

EDITORIAL

Over the past few years librarians have been considering the future of the profession in an era where technology increasingly enables end-users to locate and retrieve information for themselves. The pessimists felt that librarians would become obsolete, while the optimists saw a role for librarians as information brokers, acting as intermediaries in the knowledge process, facilitating other people's searches for knowledge. Librarians would move from collecting and storing (the warehouse model) to facilitating access to information that is freely available electronically.

As nervous optimists we were heartened to read two recent newspaper articles recognising the value of librarians' skills in the age of electronic information.¹ Both articles emphasised the change in image of librarians – the old 'throw away the twin set and pearls' line, as though surfing the net suddenly makes librarians and librarianship glamorous, sexy and exciting! The articles also highlighted the bright employment opportunities for the profession – the *Australian* citing a Federal government survey that projected a 61 percent growth in jobs for librarians by 2005.

We know that you shouldn't believe everything you read in the newspaper – but let's just assume they are right and librarians are a valuable commodity – that means we can stop worrying about whether there IS a future and start shaping that future! As law librarians there are currently a number of organisations looking at the future of legal information and inviting input from interested parties. We should all take the opportunity to draw on our knowledge of information needs and how end-users approach information to contribute to these discussions and ensure that legal information is readily available and easily accessible in the future.

In New South Wales the Legal Information Standards Council has been established to investigate the

co-ordination and provision of electronic legal information in New South Wales. The Australian Law Reform Commission is examining the impact of technology in federal dispute resolution and released an issues paper in March calling for submissions. As librarians, and law librarians in particular, we can contribute our knowledge and skills to these investigations.

In this issue of the *Australian Law Librarian* we have published **Sandra Davies'** informative article "Managing the Magic", an abridged version of the paper Sandra presented to the AIIA Technology in Justice conference earlier this year. Sandra examines why it is important for Australian courts to develop standards for the creation and distribution of their judgments in electronic form. She discusses the work of the Canadian Judicial Council which developed such standards in 1996.

New Zealander **Jane Treadwell** writes about the availability or lack of availability, of New Zealand case law in electronic form. Jane's article also provides a perspective on how New Zealand law librarians lobby for increased access to this material.

Yvonne Butler examines the area of potential professional liability of law librarians. With the move by many libraries towards user pays this topic is becoming increasingly important. Yvonne considers just about every possible head of liability and has some very practical suggestions for limiting this liability.

Dr Des Butler, Assistant Dean at the QUT Faculty of Law has written a comprehensive overview of the Faculty's LawSim project. LawSim is software that allows lecturers to create multimedia problem solving exercises to be incorporated into their subjects. This is an exciting innovation responding in part to the 'flexible delivery' imperative of today's tertiary sector. Des makes reference to the simulated library in LawSim that has some excellent features such as including urls and providing lan access from within the program. It is also worth noting that a template

¹ "Hybrid graduates off the shelf" *Weekend Australian* 30-31 May 1998 p 33; "The treasure hunter" *Courier Mail* 27 June 1998 Employment 1

such as this could be used for interactive user education or legal research skills training

Continuing our legal subject series, legal academic, **Simon Young** and librarian **Carmel O'Sullivan** teamed up to write an article on the law and legal resources in the area of native title.

Dennis Warren's latest contribution "Citation of Legal Authorities – Australia – Handbooks, Manuals, etc" is extremely timely. There are now so many citation manuals that it is necessary to standardise the standards! As always Dennis's article is extremely clear and practical. We found Dennis's criteria 'comprehensiveness and widely accepted practice' especially useful. National agreement on standards is probably a long way off but at least now there are a number of well documented approaches and if the particular one being adopted is clearly stated and accurately used – what more could we hope for?

In the last issue we mentioned that we were aiming to include an article about the legislation of a particular Australian jurisdiction in each issue of the journal. Unfortunately we have not been able to include such an article in this issue, but will include an overview of Northern Territory legislation in the next issue. We have not been overwhelmed by people offering to write about their jurisdiction so we would welcome any contributions for later issues.

Finally, we would like to thank **Carmel O'Sullivan** for her mammoth efforts. Carmel has been the book review co-ordinator and co-co-ordinated the Online and ondisc column for the last two issues. She also co-authored an article for this issue. Carmel will be travelling overseas for the next six months and we wish her well.

One last thing – we would like to apologise to our Business Manager **Sue Green** for the error on the back cover of the first issue for this year. Sue is still librarian at the Brisbane Office of Mallesons Stephen Jaques and has not moved to Minter Ellison!

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