

## *European Information Association*

**Linda Stevenson** and **Sarah Chase**, authors of two articles in this issue of the *Australian Law Librarian*, are members of the European Information Association (EIA). Here **Catherine Webb**, EIA Manager, describes the aims of the Association and how it helps its members.

The complexity, variability and sheer bulk of information coming out of the institutions of the European Union (EU) could easily be described as 'mind bending'. From the daily Official Journal to COM and SEC documents through to CD-ROMS, databases, Internet sites and the plethora of free newsletters and leaflets, finding a way through the maze is a complicated affair and many people get lost on the way.

European information specialists in public, academic and commercial organisations have been battling with the tide of EU information for many years. In 1991 those working in European Documentation Centres in the UK decided to broaden their own professional association to include people from other sectors dealing in EU information. A result of their desire to share experience with others was the formation of the European Information Association.

The EIA is a professional organisation based in Manchester, UK, for people providing, or interested in, information with a European dimension. Our members currently include individual consultants, public, academic and government libraries, European Documentation Centres, Euro Info Centres, local authorities, publishers, companies and law firms. Members come from some 32 countries – including two in New Zealand and one in Australia!

We aim to bring members into contact with each other so they can exchange experience and expertise, discuss and solve common problems, become better trained, develop publications which will help them in

their work, and lobby the EU institutions to influence decisions on European information provision.

We achieve these objectives in a number of ways. The directory of members gives details of people in the Association allowing them to make informal contacts. We hold an annual meeting to which all members are invited along with guest speakers who are specialists in their particular field. Our journal, *European Information*, is published quarterly and provides a published forum for debate, comment and analysis on the world of European information. *EIA Update* is a monthly newsletter keeping members up-to-date with the Association's activities. A particularly successful venture has been the creation of an e-mail discussion list called Eurotalk. This allows members to get help with queries, pass on news and views – or gripe about the subject!

We also run a programme of training seminars and courses – indeed, two years ago in association with the European Commission's Delegation in Yarralumla, we ran a series of very successful training seminars in Melbourne for EDC librarians in Australia and New Zealand.

We produce publications to help members locate EU information. We also try to improve the production and dissemination of EU information through the prestigious EIA Awards for European Information Sources awarded annually, and through specific issues raised by members.

If you are an information worker who has to face EU enquiries, or if you are simply interested in EU information generally and would like to find out more about the EIA and how we can help you, then please contact me or visit our website:

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There is also an EC Delegation here in Australia. The Information Officer is Lynne Hunter who can be contacted at lynne.hunter@ecdel.org.au

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## Digital Agenda Bill

The Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Bill 1999 was introduced into the House of Representatives on 2 September 1999. The Bill which is intended to amend the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) to protect the copyright in electronic material by creating a medium neutral copyright contains a provision of major impact to corporate libraries. The bill is based on the Copyright Reform and the Digital Agenda discussion paper which was released in July 1997 and an exposure draft which was released earlier this year. However the bill contains a provision which will have a major impact on libraries generally which was not mentioned in either the discussion paper or the exposure draft. The bill amends the definition of 'library' in the Copyright Act to exclude corporate libraries. The provision states:

*library* includes a library owned by an educational institution, being an institution that is conducted for profit, but does not include a library owned by any other person or body carrying on business for profit if the person maintains the library mainly or solely for the purposes of that business

The Explanatory Memorandum issued with the bill makes the implications quite clear when it states:

It is intended that the definition should operate to exclude libraries operated by for-profit organisations, such as corporations and **law firms**. This definition is also intended to exclude lending

libraries owned by business organisations made available for use by members of a particular profession where the organisation maintains the library mainly or solely for the purposes of that business. The effect of this definition is to prevent such organisations from relying on the libraries and archives exceptions to the exclusive rights created by the Act

An analysis appearing on the ALIA web site discusses the implications of this amendment for the entire Australian library community:

The problem is that this change will split the library system in half and create all sorts of unnecessary administrative and other problems. For example:

Not for profit libraries will no longer be able to request documents from corporate libraries under section 50 (eg if a university law library requires an article held only in a law firm library, or if a Parliamentary library needs a copy of an article held only in a corporate library), and vice versa.<sup>1</sup>

The legislation has been referred to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, submissions close on 1 October 1999.<sup>2</sup>

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## CD ROM versus Online

Earlier this year Niall O'Driscoll of the Australian Securities and Investment Commission posted a message to the anz law librarians list asking for information about the number of Australian law firms and other organisations providing their lawyers/officers with access to published legal information through the publishers' web sites such as Butterworths Online as opposed to through networked CD-ROMs. The question generated an enthusiastic response, the results of which are summarised here.

The majority of legal libraries that responded were using a mixture of CD-ROM and Internet based resources from the publishers, although a significant

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<sup>1</sup> [www.alia.org.au/copyright/news/1999.09b/](http://www.alia.org.au/copyright/news/1999.09b/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.aph.gov.au/committee/laca](http://www.aph.gov.au/committee/laca)

number were still mainly relying on CD-ROMs. Obviously, not all publishers produce all their products in both formats, but even where a product is available both on CD-ROM and from the publisher's web site, many firms/organisations still need to think hard about which format suits their needs best. Some of the criteria/problems associated with choosing one format over the other included:

- the current lack of speed and reliability of the Internet;
- ease of use;
- currency;
- contingency planning – if a library's link to the web, or their CD-ROM server is down they still need to be able to provide information, therefore many libraries currently aim to provide a spread of CD-ROM and Internet based information sources when possible;
- cost – few libraries can afford to maintain parallel subscriptions and the publishers are still grappling with pricing structures;
- ability to access information from out of the office;
- problems maintaining numerous passwords for Internet based services;
- problems and expense of administering a CD-ROM network;
- archiving – when your subscription ends you do not have any inhouse information regardless of having paid for years;
- problems accessing some Internet sites through some corporate firewalls or not all staff in the organisation have desktop access to the Internet

There is a general feeling that CD-ROMs are only an interim solution however at present organisations are not confident about moving totally to Internet sources due to lack of speed and reliability. As one respondent noted, no one format is perfect for all situations, the Internet may be acceptable for obtaining copies of judgments but extremely frustrating for accessing 'looseleaf services' or even using legislation.

## *National Bibliographic Database Survey*

The Australian Library Collections Task Force was established earlier this year to examine issues relating to access to overseas monographs in Australia particularly focussing on humanities and social sciences subject areas because of the importance of monographs to these disciplines.

The Task Force recently completed a survey of the National Bibliographic Database (NBD), formerly ABN and now known as Kinetica. The study looked at the extent to which various types of libraries in Australia contribute to the NBD, in particular:

- the extent to which materials in Australian libraries are actually recorded on the NBD;
- the types of materials most likely or unlikely to be recorded on the NBD;
- the nature of any other records for material not recorded on the NBD;
- the possible existence of special collections of material not recorded on the NBD, that may be of particular research value; and
- patterns of contribution or non-contribution to the NBD amongst particular library types.

The Task Force surveyed National, State and Territory libraries, academic and special libraries

The survey found:

- academic libraries are the major contributors to the NBD;
- a significant proportion of library collections are not recorded on the NBD in particular pre 1980 monographs; non-book resources such as maps and music; and special collections;
- only 60% of the 94 special libraries surveyed were members of Kinetica and some were not aware that Kinetica existed;
- only 51% of the 94 special libraries sampled contributed records and / or holdings to the NBD

The full report of the study is available on the Internet  
at: [www.nla.gov.au/niac/auscoll/nbdsurvey.html](http://www.nla.gov.au/niac/auscoll/nbdsurvey.html)

Comments regarding the survey are particularly  
welcome, and should be directed to:

ALCTF Secretariat  
Coordination Support Branch  
National Library of Australia  
Canberra ACT 2600

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