



Update from the New South Wales Bar Association Library

The Bar Library has had a bright start to 2024, providing research, training and access to resources for the Bar membership and continuing and expanding upon initiatives from previous years.





Benjamin Laing

Managing Librarian,

New South Wales Bar Association Library

Possibly the biggest challenge facing the librarians through the latter part of 2023 and into 2024 has been managing the expectations of requesters in relation to electronic distribution of subscribed materials after the changed conditions the library operated under during the COVID-19 pandemic. During that time, the Bar Library's commercial vendors relaxed their conditions around electronic distribution of their materials. At the start of September last year and again at the end of January this year, the library sent memorandums around to all members and clerks advising that these conditions were no longer in effect and that the expectation would be that members or their staff would have to retrieve materials from certain databases from the premises of the Bar Library. Of course, the Bar Librarians are always happy to assist with the retrieval of materials onsite, and we would just like to take the opportunity of this update to remind everyone that this change is not a choice made by the librarians; it is required to comply with our legal obligations under the terms and conditions of the licensing agreements in place with our major commercial vendors. These conditions do not generally apply to members working in regions away from the Bar Library premises.

There are, however, a number of providers who permit electronic distribution and we also work with many public resources, so we can still supply certain materials electronically – if in doubt, please enquire with the Bar Library at any time for clarification.

The library has also taken the first steps to creating a closer relationship with chambers by reaching out to the Clerks Association, with the goal of creating an ongoing dialogue to make communication of issues

such as the one outlined above easier and better understood.

Another significant challenge being addressed is finding the physical space to accommodate our ever-growing monograph collection. Several initiatives, including weeding out extra copies of older editions, removing materials otherwise available online, and relocating some of our journal collection, have helped address this issue. We have also facilitated the return of our hard copy unreported judgment collection (also available online via the Bar Library catalogue) to the Law Courts Library – the plan is for these judgments to eventually be converted to be available to the general public online via the New South Wales Caselaw site.

We are currently analysing our hard copy legislation and stack collections with a view to rationalising less valuable materials and materials available online. Plans are also being developed to renovate sections of the library to incorporate more shelf space so that our vital and heavily used monograph collection will be able to continue to expand unimpeded by storage concerns into the future.

In other news, the long overdue upgrade to the Bar Library intranet is ready to go, pending developments in the Association's Information Technology department, which as many will be aware has faced unprecedented challenges in recent times. When we are able to implement the upgrade, we will have a much simpler and more intuitive design in place, with stronger search capabilities across both the intranet and the library catalogue.

A significant achievement for us in the near future will be recognition of our

assistance to the research effort required to compile the forthcoming publication of *Constant Guardian: Changing Times – The Supreme Court of New South Wales 1824–2024*, celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Supreme Court this year. The Bar Library team will be acknowledged for our efforts in aiding the Law Courts Library in providing research and supplying materials unavailable to their team.

Finally, the library team would like to restate our commitment to providing research skills training to members, chambers and their staff. We have provided numerous sessions to juniors already in 2024, but we know that there are many more who would benefit from this exposure to our resources and processes and we would love to see more members availing themselves of this opportunity. These sessions are intended to be highly flexible in nature as we are happy to tailor the experience to suit the individual, from a basic, ground-up demonstration of available resources to highly specific sessions based on individual resources or areas of law. Simply contact the library to describe the nature of the training you would like to receive and we will arrange a time to accommodate.

We look forward to continuing to provide our wonderful membership with the best library, research and training services we can, and we hope to see many of you downstairs with us in the near future. **BN**

For research queries, please contact us on 02 9233 4025 or libref@nswbar.asn.au

For general queries, please use library@nswbar.asn.au

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