

# Private law libraries\*

A relative new-comer to the law-library field is the private law firm library. This has grown as a result of the inability of the existing academic, court and institutional libraries to provide very specific, detailed information quickly enough to satisfy the needs of the profession.

More and more firms are recognising the value of having a library of their own, often investing in it very heavily: in the larger firms a staff of up to six and a yearly acquisition budget of more than \$200 000 are not uncommon.

The computerised legal database is one reason for the legal profession's growth of interest in library services. In Australia as elsewhere, the arrival of LEXIS or CLIRS services has led legal firms of quite modest size to add the office of law librarian to their establishments. This is likely to push law librarians even further into the area of information specialists: CLIRS, particularly, aims to include access to all sorts of

financial, business and administrative data as well as unreported case law, which is often unavailable for general distribution in print.

The eventual effect of computerised legal information systems can only be guessed at. They will be a remarkable asset to firms and others engaged in legal practice and may well help to reduce the need for large collections of books.

In teaching and research the posi-

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tion is less clear, but for the next decade CLIRS and others are likely to remain largely very fast indexes to a law collection, rather than replace the collection itself. They will also provide access to a great deal of information previously not available. How much they are used outside legal practice will depend, among other factors, on their price.

As the computer databases develop, so will the profession of legal information broker — law graduates and/or

librarians who have the courage, or the capital, to set themselves up as specialist legal research workers. It could also lead to more university libraries setting up user-pays information services.

Given the weight of the problems in both the universities and the National Library, the immediate future for the more public law collections and services in Australia does not look bright. Great improvements are necessary. Even today, not a single law library in Australia reaches the figure of 250 000 titles for a comprehensive research library mentioned in the Martin and AULSA reports. The National Library comes closest with 135 000 (1981 figure). In 1984 only three of our universities exceeded 100 000 titles. In Canada, with smaller enrolments and a generally less-isolated environment, ten exceeded 100 000 and four 150 000.

We must go forward, but at the moment too many of us are struggling to hold on to what we have. At this stage the source of funding for the next advance is not apparent.

Richard Finlay  
Law Librarian  
University of Adelaide

\* This item is a continuation of the *Law Libraries* article featured in *InCite* of 24 April 1989. The Managing Editor apologises for the omission from the earlier article.

that academics should be involved in the process and that it is essential to exhibit potential 'corpses' before final decisions are made.

The last speaker was Kathy Grgic, Serials Librarian at the Brisbane College of Advanced Education. Kathy outlined the four stages of implementation of the serials module of URICA at BCAE, i.e. software evaluation; data collection on worksheets; data entry; retrospective accessioning and invoice processing. She discussed the effects of introducing structure (logical computer-processing functions) into a highly unstructured environment (serial publishing). Kathy concluded by raising some management issues and implications of automating serials, e.g. improved management control; improvement in the access to, and level of, information for the end user.

The lively panel discussion that ended the seminar demonstrated that the large audience found all the papers stimulating and interesting.

Anne Whyte  
Treasurer

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### ALDIS now UMI distributor

ALDIS Pty Ltd, leading Australian CD-ROM supplier, has been appointed distributor of University Microfilms International (UMI) CD-ROM products. UMI is a world leader in microfilm products for libraries.

ALDIS, an associate company of CLSI (Australia) Pty Ltd, has been selling and supporting CD-ROM products since 1985. ALDIS is currently distributor for SilverPlatter and the Library Corporation. The addition of UMI products brings the total number of CD-ROM databases available from ALDIS to more than thirty.

From 13 . . .

It should offer recognition of one's professional expertise from the employing organisation and from professional and management personnel in other fields. It also affords the opportunity to communicate to colleagues the importance of library and information services for the rest of the organisation.

Future detailed accounts will outline graduate courses on offer at institu-

tions throughout the country. The following institutions offer Master's programs:

- Canberra College of Advanced Education
- Curtin University of Technology
- Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education
- Monash University
- Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
- South Australian Institute of Technology
- University of Tasmania.

Ann Foady  
Professional Development Officer

## HEALTH INFORMATION

### NEW DIRECTIONS

12-16 November 1989 Auckland, New Zealand  
Joint Conference, Health Library Sections  
Australian Library and Information Association New Zealand Library Association  
Registration forms are being sent out now. If you do not receive one, but wish to attend the Conference, please contact M. Gibson Smith, Philson Library, School of Medicine, University of Auckland, Private Bag, Auckland, New Zealand.