

Postgraduate Study for Law Librarians - An Alternative

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Many law librarians, when contemplating postgraduate study, think in terms of studying for a law degree or a Master of Librarianship/Information Science. Some even do a Master of Business Administration or something else. When contemplating this decision back in 1995, I decided on a different option and that was a Master of Legal Studies through the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). The intricacies of Equity, Real Property, Succession etc weren't for me and I didn't want to practise law.

Some readers might think that Sydney isn't their home town, yet whilst doing a number of subjects, I encountered students doing their Master of Laws (LLM) from Townsville, Hong Kong etc. So theoretically, if you are from out of Sydney, you could do your course over a few summers. Can you imagine a more ideal place to study over summer than Sydney? (Yes, I am biased.) For Sydneysiders, you can do courses during the four semesters which correspond with the four seasons. Winter is usually optional, so you can hibernate if you wish. The classes are usually held at the Haymarket's Campus adjacent to Chinatown, though some classes are held in the city offices of the lecturer.

After starting my Masters in 1996, I discovered similar degrees for non-lawyers offered at other universities. The University of Queensland is offering a similar degree for non-lawyers, called a Master of Applied Law, to be offered from February 1998. A Graduate Diploma of Law, which is for graduates who require a working knowledge of law, is available through the Southern Cross University, Lismore Email: tbryant@scu.edu.au. Other options at UTS include the Graduate Diploma in Legal Studies, which has a lesser workload than the Masters.

In the classes you attend, you will often have students from various backgrounds. There will be LLM, other Masters students, graduate diploma students plus students aiming to be patent attorneys or non-lawyers who might be company secretaries. In one of my subjects, Legal Process, I had the company of two science PhDs, plus a science honours graduate in my group presentation.

Apart from the written assignments and exams, in two of my subjects, Legal Process and Computer Law, part of the assessment process consisted of a group presentation. Here a group of students give a joint presentation on a particular topic usually chosen by the lecturer or initiated by the students. This involved library research together with joint preparation. I found this particularly stimulating as much of my research has been individualistic. The outcome can be positive, with different viewpoints shared.

There are a number of compulsory subjects such as Legal Process and Advanced Legal Research. The latter subject would be useful for many law librarians who have not been formally taught legal research. Some law librarians in previous years have registered and attended just that subject. Although the lectures often mirror Robert Watt's *Concise legal research* (3rd ed, 1997), doing the course plus assignments assists in honing your skills in areas often not examined e.g. the United States and international legal research.

The subjects you may choose to specialise in will be in the following areas:

Commercial law

Dispute Resolution

Industrial & Intellectual Property Law

Industrial Law

International Law

You can study traditional law subjects such as corporate regulation, environmental law, industrial law, international trade etc. Also available are Asian law subjects covering Indonesia or China, or non traditional law subjects such as dispute resolution or negotiation.

Each subject is usually worth 6 or 12 credit points and to complete your Master of Legal Studies, you require 60 credit points. As Advanced Legal Research is compulsory, you usually finish with 62 credit points. If that seems to be too much work, you can do less and graduate with a Graduate Diploma in Legal Studies (UTS). I chose to do the Masters because, being a glutton for punishment, I wanted to do a research project worth 12 credit points. My research project, *Australian legal citation a guide*, is expected to be published by Prospect towards the end of 1997.

Over the years, a number of ALLG branches have organised law for non-lawyers lectures for their members. The Inaugural Law Librarians' Symposium, Melbourne, 1996 included a number of legal topics, as have a number of law library conferences over the years. These are fine and have their place but if you want to come to grips with many legal topics then studying them at greater depth is intellectually satisfying.

I suspect a Master of Legal Studies (UTS)/ Master of Applied Law (Qld)/Graduate Diploma in Legal Studies (UTS) etc. may be the right step for those law librarians who may not wish to do a law degree, yet wish to have a fuller background to the subject that surrounds them.

For further information, contact the

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or visit the UTS Website at <http://www.uts.edu.au>