that they would not be losing anything by providing free or reasonably priced network licences for their products. They realised that they could, on the contrary gain new customers, good-will from the old ones and a moderate amount of revenue."

Lawyers Cooperative Publishing, which produces *US Supreme Court Reports* and the *US Annotated Code* on CD-ROM, charges a small add-on fee for network licences. Figures obtained from DA Electronic Media show the cost of their products for unlimited access on a network is less than double the single user price. Figures from the UK supplier Context show the maximum network licence is twice the single user licence. Canada Law Book charges a \$15.00 per access node for their Statute and Citorator Service on CD-ROM.

The only Australian publisher to offer an acceptable pricing policy is Pink Ribbon Publishing which produces CASEBASE. An unlimited network licence is twice the cost of a single user. The price schedules for other Australian publishers are untenable. For example some publishers use a straight multiple of the stand alone cost, while others, although having some sliding scale, charge at least four times the stand alone for multiple users. Of some concern is the proposal by one publisher to install software on the PCs of prospective users thus limiting usage to those users with the software.

As stated above very few libraries would buy more than one copy of these works. Because of the nature of the work many lawyers can access the hard copy at one time. Why should libraries pay up to four times the cost so this can take place with the electronic version? For the other full text works the point made above should be reiterated. A great majority of users use the electronic version to search but work with the hard copy.

All libraries face shrinking budgets. Librarians attempt to provide their users with the most efficient means of accessing legal information. Electronic access is desirable but is proving beyond the means of many libraries. We call on the publishers to adopt a more realistic approach to pricing. In this way you will, to quote from *Computers in Libraries*, "gain new customers and good-will from old ones." If you do not you will face a drastic reduction in sales as we try to manage on our reduced budgets. We also ask

that when more realistic pricing policies have been worked out they should be entrenched in a formula to avoid fresh negotiations and deals each time a new product is released.

News from Butterworths

■ Mari Kauppinen

Marketing Communications Manager
Butterworths

As some of you might already know, we have recently made a decision to display and supply only Butterworths titles from our premises in 153 Phillip Street, Sydney. All Butterworths book orders will be processed as previously through the NSW Sales Centre, your local Sales Centre or through our Head Office in North Ryde.

In the near future, our expanded NSW Sales Centre will feature an extensive electronic display area designed to showcase all of our electronic publications including *Halsbury's Laws of Australia on CD-Rom* and LEXIS, the world's largest provider of online information in the legal, news and business areas. Please visit us there when you get a chance and see our range of electronic publications in action!

After 19 years' service, Mr David Jackson has retired as Managing Director of Butterworths Australia. He was replaced by Mr Stephen Stout who commenced his new role on 10 April 1995. Mr Stout joined Butterworths in 1982 and was previously Managing Director of Butterworths Asia in Singapore.

Last year, Mr Jim Broadfoot, Editorial/Marketing Director of Butterworths, spent some time in Butterworths Canada, Toronto. While there he had the opportunity to meet the Canadian law librarians on a regular basis. These meetings proved very useful, and we would therefore like to suggest that all legal publishers and law librarians meet on a quarterly basis to discuss

interesting issues in legal publishing Butterworths is happy to host the first meeting and I welcome your feed-back on this proposal

Bulletin Picked Up on the Internet

Supplied by Y Butler, The Information Source

On 1 February Martinus Nijhoff Publishers joined forces with Graham & Trotman and Kluwer Law and Taxation Publishers within a new framework: Kluwer Law International (KLI). The same Acquisition Editors will remain responsible for the various publishing programmes

KLI's headquarters are located in The Hague, facing the Peace Palace, and the company will continue to have offices in London (UK) and Cambridge.

As law librarians you are probably most interested in our marketing and sales forces, and I am pleased to inform you that you may continue to order through your local bookshop or distributor, or directly from our own customer services:

In the USA and Canada:

Kluwer Law International
675 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge, MA 02139,
USA Fax: 617-354-8595
e-mail orders to: kluwer@world.std.com

In all other countries:
Kluwer Law International
PO Box 85889
2500 CN The Hague, The Netherlands

Networks - News from International Law Librarians' Associations

CANADA

"The Vendors Liaison Committee Report" published in 1994 *Canadian Law Libraries - Bibliotheque de Droit Canadiennes*, v 19, no. 3, p 12

This Committee has summarised their 1994 activities which included: the general role of monitoring content and pricing as per terms of reference liaising with the Canadian Abridgment Advisory Board to Carswell

The Vendors Liaison Committee noted BIALL's initiative in the looseleaf standards project (see letter from BIALL above) and made preliminary investigations with the publisher Carswell regarding publisher's interest in a similar Canadian project. While generally sympathetic to the librarians' concern for uniform standards Carswell felt that interest was not high given the small captive market and the many competing interests

It seems Canada faces similar problems to our own Publishers Liaison Committee here in Australia whereby individual librarians attempt to solve their own problems, report to the National Committee who bring general problems to the attention of all members when it is warranted

Like Australia, Canada has communication and coordination problems across a large country. The Canadians will address the problems at their annual general meeting and reconsider their modus operandi, probably concentrating on the way the Committee could act as a national clearing house for vendors liaison concerns

Perhaps this is a timely reminder to our members that at our AGM in August they bring with them their opinions on how we could improve our effectiveness and the ways we operate

CANADA TRACKING THE COST OF LEGAL PUBLICATIONS PROJECT REPORT 1994¹

Final statistics showed a minor decrease in cost for the year but the three year average showed an average cost increase of 9.06%. Canadian Consumer Price Index was 2% of 1994. Overall no pattern emerged between price increase/decrease and the quantity of releases or volumes. The figures for 1994 report are based on the same list of titles for 1992 and 1993

The report states a major investment house predicts newsprint will increase in cost by US\$290 per tonne!

1 (1995) 20 *Canadian Law Libraries/Bibliothèque de Droit Canadiennes* 40.

UNITED STATES

Summary of The CRIV Sheet: the Newsletter of the Committee on Relations with Information Vendors

American Association of Law Libraries vol 17, no 2, Feb. 1995.

"Ms Acquisitions: more, more on the Web" A B Lieserson, p 9.

"Ms Acquisitions" is basically a compilation of a number of Uniform Resource Locaters (URLs) organised into seven categories of interest to acquisitions librarians. It gives access to major bibliographic utilities, such as RLIN, and provides links to publishers and professional associations. It is a single source for all the relevant acquisition tools in cyberspace.

The present CRIV policy is to monitor the Net but not to become involved officially in an individual's problems unless asked to intervene, or if vendor practices affect the library committee at large, i.e. large price increases, unnecessary supplementation, etc.

This issue publishes a list of email addresses as a result of a survey of legal and commercial publishers. The American Association of Law Libraries Committee on Relations with Information Vendors has published at the back of their issue a standard form for filing a complaint against a publisher or dealer. This form includes provision for naming the violation of the specific guide number within the *Guides for the Law Book Industry* as promulgated by the Federal Trade Commission.

The PLC has a long way to go!

Industry Announcement

Butterworths' parent company, Reid Elsevier PLC, has recently purchased the database Mead Data Central, which includes the LEXIS database that we know. The purchase also includes Michie company which has been a law publisher since 1855 and is a pioneer in CD-ROM legal publishing and the Folio Corporation which is the developer of Folio Views software. We look forward to the development of integration of both online and CD publications.

The Australian, 9 May 1995

"The future of CD-ROM" K. Kelly, Forrester Research Massachusetts, US

This report warns that there is a widening creativity gap between the potential of CD-ROM technology and the ability of content designers to create high value products. Consumers are seeing weak products and high prices. Could this be applied to the legal CD-ROM resources?

LEGAL THESAURUS

Used by law librarians throughout Australia & NZ

5TH EDITION - 1995

Price: \$190.00 (print or disk)
[Network prices on application]
Available from:

Enterprise Information Management Pty Ltd
6/217 Eastern Valley Way
WILLOUGHBY NSW 2068
Ph: (02) 958 7099 Fax: (02) 958 0699