

PUBLISHERS LIAISON COLUMN

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Publishing Forum meeting

As mentioned in the previous issue of this journal, the ALLG (Vic Div) Committee arranged a meeting of members in regard to publishing issues. Representatives from the Australian Government Publishing Service, Anstat, Butterworths, CCH and LBC were also invited to attend on an observation basis only.

To provide an opportunity for formal response, the Committee forwarded a summary of the meeting to the five publishers and each letter included publisher-specific examples to demonstrate the issues raised. These examples have not been included here, but the publishers' responses have been reproduced in full. The following excerpt of the Committee's letter outlines the main concerns of general relevance.

Customer service

Consultation and communication

The issue of consultation and communication was raised frequently throughout the forum. The value of using the ALLG as a communication vehicle and also as that of a consultative body was highlighted, for example when testing new products and formats, and for ensuring customers are promptly made aware of product difficulties. Publishers were encouraged to use the group to facilitate these processes.

The importance of ensuring that information reaches the manager of a library was also stressed. The manager must be made aware of difficulties or changes in order to communicate this to other library staff and library clientele.

Simply printing a note for filing at the front of a loose-leaf service is not an efficient form of communication.

Both audience and speaker comment throughout the forum emphasised the importance of publishers listening to their clientele and acting on that feedback. It was suggested that publishing companies, at management level, would be well advised to collect contributions from their locally based sales consultants. Local representatives are the first line for receiving customer comment on issues and products.

Participants also expressed concern that there has been a tendency to misinform clients about the current marketplace, for example overstating the take up rate of a new product or misleading a customer by suggesting that they are the sole library to mention a specific problem. The ALLG is fortunate to have a very good network operating and this type of misinformation becomes quickly apparent.

Training

Many members of the ALLG (Vic Div) believed greater training opportunities should be provided by publishers. Particularly in relation to electronic products, members expressed a desire for more thorough and widely available training to be provided. This was considered an integral part of the purchase of a product.

This point was made that there needs to be improved publisher commitment to ongoing training, to ensure product's enhancements are being utilised. It was also suggested that publishers consider providing assistance to libraries in training their own frequent users of a product, for example firm solicitors. This would also help publishers to ensure their products were being promoted within an organisation.

Central contact or help desk point

Some frustration was noted during the meeting in regard to contacting publishers on a day to day basis. This was expressed on two levels. The first was that of individuals being confused as to whom they should contact regarding specific problems, for example whether to contact the local representative, the local office receptionist, various head office numbers or a help desk. A suggestion was made that publishers clarify who their customers should be contacting in regard to specific issues, or better still that a central contact line be established for the placement of all queries.

The second frustration expressed was in regard to the current provision of help desks or hotlines. Members noted some disappointment with the level of service generally available via these contact points. A common complaint during the forum was that customers were frequently unable to receive a quick response to a problem. Listening to holding music or having to leave a message on an answering machine leaves customers thinking of the hotline as something more attuned with a 'coldline'. Some members also commented that on occasion they had felt they were the one instructing the help desk representative.

Marketing

A range of concerns were raised in regard to marketing issues. One particular concern was the amount of advertising material forwarded to individual customers in multiple copies. Members suggested that this could be partly reduced if publishers revise their mailing lists and addresses, clearing out incorrect information. A further suggestion was for publishers to forward advertising material per subscriber and not per copy, as often appears to be the case.

Additionally, some participants complained of occasions where publishers had made contact with a client on a number of occasions, through multiple representatives. Telemarketers,

customer service representatives and accounts departments were noted as having contacted a client regarding the same issue, often in addition to the customer receiving correspondence and having already addressed the issue with the local representative.

Hard copy and electronic issues

Accuracy of data

Considerable concern was expressed at the apparent trend of products losing their accuracy. Looseleaf services were clearly the major concern, with an alarming fall in the standard of currency noticed by clientele, particularly over the past eighteen months. Customers emphasised that it is unacceptable when services do not represent the current environment. Participants pointed out that users do not generally access looseleaf service information via bulletins and thus it is inappropriate to simply reflect changes in bulletin format and expect that this act as sufficient notification for significant periods of time.

This lack of currency has been interpreted by clients, in many instances, to be a result of publishers devoting far greater resources to establishing electronic products and developing the marketplace for them. However, it was also highlighted that the currency of monthly CD-ROMs can also be disappointing. Participants queried whether this lack of currency may in fact be one method to encourage clientele to move towards online technology. While members encouraged the development of electronic products they stressed that this development should not be to the detriment of existing hard copy products.

Search software

The differences between search software is disconcerting to anyone wishing to make use of electronic products and alarming to anyone that has to train multiple users. The likelihood of publishers arriving at an industry standard for search software was considered unlikely,

particularly in a form that all customers would agree with and that would be developed on an ongoing basis. An alternative suggestion was for publishers to supply material in ASCII format, allowing customers to develop or purchase their preferred search interface, to be applied across products. Apparently this is already occurring in New Zealand to some degree.

The importance of thorough testing of a new or enhanced product before it is released in the marketplace was stressed. It is an unfortunate but common occurrence that it is the end users who discover errors and subsequently must notify publishers of software problems.

A number of participants commented on the apparent step backwards in CD-ROM search capabilities, pointing out that many online systems of years past offered more complex search capabilities than that of today's CD-ROMs.

Training and network support

As discussed earlier, participants expressed the need for more detailed user training with publishers' electronic products, with regular follow-up training opportunities.

Additionally, the possibility of offering hard copy training with the purchase of looseleaf services was queried. This type of assistance from publishers would help ensure the best use of a product, as well as assist in convincing customers that publishers recognise the necessity of hard copy products for the foreseeable future.

The provision of network support was commented on by a number of people. It appears that many libraries operating networked electronic products are experiencing considerable difficulties in getting products up and running successfully. It was suggested that publishers investigate the possibility of providing more dedicated network support to assist customers who are experiencing difficulties. Network installations are proving over and over again to be

inherently problematic and considerable personnel time is spent on dealing with such problems. Significant periods of down time for an electronic resource have many customers wondering about the true value of electronic access, especially when dealing with an annual subscription. It is not difficult to calculate how much the latest problem has just cost the library. Additionally, many libraries may not have IT departments or sufficient skilled personnel to assist them to the degree that it takes to get many electronically networked products operating effectively and consistently.

Awareness of marketplace

Forum participants expressed some concern that publishers were not fully listening to a significant number of their customers in regard to the use of products and their formats. Some doubt was expressed about whether publishers had made the effort to familiarise themselves with the differing levels of computer literacy in the legal marketplace, evidence of which library staff witness on a daily basis.

Customers have become aware of a strong push towards delivery of information through online services, in particular the Internet. However, many of those attending the forum expressed concern that this trend did not accurately reflect the current needs of customers, that in fact publishers need to look at the reality of the environments in which many of their clientele are operating. Participants indicated that CD-ROM technology remains the main vehicle for mass electronic product usage in legal libraries in Australia and that many libraries have invested significant time in training their customers in the use of this format and were continue to do so. Those present indicated that desktop online access is a significant way off for most legal organisations and thus online resources are not yet an efficient way of distributing access to information.

Further evidence of a push towards expansion of the electronic environment is the halt in

production of some hard copy products. Many customers have interpreted this as a direct attempt by publishers to forcefully steer customers away from hard copy products. This style of decision does little to convince customers that publishers recognise the need for continued support of hard copy products. In addition many customers have become quite sceptical about the willingness of publishers to hear what clients are saying about their environments and the needs of a user from a legal library.

Pricing issues

Flexibility in pricing arrangements

Members representing a variety of organisations, particularly larger organisations, expressed frustration at the inflexibility of publishers in their definition of licence agreements and subsequent pricing arrangements. Participants reported difficulties in arranging national based licences for firms, licences for university campuses and in one instance a court site licence. Participants asked that publishers give further thought to the repercussions this has for many organisations and the detriment it may have on subscription take-up.

It also became apparent that while some customers have been able to arrange certain licence agreements, others had been told this was not possible, indicating a need for a somewhat more consistent approach from publishers.

Costs - budgeting and procedures

A common complaint among participants was that pricing is very difficult to predict. Billing per release can ravage budget predictions and results. A suggestion was offered that publishers consider a fixed fee for a subscription, with a credit to the account where the predicted number of releases was not reached. A call was also made for publishers to investigate the possibility of forewarning customers of predicted subscription price increases well in advance, to assist managers with the budgeting process. Blackwells were noted as one publisher who currently offer this service to customers.

Costs of subscriptions are generally proving to far exceed the cost of inflation and yet the budgets of many customers, in reality, are decreasing. Representatives of libraries were concerned that publishers were operating under the misapprehension that law librarians had access to inexhaustible sums of money. There was concern that publishers had not yet recognised that as cost centres, library managers were likely to have to justify all purchases, stringently review collections and cancel products in order to afford new products. Participants queried how publishers can justify the often significant price increases and were quick to highlight that customers are not generally satisfied by the standard 'more pages are now produced' response.

While the introduction of electronic products promised to reduce costs, this has failed to eventuate. CD-ROM prices remain high and participants queried how much longer their budgets would be paying for the publishers' electronic set up and conversion costs.

Clearer and more widely advertised information is required regarding discounts for purchasers when subscribing to a product in a number of formats. Members expressed some concern that discount entitlements had been discovered haphazardly and queried whether publishers could better assist customers by making them aware of potential savings.

Clearer accounting procedures are required. Participants expressed general dissatisfaction with the way in which some invoices have been issued recently, for example products and invoices being issued separately, no clear indication being given as to whether credit notes should be taken up or are simply account adjustments and the inadequate physical format of some invoices.

A strong case was made for customers to seriously consider reviewing all subscriptions in order to reduce duplicate titles and thus free up budgets to acquire the absolutely necessary products.

Overseas publications

There was lively discussion about the often exorbitant prices charged by some publishers for their own overseas titles. Concern was expressed at why recent UK titles, for example, were charged at a cost far exceeding their price in the UK and that in fact could be purchased via a UK agent for far less. Participants urged publishers to review policy in relation to this matter.

Your response

The Committee invites you to respond to any of the issues above, with a view to publishing responses in a future issue of the *Australian Law Librarian*. Responses will follow an excerpt of this letter, to put the issues into context but will not contain the specific incidences noted individually to you as a publisher. If you would like to respond, please forward your correspondence directly to me. I will distribute it amongst the ALLG (Vic Div.) Committee and arrange for your response to be published in this journal.

Australian Government Publishing Service Response

Thank you for your letter dated 5 September 1997 providing feedback from your members concerning publishing issues. We would also like to take this opportunity to provide members with information about the Australian Commonwealth Publishing Service as well as responding to the issues raised.

Customer Service

Consultation and communication

The Australian Government Publishing Service uses several vehicles to keep members of professions with an interest in law informed, and to provide opportunities for feedback. For

example, we have been active in attending customer forums. We had trade stands at the Australian Law Librarians' Biennial Conference (Melbourne October 1996), the 30th Australian Legal Convention (Melbourne September 1997) and the Library Technicians Conference (Canberra September 1997). We participated in ELI 1997, Standards and Issues in Electronic Publication & Dissemination of Legal Information (College of Law Sydney April 1997) and also attended the May 1997 meeting of the ALLG (Victorian Division) to demonstrate Osiris and FRLI and to discuss relevant issues.

Regarding FRLI, we have assisted the Attorney-General's Department to 'spread the word' about the Federal Register of Legislative Instruments (FRLI). The Attorney-General's Department held public meetings in all State capitals in late 1995 and early 1996. Late in 1996 we notified all our customers affected by the changes via an information letter and survey form. We have incorporated feedback from this survey into our FRLI planning, and have now adopted a 'wait and see' approach until the bill passes parliament.

Of more direct relevance to ALLG members is the AGPS-ACLIS Liaison Committee (AALC). Ms Joanne Pentony is ALLG's representative on this committee. At the last meeting of the committee, held in July this year, members were briefed on the market testing process and minutes from this meeting have been distributed to committee members.

Since the meeting there have been further developments in the market testing process. In brief, the tender process has progressed as follows. The August 1996 Federal Budget included a decision to market test the Australian Government Publishing Service's activities. The Department of Administrative Services (DAS) sought expressions of interest in these activities. Based on the responses, it was decided to proceed to a Request for Proposals in October 1996.

After the Evaluation Team examined all proposals it was decided to offer five packages for tender:

1. Assets and equipment
2. Security printing
3. Government Printing Office
4. Instant Print and Copy Centres
5. Information Management Strategic Alliance.

The results of packages 2-4 have been announced. Regarding printing responsibilities carried out by the Government Printing Office, the successful tenders were Union Offset Company Pty Ltd and Cenerob Pty Ltd trading as Better Printing Service. The companies have formed a separate special purpose company to conduct the business from the Australian Government Publishing Service and this company is known as CanPrint Pty Ltd. After 8 October 1997 we will no longer be providing printing, publishing management, design or editorial services.

DAS is moving to a new structure following the sale and outsourcing of various businesses and functions. Those functions of the Australian Government Publishing Service that are not being sold will be transferred to a new Information Services Division. The division consists of four branches, each having specialist government information functions. The other three branches are the Australian Government Analytical Laboratory, Australian Surveying and Land Information Group, and the Ionospheric Prediction Service. The Australian Government Publishing Service will likely adopt a new name under this structure, and will play a key role in providing public access to the specialist information of the division. Delivery of electronic access to government information will play an increasingly important role in this new organisation.

It may also be useful to clarify the sources of much of what appears to be 'AGPS Product'.

The Australian Government Publishing Service produces very few of its own electronic legal products. Examples are the *Commonwealth legislation catalogue* on disc and the Internet Bills list. Most other legal products are made available to the public by the Australian Government Publishing Service, but are published by other Commonwealth departments. We assist some departments with their electronic products, but we do not necessarily have 'control' over them.

For Internet databases we use the search engine TOPIC. This search engine was chosen on technical grounds, primarily for its capacity to handle very large amounts of information, and its ability for customisation and extensibility. Statute-E publish is most used as the search engine for disc and CD-ROM products for the same reasons. The Australian Government Publishing Service takes feedback from end users seriously and undertakes where possible to incorporate users' feedback into the development process. One recent example is the Internet Osiris site (developed in conjunction with the Department of Workplace Relations and Small Business), which has been extensively modified over the last six months by incorporating feedback from end users.

SCALEPLUS, Legislative Instruments Database (both owned by the Attorney-General's Department), Hansard and Committee Reports (owned by the Department of Parliamentary Reporting staff) are Internet sites to which we provide public access on behalf of the relevant department. Feedback to these sites goes directly to the department and the Australian Government Publishing Service is unable to comment on this. The remainder of the Parliament site, including BillsNet, is managed directly by Parliament and we only provide links to the site.

Central contact or helpdesk point

All excess telephone calls that cannot be answered by the Government Info Shops are automatically

automatically diverted to the Canberra based TeleInfo area. The TeleInfo team answer direct calls as well as the diverted calls from Info Shops all over Australia. The benefit to callers of this system is that it ensures that calls are answered.

TeleInfo staff rarely rely on stock information available to them on the inhouse system. When they look into the system and see stock-on-hand figures for a publication this reflects the stock available at the Info Shop. If stock has been reserved for a customer then the stock quantity is taken off the total available stock, so that the figures show the correct quantity available. However, if a publication has been put to one side and is not reserved in the system, the staff in TeleInfo would not be able to tell this from looking at the system. Often if a publication is not reserved by a customer, from the time of the call to the time the customer goes to the InfoShop, another customer could have come and purchased all the stock at a single transaction. It is advisable therefore to reserve the publication requested.

Hard copy and electronic issues

Accuracy of data

The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department selects which Commonwealth Acts or Statutory Rules will be reprinted. The department advised the APGS in late July that there would only be a few reprints for the remainder of the year, as they were converting their inhouse system and transferring files to a new system. All our sales staff were notified of the Attorney-General's decision in late July 1997. Our understanding is that the reprint program for hard copy legislation will recommence in the new year.

Awareness of the marketplace

Currently the Parliament site BillsNet contains current Bills before Parliament with Explanatory Memoranda. Once a Bill has been enacted, Parliament removes the files from BillsNet. The Australian Government Publishing Service

recognises the need to maintain access to this data longer term and have instigated a process of allowing access to previous years' data (Explanatory Memoranda at present) at an alternative site. Until a long term solution is negotiated between Parliament, the Attorney-General's Department, the Australian Government Publishing Service and Australian Archives, we will continue to make this data available either through the Internet or through demand publishing at our Government Info Shops.

The Australian Government Publishing Service has been listening to all suggestions made by customers regarding the Federal Register of Legislative Instruments database. There are however, some constraints which affect how FRLI will operate. *The Legislative Instruments Bill 1996* (Cth) currently before the Commonwealth Parliament states in sections 43(2) and 50(2)(a) "The copy must: be a good quality copy of the original instrument on A4 paper ..." As a result documents printed from the database will be in A4. Upon commencement of the Act the *Statutory Rules Publication Act 1903* (Cth) will be repealed (Schedule 4). The Statutory Rules series will no longer be published and we will be unable to provide a subscription to that series.

The Bill provides for the establishment of a new series called the Legislative Instruments series and we will be providing subscriptions to that series. We recognise that all customers may not wish to subscribe to the new Legislative Instruments series and have offered some alternatives to which customers have offered suggestions.

The issues of the A4 size and the difference in volume between the statutory rules series and subordinate legislation were discussed at the July 1997 AGPS-ACLIS Liaison Committee Meeting. Generally, the committee felt that the A4 was the better size, especially when downloading from electronic format. The suggestion of a subject based approach to subordinate legislation was discussed, and further

ideas on this suggestion were sought from the committee.

The Australian Government Publishing Service is acutely aware that not everyone has access to the Internet, and have ensured that hard copy of all Legislative Instruments will be available through all the current distribution methods (subscriptions, mail sales and over the counter at Government Info Shops)

Pricing Issues

Costs - budgeting and procedure

The Australian Government Publishing Service maintains a policy of not discriminating on price between formats of like products where ever possible. This helps to ensure equality of access.

Regarding subscriptions, unfortunately we cannot exactly predict the activity of Parliament over a year. Currently our annual subscription accepts a loss on years of heavy parliamentary activity. Reprint legislation is subscribed to by the page, and that provides customers and the Australian Government Publishing Service with confidence that you will get what you paid for. Until now we have not received any complaint about the subscriptions offered for the new Legislative Instruments series, except for a desire to continue subscribing to the Statutory Rules series (covered previously).

At the moment we are developing and testing a new Subscription System. The subscription invoices are being reviewed and will be in line with other standard invoices. It is hoped that the new Subscription Service system will be up and running in the near future, and your invoicing will be incorporated when developing that area of the system.

The Australian Government Publishing Service is in a unique position as a legal publisher in that we do not generally have control over what we publish. We act as a liaison point between the authoring department and the users of the information and we endeavour to meet the distribution needs of both parties. We also

maintain a Legislative Products area that coordinates published legal information. This area is the contact point for future issues you may wish to discuss.

Vanessa Muller

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Again thank you for the opportunity to respond to members' concerns and to provide information on the developments at Australian Government Publishing Service.

Yours sincerely

Ann Villiers

Manager - Government Information Services

ANSTAT

Thank you for your letter dated 5 September 1997. While some of the issues raised in your letter may not relate to Anstat, we have taken the opportunity to provide some feedback which may be of interest to your members.

Customer Service

Anstat has always regarded customer service as a cornerstone of its commitment to subscribers. This statement is supported by the action we take to service our clients, whether it be the dispatch of an item of legislation by urgent courier within 10 minutes, late on Friday afternoon, or a 20 minute Legislation Hotline call where we are asked to research a particular Government Gazette. I believe that these examples would be confirmed by your members.

Consultation and Communication

The points raised are noted, and we have recently followed your suggestion in relation to our proposed legislation promotion whereby our

plans have been forwarded to the ALLG for comment prior to launch.

Training

Anstat offers training services in relation to its range of electronic services. Many of your members have taken up the opportunity to have an Anstat representative call in to their office to conduct a training session for users of our electronic databases. In view of the relatively low price of our electronic services (\$500 p.a.), a normal fee is charged per person for training which covers time and materials.

You will note also that Anstat has taken up the ALLG suggestion to produce a "quick user guide" for users of our electronic services which is distributed free of charge to subscribers.

Central Contact or Help Desk Point

In order to assist our clients in reaching the appropriate contact within Anstat at first attempt, we have recently installed a new phone system (after some frustration and an unsuccessful first attempt) with direct numbers for various departments within the company.

A practical guide as to who to contact for assistance follows (there are times when the caller actually doesn't know how they need to speak to):

Subscription Enquiries

e.g. when does my subscription fall due? when is the next electronic release due?

Contact Customer Services staff on telephone (03) 9278 1144 or facsimile (03) 9278 1145

Legislation Enquiries

e.g. is s26 of the Crimes Act in force? Has the Alpine Resorts Bill had its second reading? Has s10 of the Adoption Act been amended? etc

Contact Legislation Hotline staff on telephone (03) 9278 1133 or facsimile (03) 9278 1135

Technical Enquiries

e.g. how do I load the CD? Why can't I open a file/Act? how do I get back to the bookshelf? etc

Contact Electronic Help Desk staff on telephone (03) 9278 1122 or facsimile (03) 9278 1135

Sales Enquiries

e.g. I'm interested in subscribing to your new electronic database or internet service, etc

Contact our Victorian Sales Manager on telephone (03) 9278 1161 or facsimile (03) 9278 1135

OR

Contact our New South Wales Sales Manager on telephone (02) 9630 3830 or facsimile (02) 9630 3840

We are aware of the occasional difficulty in making contact with the appropriate staff, however, we genuinely believe that any such experiences are isolated and not reflective of the level of service we provide.

In order to address the specific issues raised in your letter, the following company policies have been re-enforced to staff:

All staff in a direct customer support type role must ensure that there is always adequate staffing to respond to incoming calls e.g. staff meetings. This policy is monitored by the respective department managers.

All staff in a direct customer support type role must ensure that when responding to a phone call, our standard response follows the lines of:

"Good morning/afternoon [department], how can I help you?"

Any further difficulties experienced by members can be directed to:

In the case of Annotations Customer Service Publishing Operations Manager

In the case of Legislation Hotline
Information Services Manager

In the case of Electronic Help Desk
Information Technology Manager

Marketing

The points raised are noted. We point out that at times, multiple dispatches of promotional material can occur as an oversight. Apart from the annoyance to your members, we also aim to distribute one mail out only per person to reduce the associated costs.

In relation to cases where contact is made with a client on a number of occasions, this can occur at times due to a lack of communication. Anstat conducts weekly "Production Meetings" which involve sales, customer service and dispatch staff. This meeting helps to ensure that incidences described are minimised.

Hard Copy and Electronic Issues

Accuracy of Data

Like customer service, this is considered to be a critical component of Anstat's services. Anstat goes to great lengths to ensure that the information distributed to subscribers is accurate, and we often liaise with numerous State Officers of Parliamentary Counsel to advise them of errors in legislation identified by Anstat.

Your specific example regarding the currently of our annotations service is one which is often raised by subscribers.

The first point to make is that the annotations service is well entrenched in Victoria, despite the "electronic age" and the expectation by some in the market that this service would be made redundant.

With this in mind, Anstat is dedicated to continuing the service for many years into the future providing that there is a reasonable demand. We assure your members that the resources allocated to annotating have remained unchanged in number over the years and will continue unchanged.

The second point is that there is an extremely labour intensive process in creating and then updating the annotation services. As an indication, editorial keying work in processing legislative amendments is only completed some four weeks after Parliament has risen given that many Acts only receive assent after Parliament rises.

The information is then proof read and specifically cross-references to legislation, each annotation having to be paginated in reference to the relevant page of the Act or Regulation. This process might take some 2 weeks.

Printing will then take one week. The material is printed in the form of long sheets of amendments which are then cut by our staff into specific annotations for pasting onto the relevant pages of the Acts. This process will take a further two weeks. Appointments are made with clients and we then commence annotating.

As you may be aware, Anstat has a commitment to annotate the many sets in Parliament (which in itself is a unique service which requires specific editorial work to be completed) and then the various Courts prior to booking subscriber visits.

Our aim is to then ensure a fair approach to ensuring that subscribers are updated as quickly as possible given a fixed level of dedicated resources, with subscribers having to wait a little longer in a previous session being moved forward in the list of priority the next session.

All in all, the above process may see updates delivered to subscribers some 8 weeks after Parliament has risen.

We are considering various options in improving service delivery with a view to maintaining service standards, and will liaise with the ALLG as appropriate.

Search Software

The points raised are noted. In a commercial world, it is considered unlikely that publishers will develop an identical standard for publishing

given the fact that each publisher looks to establish its own market niche and deliver to the market what it sees as the appropriate service (and software) to meet market demand, which is different within the ALLG and different again outside of law librarian groups. For further information about Anstat's search software capabilities, your members can contact our Electronic Help Desk on telephone (03) 9278 1122 or facsimile (03) 9278 1135.

Training and Network Support

See our comment under 'Training' earlier. In relation to network support, members can contact our Electronic Help Desk for assistance. Where clients are still experiencing difficulties in networking our services, Anstat has made Information Technology staff available to call in to the premises of clients to assist.

Awareness of the Marketplace

Anstat is absolutely committed to the continuation of hard copy services (within reason). We support the comments raised which is reflected in our approach in releasing electronic services to the market.

Our newly released electronic databases have been offered free to existing Anstat hard copy subscribers for an agreed period, at which time the subscriber is entitled to subscribe to the electronic service or discontinue. However, this decision has no impact on the ongoing availability of the hard copy subscription.

Pricing Issues

Flexibility in Pricing Arrangements

We believe that our pricing reflects market needs and is extremely competitive. At \$500 p a for a monthly update service available in both CD-ROM and the Internet, and only \$30 approximately per additional user, our electronic services represent incredible value.

Costs - Budgeting and Procedures

The specific example raised regarding the increase in the Reprint Program has been discussed previously within the ALLG-Anstat Publishers Liaison Committee.

In recent months, the Reprint Program maintained by the Office of Chief Parliamentary Counsel ('OCPC') has increased which has impacted on the volume of dispatches.

We have been advised by OCPC that the number of Reprints to be published in 1997 will approximate 200. Part of the reason for the increased volume is due to a project being completed by OCPC to consolidate the entire legislation database and introduce consistency in the format of all documents, thus improving the quality of Reprints.

Irrespective of the above, subscribers can expect that the Reprint Program will remain at this output level, which is a decision made OCPC.

In recognition of the possibility that subscribers may not require all Reprints available for publication, Anstat released a survey to Reprint subscribers earlier in the year with a view to considering various options regarding a new range of Reprint Services.

Interestingly, the key results highlighted:

a) Despite the increased Reprint program in recent months, the majority of subscribers still require all Reprints published by OCPC; and

b) Subscribers do not see legislation published in electronic format as a substitute for hard copy (supported by your comments).

However, in accordance with our normal practice of offering subscribers a cheaper service alternative where available, Anstat offers a Self-Service which enables subscribers to select a specific range of legislation of importance to their needs (which includes the supply of new Reprints when published).

Members can contact Customer Services staff on telephone (03) 9278 1144 or facsimile (03) 9278 1145 for further information about the service

We believe that the comment regarding a failure of publishers to deliver a cheaper electronic alternative does not apply to Anstat. As outlined earlier, Anstat has taken an aggressive pricing stance in relation to its electronic services which has seen the price of alternative services in the market decrease. Our electronic prices are certainly cheaper than the cost of subscribing to hard copy alternatives.

Overseas publications

Not applicable

We congratulate the ALLG in establishing this specific forum to discuss publishing issues and trust that the information provided not only answers the issues raised but also gives you an insight into Anstat's service philosophy.

Jacob Weinmann

General Manager

BUTTERWORTHS

Thank you for your letter of 5 September detailing issues raised at the recent ALLG forum. I enjoyed the opportunity to meet your members and to hear their views and concerns and I also welcome your invitation to respond to the points raised.

Customer Service

We appreciate your suggestion that we use your members as a communication vehicle and consultative group, especially for testing new products. All our products are tested extensively before release but since all computer networks are configured slightly differently, the only real test is in real life situations. We would welcome offers to help us test new products and we look forward to discussion with your members the most practical way to do this.

We regard market feedback as a vital ingredient in improving our products and services. Apart from User Groups and market surveys, we have sales and customer service reporting procedures in place which capture market opinions and suggestions. We receive and act upon these reports weekly.

Training

We offer complimentary training to all purchasers of electronic products at all levels - from basic to advanced. Our Victorian trainer, Natalie Wieland, will train those staff in your organisations who need it and will return to offer training on enhancements as they occur. Your members can contact Natalie on (03) 9670 3811

Your sales consultant will attend to your looseleaf training needs. Please don't hesitate to ask for assistance whenever you require it.

Central Contact Point

Following the meeting, we have decided to restructure our customer service and marketing functions and are certain that these initiatives will lead to a more streamlined approach to client contact. We will keep you informed of developments.

Helpdesk

When it began operation, the number of calls to our helpline exceeded expectations. We now believe we have the right level of staffing to give prompt service. While calls will still go to voicemail in really busy periods, we have procedures in place to monitor these calls and to ensure that they are responded to within a short time span.

We train our operators in product content and searching techniques but as the majority of calls that come to the helpline are technical, we employ people who have technical expertise. When they cannot answer a complicated search query, they will pass your call to a trainer or editor.

Marketing

We share your concern about receiving multiple copies of advertising and have embarked on an ongoing data cleansing and maintenance programme to ensure that customer details are as correct and current as possible

Hard Copy and Electronic Issues

Accuracy of Data

Initially there were some delays in updating looseleaf products while they were undergoing data conversion to electronic form. We have recognised this problem and have altered editorial procedures to ensure that looseleaf service parts publish regularly during the conversion process. We are committed to all our media and to ensure that all formats are current so that customers can choose whichever format meets the present needs of their organisation.

It is true we no longer delete reported judgments from the Unreported Judgments CD-ROM. Our market feedback shows that this has generally been approved by our customers because some users do not have access to the reported version. However, we do clearly mark those judgments that are reported elsewhere so that there is no confusion between reported and unreported cases.

Search Software

As a modern publisher, we strive to present information, together with the best possible interface. We have put a lot of thought into our search template to help users narrow down searches efficiently but we realise that other publishers have different search templates. However, the move to open systems and the Internet would suggest that as time goes by, standards will emerge. There may even be less need to learn a specific search syntax to perform a search and so the need for product specific training should decline.

Training and Network Support

Folio Views does have problems with networks. Nor does it cater for the scenario where several publishers all install Folio View on a network. We are addressing the network issues with Folio but a permanent solution is still to be found.

Pricing Issues

Flexibility in Pricing Arrangements

While Butterworths works within a framework of licence and pricing policies designed to accommodate both differing customer needs and protection of our information, we are working with our customers to arrive at arrangements which fulfil the needs of their differing internal structures. This year we have already negotiated a number of more flexible arrangements to suit individual needs. Your members should feel free to discuss their needs with their local sales consultant.

Costs - Budgeting Procedures

We retain charge per issue pricing with certain products where the amount of case law and legislative activity is difficult to predict. This flexible pricing alternative allows us to pass on a fair charge to our customers. In addition, we have formed a project team to further develop more flexible services which will help customers gain more control over their cost structures.

With electronic publications, we believe that the true savings lie in areas such as research time, filing time, storage space and so on. For publishers, the actual costs of collecting information, compiling, editing and producing the material remain the same no matter the format, but other costs increase. It is an often unrealised fact that the introduction of electronic formats has significantly increased publisher's costs. As well as the significant cost of converting historical data to electronic, there are the new costs of programmers, trainers, electronic helpdesks, etc which were not needed when print was the only format offered.

Invoices are issued separately to ensure faster turnaround time for dispatch once the product has been produced. Credit notes shown as outstanding may be taken up and offset at any time the customer requests. We are open to suggestions on how the format can be improved.

Overseas Publications

In early 1997 we conducted a detailed review of our importing procedures. As a result we have been able to substantially reduce many of the prices for these titles. To quote the example you gave, *Paget's Law of Banking* priced at 235 UK pounds is now available at AU\$498.

I am certain that the initiatives and procedures outlined above will go a long way to alleviating the concerns raised by your members. We will certainly be keeping in touch with you to ensure that our services continue to meet your members' needs.

Murray Hamilton

Managing Director

CCH

Thank you very much for your letter of 5 September 1997 which our CEO has passed on to me as the Publisher responsible for all CCH Legal publications.

As I am sure you are aware CCH places a great deal of importance on our relationship with law librarians and I feel that we have been particularly active this year in promoting this relationship through visits to various law libraries around Australia.

Our quick response to ALLG concerns over the production of bound volumes is evidence of this attitude. I would also like to take this opportunity to officially inform your members of our decision to produce the bound volume of 1997 cases for both ACLC and AIPR. This will be included as

part of the subscription price for these services.

Nevertheless we are always keen to receive both positive and negative feedback from your organisation to help ensure we are providing the best service and the best products possible.

I have followed your format and layout of the issues raised in your letter to ensure as complete an answer as possible. Whilst my comments below are of a general nature I would be happy to address any specific issues you directly.

Customer Service

We take the issue of customer service very seriously.

Consultation and communication

CCH has the largest direct sales forces of any business publisher in Australia. Our sales representatives provide direct feedback to both management in our regional offices as well as to management at head office. We rely heavily on this frontline feedback and act on it accordingly.

I am surprised to note that some of your members feel that some publishers have a tendency to misinform clients about the marketplace. I can assure you that CCH's policy is to have, within normal commercial constraints, open and frank communications with our entire customer base. Certainly the ALLG forms an important part of that base and we have always been open in our dealings with you.

Training

In addition to the guidebooks and online help that comes with CCH electronic products we also offer training courses as an option for those customers who wish to take advantage of the advance feature of our search engine. Rather than build the cost of this training into the price of the product we believe that it is more appropriate to allow customers to choose the level of training that is adequate for their own organisations.

Central Contact or Help Desk Point

Our telephone response monitoring systems give us detailed breakdowns on waiting times and response calls. Any messages which are left for follow-up are also tracked. The recent implementation of our new order management system has already increased the efficiency of these operations.

In addition CCH provides the ability for queries or concerns to be either faxed, mailed or emailed to us for response. These multiple methods of communication allow the customer to determine the level of response to a particular issue and choose the method which best suits their particular query. We do not pretend that our systems is perfect but we are working toward a benchmark of world best practice and I can assure you that there is a great deal of focus on this area.

Marketing

CCH has a comprehensive 'de-duplication' system for all direct mail and advertising material. This helps ensure that customers do not become overburdened with material as well as saving some trees!

In the same way our customers are all clearly identified with a single sales representative and this person is responsible for the management of the account. To our knowledge there has not been any issue with multiple contacts of the one customer by CCH but we would naturally welcome notification of any instances where you believe this has occurred so they can be rectified.

Hard Copy and Electronic Issues

Accuracy of Data

CCH is renowned for our ability to keep customers informed of changes on a timely basis. For this reason CCH estimates each year the expected number of reports that will issue for each product. In addition, any urgent information is notified to our subscribers via our well known 'Special Dispatch'

To assist customers further CCH uses the 'New Developments' tab in our services. These contain the latest information before it is consolidated back into the main service. Our index references these 'New Developments' to ensure that customers have all the information located in one volume.

The development of CCH's electronic program has focussed on using a single data source for both our print and electronic products. This ensures that regardless of which mode of delivery our customers choose the content remains the same. CCH will continue to support both print and electronic delivery of information to our customers depending on their preferences and requirements.

Search Software

CCH has selected the Dynatext search engine for its CD-ROM products after extensive testing of all major search engines. Dynatext offers quite sophisticated search capabilities through boolean searches and our tailored search forms. Our in house technology team is thoroughly versed in the nuances of legal research and each disc is tested prior to mailing to help ensure that our customers receive error free discs.

Training and Network Support

CCH is cognisant of the issues that libraries face regarding the operation of their networks. Our electronic customer service support representatives offer guidance on the installation and operation of our CD-ROM's. However it is not viable to have our support representatives trained on the myriad of different networks and combinations of networks that operate within our customers' organisations. To do so, as I am sure you could understand, would add significantly to the final price of our product.

Pricing issues

Flexibility in Pricing Arrangements

CCH's pricing policy is one that ensures fairness and equity amongst our customer base. We also recognise, however, that some larger national organisations have unique circumstances which need to be addressed. Our sales representatives and management are always willing to discuss these types of issues.

Costs - Budgeting and Procedures

CCH takes the issue of pricing very seriously. Any price increases occur directly as a result of increased costs associated with that service. These increases are scrutinised thoroughly before being implemented. As I am sure you can appreciate if we incorrectly price our products and services then the resultant cancellations will have an impact on our bottom line. There are many factors, including paper and the cost of intellectual input, which impact on the final price of our services and which are not reflected in the Consumer Price Index.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on some of the issues raised by your members and I would like to wish you all the very best for the festive season.

Gary Stanton

Publisher - Legal Publications

LBC

Thank you for your letter dated 5 September 1997. I welcome the opportunity to respond to the points that have been raised as LBC is very much committed to working closely with the various ALLG divisions.

I must say however, it has been a while since I have received a six page letter! I hope to join one of your meetings in the not too distant future as I much more enjoy face to face discussions on these sort of issues

There appear to be a number of generalisations so I have responded, as best I can, to each in turn:

Customer Service

Consultation and Communications

I could not agree more! We are indeed privileged to be a part of an industry that is willing to be consulted and to provide feedback on issues affecting it. Since I joined LBC, I have met with a great number of your colleagues and have made a big effort to ensure the LBC management team spend more time with you.

The quality of the communication between LBC and our customers is critical to us and we recognise the need to better utilise the ALLG as a communications vehicle.

We will work to establish better communications with you as the Publishers Liaison representative and would like to, for example, contribute to your newsletter 'Back in Town'.

We also work closely with your national body via Anne Gardner and for example, to assist with the Asian Pacific Specials, Health & Law Librarians' Conference in Perth, we have donated 10 bursaries at a value of \$500 each. Our aim is to assist those librarians who would not normally have the opportunity to attend such a conference.

In addition to these sorts of activities, we also seek input on major new products and for example, we recently hosted a number of librarians to discuss what they wanted in an online service. This is an area we would like to continue to work far more closely with you on.

In terms of the postage and handling, I was disappointed this has been raised some twelve months after the event. As I said, in person, to the state convenors who visited LBC early this year - this was probably not the best way to introduce myself. I believe, given the commercial realities of the situation, that we did indeed listen to our major customers and we reacted accordingly.

With regard to the specific example of not acting on feedback regarding electronic bulletins delivered in a more efficient and workable format, I can say that this is an issue we have been looking at but due to commercial priority setting, it is not an immediate priority.

In terms of misinforming clients about the current marketplace, I am somewhat concerned, to say the least. LBC prides itself on having the highest level of integrity and honesty when dealing with customers and I trust this comment was not directed at LBC. If there has been any act of impropriety, please advise me directly and I will take the appropriate actions.

Training

Again, I can only agree. LBC has invested heavily over the past twelve months in training and support. We have increased our field training staff from zero to four in that time. We have a dedicated training manager in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

In Victoria, our training Manager is Vivien Astl. Since her appointment early this year, Vivien has been conducting on site training for our customers, based on their individual needs. Please do not hesitate to call Vivien as she is more than happy to discuss your training needs.

There is of course a commercial limit to the amount of training we can provide and we have the challenge of balancing the training support (and cost) against demand. This will not doubt change over the life cycle of the product. Microsoft and software life cycles provide a good case study.

Central Contact or Help Desk Point

In terms of first contact point, we suggest your local sales representative for any sales or product enquiries. For matters other than these (billing or customer service related) I suggest you phone our free call number which is 1800 650 522. Once through to this number you will be directed to the best person to handle your query.

With regard to the help desk for electronic product, I was somewhat surprised at your comment that LBC do not provide a specific helpdesk. I will ensure your members received an updated number. LBC was the first of the legal publishers to launch a dedicated helpdesk and in fact offered this service 7 days a week.

Due to lack of response, we now only offer weekend support by appointment, but we still have a dedicated resource to respond to electronic enquiries during the week. A number of these staff have been promoted/transferred to other areas and I admit there has been some short term disruption, but we are committed to providing dedicated electronic helpdesk support.

Should you have any difficulties, I am more than willing to speak to you directly, please do not hesitate to call me.

Marketing

In terms of reducing multiple inserts, I will be following this up. We have reduced these through our major mailing house but your letter indicates this is still a problem. Again, our aim is to ensure you receive advance product information and are always kept up-to-date in this regard.

With regard to multiple contracts, telemarketers etc. last year we instituted a new state sales management structure which is designed to manage the majority of your issues locally. For example, this will ensure that if telemarketing is the best way to inform customers of a new product or product enhancement, that it will be controlled by the local sales manager.

Due to the number of accounts we have, the reality is that (unfortunately) there will be some overlap with some of the customer service and credit issues. We are introducing new systems to better manage our customer contact but as I am sure you are aware, these have a high cost and therefore we are introducing these gradually.

I have passed on the example you gave re ATP to Martin Hartcher who is the Managing Director of ATP.

Hardcopy and Electronic Issues

Accuracy of Data

Whilst you state that there has been an alarming fall in the currency of looseleaf over the past eighteen months, I can only say that the LBC has continued to maintain resourcing levels to the updating and maintenance of looseleaf services. In fact, the number of updates published for looseleaf services has increased rather than decreased, over the past few years.

The examples you give of Ford and Lee: *Principles of the Law of Trusts and Voumard. Sale of Land* are a little misleading as they are not Looseleaf services. These are both published in supplemented book format and you will see that these works contain chapters bound in booklet form, not loose pages. The promotion of these works clearly indicated that this format would be updated annually through the publication of an annual cumulative supplement and the complete reissue of chapters when sufficient amendment to the law has occurred.

Unlike bound texts where new editions are generally published every 4-5 years, a supplemented book remains more up-to-date than bound texts through the issue of an annual supplement, but is not as expensive as the looseleaf option. It is true to say that the supplement for Voumard is running behind schedule, but it is now in preparation and is scheduled to publish late 1997.

In terms of the *Gifford and Gifford Town Planning Service*, this product has been discontinued and will be gradually replaced by *Taylor: Australian Planning Law*. Chapter 1 was recently issued and all subscribers have been informed of this.

Search Software

This is certainly an area that we want to speak to you more about. Unfortunately, we still receive mixed messages. For example, we recently had several senior librarians visit LBC and we asked how they found Folio. Half said Folio was too

sophisticated for their needs (and their clients' needs) and the other half said that they found that it did not have the search capability they required (as per your CLIRS example).

In terms of delivering data in ASCII format, we are moving to more flexible information solutions and would be happy to discuss this further. The only problem I would see is that it could increase the strain on you or your IT departments to 'tag' the data to achieve the level of functionality required.

With regard to the network problems you cite, our feedback is that since we have offered network discs, problems have substantially reduced and they now mainly appear to be networking configuration issues.

Awareness of Marketplace

Again I agree. This is an area where I have placed significant effort since I joined LBC. This is exactly why we have not 'pushed' an online service. For example during a recent trip around the country where I visited a large number of customers, feedback was that the market was not ready for online and that CD-ROM is still the preferred electronic delivery vehicle.

We have been ready for some time to launch an online service but have taken a view, after listening to many of our major customers, to hold back. We realise that this will be another expense and of course someone ultimately has to pay for the conversion of products to online and the associated marketing and running costs.

We also wanted to deliver a product that provides you with better functionality and is not just an Internet copy tool.

In terms of the hardcopy example you gave, the *Journal of Judicial Administration*, this was a commercial decision as we only had 13 subscribers to the bound volume service. I am sure you would understand that to maintain a service like this with so few subscribers is not viable and we were not willing to pass on the cost of doing this to other subscribers.

Flexibility and Pricing Arrangements

Pricing Issues

This is an area we are working on as I write. We are very much committed to providing you with flexible pricing and are more than happy to work with you in developing site packages.

This will mean however there is likely to be a number of prices in the market, depending on say the volume of the client in question, as we move more to 'client pricing'. John Belleville, our Victoria State Sales Manager is more than happy to speak to you regarding individual packages and can be reached on (03) 9670 6595.

Cost - Budgeting and Procedures

This is something we ask our suppliers as well!

I understand your comments and can tell you that we are very much aware of the constraints and issues you face. There is certainly no view from LBC that librarians have access to inexhaustible sums of money. We too face similar constraints.

In terms of the costs of subscriptions, our aim is to always deliver value for money. For us, our goal is to provide the most up-to-date information, delivered with a high level of quality in a timely fashion. Whilst comparisons to previous years provide a good yard stick, it does not always take into account the amount of information being provided.

With regard to CD-ROM you state that the introduction of electronic products promised to reduce costs. We have certainly made no comments of this nature. The commercial reality is that we have had to make a significant investment to convert data for electronic use.

Whilst we have been able to commence leveraging off this investment, for example our Federal Cases CD-ROM which retails for \$1,700 compared to the paper backset equivalent of \$31,013 (FCR, FLR, CLR), it is not an overnight process.

We understand that many of you have to carry paper and electronic products to satisfy your

internal customers and I can tell you that we are spending a great deal of time looking at how we can best manage the transition from papers to electronic products. Discounts on paper where customers take both CD-ROM and paper is a good example of this.

Overseas Subs

We do add a mark up on these as we provide local support and have to fund this. This ensures you only have to make local calls for any queries and we take the responsibility to liaise with the overseas suppliers.

As you would know, dealing with overseas suppliers is nowhere near as easy as with local suppliers and this does create an overhead for us. We also provide billing in Australian dollars as part of this service, negating the need to organise drafts etc.

Conclusion

At LBC we are committed to working closely with our market and in particular the various ALLG groups. My personal commitment is to spend more time with you and in reviewing this letter, it is clear we have much opportunity to work together for mutually beneficial outcomes.

I look forward to our continued dialogue but would ask that next time we speak we are thrown a bouquet amongst the brickbats as we are truly trying to provide you with products and services that add value to your organisations.

Eddie Costigan

Managing Director
LBC Information Services

If you have any query or comment regarding the meeting, please contact

Greig Williams,

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