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# The Law Reform Commission's Library & Information Service

**Abstract:** Conor Kennedy provides an overview of the Law Reform Commission's Library & Information Service
**Keywords:** law reform; government; information services; Ireland

## The Law Reform Commision

The Law Reform Commission is a statutory body whose purpose is to keep the law under review and make recommendations for law reform so that the law reflects the changing needs of Irish society. Since establishment the Commission has published over 160 documents and 70% of these have resulted in reforming legislation. Examples include *Proceeds of Crime Act 1996* implemented our 1990 *Report on the Confiscation of the Proceeds of Crime*; *Land and Conveyancing Law Reform Act 2009* implemented our 2005 *Report on Reform and Modernisation of Land Law and Conveyancing Law* and Part 15 of *Civil Partnership and Cohabitants Act 2010* implemented our 2006 *Report on Rights and Duties of Cohabitants*.

The Commission also produce administrative consolidations of Acts, called Restatements and updates the Legislation Directory, a searchable guide to amendments made to Acts. In 2010 the Commission also published a draft *Classified List of Legislation in Ireland*. This comprises a list of over 2,000 post-1922 Acts and over 100 pre-1922 Acts that remain in force, grouped under 36 major subject headings.

## The Library and Reform Service

All Commission publications dating back to 1975 are available on our website, www.lawreform.ie

The Library & Information Service is specifically targeted to enable and support the work of the Commission. The Legal Information Manager works closely with Commission staff to ensure that they have access to the most relevant, timely and up-to-date resources and services. With the exponential growth in law itself, and the attendant burgeoning of information products, services and suppliers that we have seen over the past two decades, an essential skill is knowing ***where*** and ***how*** to look for relevant information. This is where the employment of professionally qualified and experienced law librarians represents a good return on investment and ensures that the legal professional has the necessary support and resources to hand.

The Library & Information Service staff of the Law Reform Commission strive to ensure that whatever is required will be sourced and supplied without delay. Furthermore, a broad range of strategies are employed to ensure that Commission staff are kept up to date with current developments, at both national and international level. To this end the Library staff create detailed, cross-referenced catalogue records, produce a weekly in-house Current Awareness Service, operate a media monitoring service and have a good working understanding of the nature of all the on-going projects so that pertinent assistance can be provided as soon as it is required.

## Reciprocal Arrangements

Through reciprocal arrangements with law reform agencies throughout the common law world the Law Reform Commission Library has developed a section that is undoubtedly unique in Ireland. We hold a copy of every publication produced by the law reform agencies of Australia, Canada, England & Wales, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland and South Africa.

The Library's acquisitions closely track the Commission's on-going projects and their evolving requirements. Relevant text books are purchased and serials subscribed to in anticipation of each new project and whenever an information gap emerges the Library & Information Service strives to bridge it. The Commission are fortunate to be able to draw on the excellent services provided by Trinity College, Dublin – Information Service, The British Library, The Institute of Advanced Legal Studies and a wide and informal network of law librarians throughout Ireland, the UK and Australia. This informal assistance, so graciously provided by librarians, academics and researchers throughout the world often proves invaluable in ensuring that the Library and Information Service can meet the needs of its user group.

Close collaboration, consultation and cooperation between the Library & Information Service staff with both our internal stakeholders and external agencies and associates, ensure that provision is fit for purpose and enables the Commission to fulfil its remit.



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## Biography

Conor Kennedy is a Graduate of Queens University Belfast (B.A.) and University College Dublin (Higher Dip. Library & Information Studies). He worked as Journalist/Deputy Editor of City West News, Belfast before joining the Irish Civil Service in 2000. He worked as Library Assistant in The Judges' Library for four years before taking on the role of Legal Information Manager with the Law Reform Commission in 2004, where he is currently employed.

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## *Government Legal Libraries in Northern Ireland*

In this section Alison Lorrimer and Jacki Sleator cover the work of libraries working within two government departments in Northern Ireland:

The Departmental Solicitor's Office

The Public Prosecution Service

# Legal Information Service Provision within Government in Northern Ireland

**Abstract:** Alison Lorrimer, Librarian in Departmental Solicitor's Office outlines the work of Departmental Solicitor's Office and how the library service has evolved to meet the information requirements of the office.
**Keywords:** government; information services; Northern Ireland

## Departmental Solicitor's Office

The Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO) was established in 1993 when the legal offices of three government departments merged to form a new centralised legal department with the objective of providing high quality, cost effective legal advice and services to all instructing departments. DSO formed a directorate within the Department of Finance & Personnel. At that time all of the staff moved to Victoria Hall apart from one solicitor who was based in Orchard House, Londonderry.

Victoria Hall is a purpose built office block which occupies the site of the original Victoria Hall, built in 1839. This building had a colourful history. It was built as a music hall where Charles Dickens gave readings of his works to a packed house in 1858 but became a Brethren Meeting House in 1916. DSO gossip suggests that the present building is haunted but I cannot claim to have encountered any troubled spirits other than solicitors in urgent need of information!

I started work in DSO in 1995 when there were approximately 35 solicitors. At that time the legal staff either worked in one of the teams advising NICS government departments or in the Commercial & Property Division. Today the number of staff has grown to between 80 and 85. Organisational changes within Northern Ireland government have added functions to the core work of DSO. There is now a Litigation Division and a Civil Law Reform Division. The devolution of policing and justice to



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