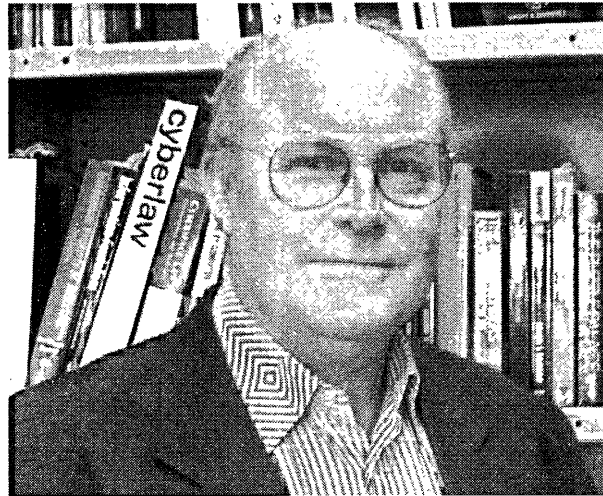


Graham Greenleaf

Founder of the NSW Society for Computers and the Law

*Dr Pamela N. Gray
Co-Editor*

The Computers and Law Journal pays tribute to Professor Graham Greenleaf, Co-Director of AustLII.



Professor Graham Greenleaf

The same person who instituted the free legal database system in Australia, AustLII (Australian Legal Information Institute), was also the founder of the NSW Society for Computers and the Law, namely, Professor Graham Greenleaf of University of New South Wales Law School. With the assistance of David Lewis, Jane Levine, Julian Burnside and Justice Michael Kirby, in 1982, Greenleaf called the initial meeting to form the Society, held at the Masonic Centre in Sydney, and became the first President of the Society. He retired as President after two years and went on to develop AustLII and its clones in other countries such as, in Britain, BAILII (British and Irish Legal Information Institute). Greenleaf made law free to people across the world, relieving the growing injustice of the principle that ignorance of the law is no excuse.

Despite its obvious value, AustLII is dependent on recurrent public donations to maintain its existing databases. Its ongoing existence should not be taken for granted. Donations can be made through the donation form on its website.

Greenleaf is a graduate in Arts and Law from Sydney University. He first worked as a research officer for the newly formed Privacy Committee of NSW which was concerned with data protection and the social implications of IT. Following his work with the Privacy Commission, he practised law with a progressive firm in Dubbo which held their system of precedents online, using Wang macro technology. In 1984, Greenleaf joined the Law School at University of NSW where he collaborated with a recent computer science and law graduate, Andrew Mowbray, now Professor Mowbray at the Law School, University of Technology Sydney. For a time they explored the use of artificial intelligence in the legal domain, particularly through the DataLex Project with Professor Alan Tyree of Sydney University Law School; Tyree was a mathematician as well as a lawyer; Greenleaf had studied philosophy in his Arts degree and had a keen interest in symbolic logic. Eventually, in 1994, Greenleaf and Mowbray obtained an Australian Research Council grant and developed the AustLII site together. The NSW Society for

Computers and the Law has donated to AustLII.

In its first month, 200 members joined the NSW Society for Computers and the Law. Well attended seminars were held monthly and were accredited for compulsory legal education requirements of the profession. For a small fee, seminars are open to non-member attendance. Staff of firms who host seminars may also attend without charge. Eventually, a newsletter was produced for all the Australian and New Zealand Societies for Computers and the Law; it was this newsletter which evolved to become the Computers and Law Journal.

The computers and law movement which began in the early 1980s, grew with the technological advances of that time. The new technology had a considerable impact on the legal system, and, in turn, on the opportunities for justice. This evolution continues, albeit with some political confrontations, through the guidance and protection of leaders such as Greenleaf who set in place the strength of an influential community.