



David J Jones

Exotic menus and good digestion

There is a now happy hunting ground for cross-cultural Rumpoles. Not only can you follow the golden thread which runs through British justice from Solihull to Samarkand, but you can track down the relevant statute law in a useful publication from the National Library of Australia. *Guide to overseas statutes in the National Library of Australia*, compiled by Biruta Udris, is a 295-page work which delivers exactly what it promises, from the laws and ordinances of Aden to the statutory instruments of Zimbabwe.

There is a remarkable richness here, with some deliberate exclusions, such as material in Arabic, Hebrew and Urdu, and Indian statutes and Indonesian laws which can be accessed through other National Library of Australia catalogues. *Guide to overseas statutes in the National Library of Australia* (ISBN 0 642 10595 2), compiled by Biruta Udris, was published in 1993 by the NLA and costs \$25.00.

Laws which haven't quite made it into the statute book (and which in some cases never will) figure in a new series of publications from the New South Wales Parliamentary Library. The *Bills Digest* series presents, in words which even legal illiterates like myself can understand, a summary of what particular bits of proposed legislation will inflict upon the unsuspecting populace. The series performs something of the role of explanatory memoranda in Commonwealth legislation, providing a wealth of background information, but also summarising the proposals.

Whilst commending the Parliamentary Library on the thorough production of this series, which will be of inestimable assistance to harried backbenchers and interested observers, one does wonder why the

legislation itself could not be couched in accessible language, or at least introduced by words which are in some form of Basic English (avoiding parties of the first, second and subsequent parts, and complexities of the Ground Nuts (Underground) Regulations type). Until the happy day when those with a reading age of under sixty-five can comfortably graze on the verbiage of certain legislation, the *Bills Digest* series (ISSN 1039-8732) from the New South Wales Parliamentary Library will remain a valuable resource.

Further information about the series can be obtained from the Parliamentary Research Service, NSW Parliamentary Library, Macquarie Street, Sydney, NSW 2000.

FOILED again!

In an appropriate instance of Freudian slippage, a politician was once heard to refer repeatedly to 'Freedom from Information Legislation.' How appropriate, for much of our continent was slow to adopt any form of freedom of information legislation at all.

The Commonwealth led the way in 1982, followed by Victoria in 1983, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory in 1989, South Australia in 1992, Tasmania in 1993. Legislation is mooted in Queensland and Western Australia. Only the Northern Territory has so far neglected to leap aboard the FOI bandwagon.

Not that an act is the be-all and end-all. All the relevant acts contain exclusions, exceptions, conditions and rigmarole which may tend to keep at bay all but the Woodwards and Bernsteins, and possibly the Brian Tooheys, of this life. To guide you around the labyrinthine legislation, such as it is, Kate Harrison and Anne Cossins have painstakingly put together a second edition of *Documents, dossiers and*

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the inside dope: a practical guide to Freedom of Information law in this blessed plot.

In a span of 232 pages the authors tell you generally what you ought to be able to see, and how to go about it; what you ought to be able to see but probably can't, and how to try to get around it; and what you are never likely to be able to see, so hard cheese. There are of course valid reasons why some bodies or classes of record are generally or partly exempt from the provisions of such legislation, for reasons of national security, or indeed for commercial reasons, in the case of a government trading enterprise.

This tremendous book lucidly explains the whys and the wherefores, and is a vital reference tool for historians, social researchers, community groups and activists. *Documents, dossiers and the inside dope* by Kate Harrison and Anne Cossins (ISBN 1 86373 185 7) was published in 1993 by Allen and Unwin and costs \$17.95.

Free research

Australian library and information research is now being produced by the University of South Australia Library, and continues to provide a useful register of projects and research work on librarianship and documentation being undertaken by a range of people and bodies. The definition of research is broad, embracing state of the art surveys, feasibility studies, pilot projects and innovations, as well as compiling substantial bibliographies.

Why then is this such a slim volume? Only 78 projects? Me-thinks there are lights being hidden under acres of bushels.

Copies of *ALIR* (ISSN 0727-8934) are generously being made available free to Australian libraries, and can be requested from Library Publications, University of South Australia Library, Holbrooks Road,

► Underdale, SA 5032. I must tell them about that bibliography of bibliographies of the stump-jump plough I have almost started on.

Scholarly stuff

Keith Maslen is one of the most distinguished contemporary scholars of printing and the book trade, and was until 1991 on the staff of the University of Otago. In that year a conference was held at that most appropriate venue, Monash University, honouring Maslen's contribution to this specialised field, and the papers presented, and some besides, are now available in a very stylish publication.

An index of civilisation: studies of printing and publishing history in honour of Keith Maslen is a fine example of a festschrift, whose contributors form a veritable Australasian who's who of the history of the book. Not everyone will be instantly turned on by the topic of book sale catalogues in eighteenth century Warwickshire, or Oxonian Antiquities, but it is worth persisting. There are some marvelous stories unfolded, some cautionary tales revealed and some valuable experiences shared by the nineteen distinguished contributors.

An index of civilisation (ISBN 0 7326 0467 2), edited by Ross Harvey, Wallace Kirsop and Brian McMullin, was published in 1993 by the Centre for Bibliographical and Textual Studies, Monash University. It costs \$50.00 plus postage (\$5.00 within Australia; \$15.50 to New Zealand, \$19.00 air to North America and \$20.00 air to Europe).

A handful of Haworths

Charles D Emery goes to the heart of library services in his re-

cent *Buyers and borrowers: the application of consumer theory to the study of library use*, which is published by Haworth Press. Are you reaching your targets? How can you interpret changes in patterns of use? Can you apply concepts like product mix and brand switching to the marketing of library services?

Yes, you can get answers to these questions, and yes, in a way libraries can be examined like corn flakes, meaty bites and environmentally friendly soap suds. So Emery attempts 'to explore the application of the compound Poisson distribution, as used by Ehrenberg in his studies of repeat buying, to a variety of situations involving the use of libraries.' Well, there you have it, cogently argued and well illustrated for those with a statistical bent.

Charles D Emery's *Buyers and borrowers* (ISBN 1 56024 183 7) was published in 1993 by Haworth Press and costs US\$26.95 hardback, US\$21.95 soft.

Interlibrary loan of alternative format materials: a balanced sourcebook, edited by Bruce E Massis and Winnie Vitzansky, tackles the availability, worldwide, of interlibrary loans of audio recordings, braille and large print materials for people with visual impairment.

Originating in a questionnaire from the International Federation of Library Associations Standing Committee of Libraries for the Blind, this work outlines relevant union catalogues, lending institutions, reciprocal arrangements and links, in a range of countries around the world. There are also a number of related essays on specific issues, such as the implica-

tions of international interlending.

Interlibrary loan of alternative format materials (ISBN 1 56024 394 5) was published by Haworth in 1992 (and also published as vol. 3 nos 1/2, 1992 of *Journal of interlibrary loan and document supply*). It costs US\$26.95 hardback, US\$21.95 soft.

Journal of Agricultural and Food Information is a new publication from Haworth, emerging from the humus in July 1993, and aiming to cover a pretty broad spectrum, including rural development, aquaculture, animal welfare, biotechnology and more besides.

It kicks off with an outline of the United States Agricultural Information Network, and proceedings of its 1991 conference. There are papers on the unfamiliar, like land-grant universities, and more common ground, like the use of information technology in agricultural extension. Some papers are summarised, and there are news notes, book reviews, and a useful select bibliography on food irradiation.

Journal of Agricultural and Food Information (ISSN 1049-6505), published by Haworth Press, began publication this year, and appears quarterly. Subscriptions cost US\$28.00 for individuals, US\$40.00 for institutions and libraries. ■

Items for review in *The Source* should be sent to:

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