Legal Information Management, 24 (2024), pp. 205–207
© The Author(s), 2025. Published by British and Irish Association of Law Librarians
doi:10.1017/S1472669624000446

RETROSPECTIVE

Raiders of the Lost Archive

Abstract: In the latest in our series reviewing archived copies of *Legal Information Management* and *The Law Librarian* – as the journal was once known – LIM's co-editors leaf through the four editions published in 1994, while they also take a quick look at an issue from 2001 which featured a contributor who has since gone on to greater things …
Keywords: legal publishing; legal journals; law librarianship; legal information management; BIALL

Legal Information Management (LIM) has been around since 1970, which means pretty much every aspect of legal information technology and practice has been covered at some time or other. With that in mind, in this regular feature the editors trawl through the archives for a given year to give a snapshot of the trends, tech developments, points of discussion, controversies, and also those predictions that have come true and those that have not, of LIMs gone by. In this issue we will look at the four editions of the journal, then known as *The Law Librarian,* that were published 30 years ago …

SENNA AND COBAIN

Sometimes you can only truly gauge the wider effect a sports star has had when he or she is gone. And when Formula 1 driver Ayrton Senna died in 1994, after crashing at Imola, the shock waves were instant and profound, especially in his native Brazil, where there were three days of national mourning while an estimated three million people lined the streets of his native Sao Paulo for the funeral.

That was not the only sporting tragedy to hit South America in this year, as in Columbia footballer Andrés Escobar was shot dead in Medellin, the motive for his murder believed by many to be the own goal he scored when Columbia played the USA in the 1994 World Cup. Brazil won the cup, the team dedicating their victory to Senna.

There was a shocking celebrity death in the music world this year, too, with the suicide of Nirvana singer Kurt Cobain in a hotel in Seattle.

The year was also notable for the genocide in Rwanda and the ongoing war in Bosnia. But it wasn't all doom and gloom, and one of the good news stories was the Church of England ordaining its first female priests – it says much for the British sense of humour that by the end of the year *The Vicar of Dibley* aired for the first time.

In May the Channel Tunnel was officially opened and the first Eurostar passengers travelled through it in November, while Tony Blair became leader of the Labour Party following the death of John Smith.

In tech news, IBM launched the first ever commercially available 'smartphone' – that word wasn't actually used back then but it did have some features that we now associate with smartphones, such as a touchscreen. It didn't have a camera or internet connectivity, though, so back in 1994 people actually looked at things, rather than take a photo of them, and – or so they say – they also even talked to each other.

MOSES AND E-MAILS

The first issue of *The Law Librarian* in 1994 was largely devoted to legal publishing and Brian HW Hill of Simmons & Hill Publishing Ltd gave us a great introduction to his piece on the problems publishers faced back then, and presumably still do today: "As we all know, Moses was the first law publisher. He had a great author but rather reluctant customers who had to be convinced that he was offering what they needed. Things have not changed much since then."

What had changed was that electronic publishing was very much the shiny new thing in '94, and as Norman Nunn-Price, the database editor at Context Ltd, wrote, the writing was on the wall, or rather the screen, for more traditional approaches. "The underlying message is that electronic publishing has come to stay. The new entrants to the legal profession are now computer literate and prefer to obtain their primary information from a screen rather than a book."

That was not the case for those already established, though, for as David Summers of Butterworth & Co wrote: "I do not believe that lawyers have made any dramatic improvements in their use of computers in the past five years and there is a major education programme ahead in which publishers and librarians have a common interest."

It was not all publishing, and there was also a small piece on something called 'electronic mail', which "allows you to send messages instantly around the country or across the globe". It was also referred to as 'e-mail'. Glad that never got off the ground, if it had we'd be swamped by those pesky messages every day and we'd never get

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1472669624000446 Published online by Cambridge University Press

any work done. No wonder those solicitors didn't want computers. Clever chaps, lawyers.

DIRTY WATER AND DEAD BODIES

It's pleasing to see that this edition's interview subject, Peter Clinch (see page 137), was also an integral part of the summer issue of *The Law Librarian* 30 years ago, and his involvement was also greatly appreciated then, too. "Peter Clinch has produced another of his immaculate articles," wrote Christine Miskin in the editorial.

Peter's contribution was obviously always welcome, but even more so this time because having planned an issue devoted to environmental matters the editor had been let down by a number of contributors, including "the Department of the Environment itself!"

Environmental law was relatively new back then, having been largely driven by the European Community, and one piece that did arrive included a segment that touched upon water pollution. This stated that since 1990 fines had risen from a maximum of £2000 to £20,000. It's much more now, of course, in the many millions in fact. Yet still rivers, and even the sea, continue to be polluted.

Elsewhere in this issue Barbara Tearle looked at 'Information Strategies in the Academic Law Library', which examined what academic law library users required and what was available to them. There was quite a lot of the latter, including "Internet through JANET" which could "give access to a growing quantity of legal texts, information and other libraries' OPACS". But, warned Barbara: "It is unfortunate that sources on the internet are disorganised, difficult to find and of varying quality."

Later, in probably one of the more random pieces ever seen in this journal, there is a review on a book called *Death to Dust: What Happens to Dead Bodies?* It sounds like a barrel of laughs, too, covering just about everything you never wanted to know about kicking the bucket, including the history of dealing with corpses and even "cannibalism, head shrinking, ritual dismemberment, the more gory forms of execution, necrophilia and necrophobia …" and so on. There's also a bit on epitaphs, our reviewer's favourite example being the wonderfully laconic and poetic "Thorpe's Corpse".

MAYO ON THE DOMESDAY DISC

"The Judge summed up – Sir Neville felt that if you punched the old boy, a cloud of library dust would rise from him, and hang about in the air for an eternity afterwards with nowhere to go." This passage from Peter Ustinov's *Krumnagel* appeared in 'Quote and Unquote' in the third issue of 1994. This was a marvellous regular feature that appeared towards the end of the journal, consisting of a quote and then a few paragraphs on the book it belonged to, in this case a novel that was a humorous take on the differences between the US and UK legal systems. Our reviewer, Nigel Jamieson, Senior Lecturer in Law, University of Otago, certainly seemed to enjoy it. "What Ustinov exposes, is the huge culture shock that lies in store for those assuming that one and the same English language can cover over the gaping transatlantic chasm between the two leading branches of the same legal system."

There were more transatlantic ponderings in the report on the AALL Conference by Susan Doe and Victoria Jannetta, which in 1994 was held in Seattle. One of the more memorable, if slightly awkward, moments was an attempt to show that teaching legal research could be fun if framed in the form of the popular game show of the time, *The Price is Right*. But the seminar, entitled *The Price is Mutually Agreeable: the legal research gameshow*, didn't get off to the best of starts when the host tried to rouse law librarians into the sort of frenzy usually reserved for the game show's audience. When an American law librarian was seen to sneak out of the room, BIALL's representative thought it was okay to make her escape, too.

Much of the rest of the autumn issue was devoted to copyright, important then with the amount of photocopying available, and very important now with the advances in AI. There were pieces on copyright laws in many parts of the world, as well as an article on the BIALL Law Firm SIG's Working Group on Copyright. It noted that law librarians have "the added difficulty of their library being open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so for many hours an unstaffed library is accessible. How can the librarian ensure that a copyright policy is being followed in her [sic] absence?" This can still be an issue, of course, and the only way to police it is to make sure everyone in the firm understands the importance of copyright.

Talking of good behaviour in the library, a review of a biannual journal entitled *College and Undergraduate Libraries*, which covered pretty much everything you would need to know about successfully running one of these establishments, was said to be mainly focussed on the US. There was one British contribution, though, which was about combatting eating in the library and was entitled: 'That's mayonnaise on the Domesday disc!'

LIBRARY ROMPS AND THE IT CROWD

In the Editor's Notes for the Winter 1994 edition of *The Law Librarian* Christine Miskin writes about the 25th BIALL Annual Conference, which for the first time "took place amidst the splendour of a luxury hotel, in this instance the Grand Hotel in the centre of Birmingham", a city the conference returns to next year.

Showing how hot a topic total quality management was in the early '90s there were three papers on this presented at the Birmingham conference, while other subjects covered included sex discrimination in the legal profession.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1472669624000446 Published online by Cambridge University Press

One of the other papers from that conference, 'Birmingham and the Law', which was presented by Judge Malcolm Lee QC and written up for the Winter edition, looked at the legal history of the city, and it was not quite as dry as you might expect, especially when he starts discussing the library at the Victoria Law Courts. He tells of an incident in its then recent history when "a startled usher came across the semi recumbent forms of a young member of the bar and a young member of the Crown Prosecution Service *flagrante delicto* in the intimate, and what they took to be the safe, seclusion of one of [the] alcoves".

There is also an interesting piece on technology, entitled 'This Time IT is for Real'. In this Dr Ray Lester, who was the Director of Information Systems, London Business School, warned that: "I suggest that what are going to change in a very significant way are the majority of the libraries that we work in; because the business that we are in, as librarians, increasingly will have no need for those libraries or their librarians."

He does go on to offer some hope, though. "Who will ensure that the organisation does not get submerged by the complexity? The answer is very straightforward. It must be YOU! We cannot, must not, leave it all to the commercial players. We must also leave it neither to the technocrats within our organisations; nor to our organisational customers and their managers. We are the ones that really understand the nature of that key resource, information …"

The fact that you're reading this suggests that's exactly what happened. Now we just have to do pretty much the same thing with AI.

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARCHIVE – EXTRA!

Since the last edition of LIM one of our previous contributors has found himself a new job; quite an important post it is, too. Sir Keir Starmer, who was then not a knight and worked as a barrister at Doughty Street Chambers, penned a guide on 'The European Convention on Human Rights and The Human Rights Act 1998' for the Spring issue in 2001 (Volume 1, Issue 1), the very first to bear the name *Legal Information Management*.

We were hoping to find a joke or two in it, or something illuminating about his character back then, but to be honest it's quite a … er … professional piece, but then it is a very serious subject. Yet the main point here is, if he hadn't contributed to LIM would he have still gone on to become Prime Minister? We're not sure, but you never know, so if you're the ambitious type then we recommend you get typing and send us an article as soon as you can.



One of LIM's Spring 2001 contributors in a very nice suit. UK Parliament

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1472669624000446 Published online by Cambridge University Press