

# Editorial

While this is the final issue of 2024, you will be reading it in 2025, which means we're already nearly a quarter of the way through the 21st Century. It's flown by, hasn't it? And while it hasn't yet brought the hover cars and world peace we had been hoping for in those 1970s and '80s school essays on what the Year 2000 would be like, things have certainly changed over the past 25 years, both in the wider world and in the legal information profession.

The changes the profession has seen – and indeed those it might soon see – are at the heart of former LIM Editor David Wills' article which starts on page 220, which is based on his very well received Willi Steiner Memorial Lecture at the BIALL Conference in Leeds in June. It's a wide-ranging piece, which is one of the reasons why we have given it so much space, and it brilliantly illustrates just how much things have changed – perhaps for worse, maybe for better – over the past three decades, and how law librarians have always been able to adapt to this.

One law librarian who has certainly had to adapt over the years is current BIALL President Claire Mazer, in her role as Academic Liaison Librarian at Brunel University of London. Claire, the subject of this month's interview, is the first President from the academic side of the profession for a decade, but as you will find out on turning to page 215 she has some very interesting views on *all* aspects of the legal information world, not just academia.

But returning to the unfulfilled promise of the Year 2000, perhaps one science fiction fancy that *has* become reality in the last 25 years or so is the rise of the robots – actually, the idea of getting a machine to write your essay on 'What will the world be like in the Year 2000' might have seemed attractive in 1978. Now, though, it's here, and as we all know, it's perhaps not always quite as cool as a hover car.

Artificial intelligence in education is actually something that LexisNexis has recently looked into, conducting a wide range of interviews with people involved in the legal education system regarding their thoughts on what impact it will have, and indeed is having, on the sector. On page 230 Matthew Leopold goes through this in some detail and, as always with his contributions to LIM, it's a fascinating read, not least because of the sheer diversity of views that were found.

AI is also central to Melissa Mills' piece on page 248. This interesting article looks at the evolution of law librarianship in Australia, although it covers topics that are relevant the world over, including milestones such as the transition from hard copy to online access, and, as mentioned, the arrival of AI.

Melissa's article was based on a presentation she gave at the 2024 BIALL Conference, as are many in this issue – a tradition for the Winter LIM – and among these is a piece by Catherine Parkin, librarian at Leeds Beckett University (LBU), and Aarti Sehgal, librarian at the

University of Sheffield (TUoS), which explores student database engagement within their institutions and how they are working to improve this (page 237). Entitled, 'Guiding Away From Google', this article is generally about the academic side of things, but it will be of interest to anyone involved in the legal information world.

The same could be said of Abi Reader's piece – is there any better name for a librarian, except perhaps Terence Stamp? – which focusses on how austerity in recent times, and especially cuts to legal aid, have made it all the more important that legal information should be publicly available, and yet cutbacks in spending on public libraries has meant this is very rarely the case. It's a thought-provoking article, highlighting real issues in accessing the law; turn to page 243 to find out more.

Related to the above, in a way, on page 252 Canadian law librarian Amy Kaufman examines the role law libraries in her country can take in responding to the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report in 2015, which examined the treatment of Aboriginal people in Canada throughout its history. It's an absorbing piece, and you certainly do not need to be Canadian to get something from it.

We then go from Canada to Japan, and the ancient art of Kintsugi, which teaches that imperfections and failures are not flaws to hide but opportunities for growth and enrichment. So explains Hélène Russell on page 257, who goes on to show how legal information professionals can make use of Kintsugi to help ease the adoption of AI in their firms.

Meanwhile, on page 261 legal tech expert Sara A Sutherland takes a good look at algorithms and asks whether we really understand them and how they function, and why this is so important when it comes to adopting new technologies. If you read just one thing in this issue, then make it this.

But while algorithms do seem to be about to take on some of the heavy lifting in the modern legal environment there are still people with real jobs – thankfully. Yet the world of work is also changing, and fast, and on page 264 Bob Cordran, an Employment Partner at Memery Crystal, examines the key reforms at the heart of the recently published Employment Rights Bill, and how it might affect you, or your staff.

Finally, in what we think you will agree is a bumper edition of LIM, on page 267 Gavin Sheridan, the co-founder and CEO at Vizlegal, considers what he describes as a first principles approach to barriers to access of information, specifically looking at how technology companies can address this issue and improve things for all.

## REGULARS

This month's book review focusses on *Legal Research Methods for the English-Speaking Caribbean*, by Yasmin Morais and Yemisi Dina, a work that fills a significant

resource gap when it comes to Caribbean legal research. Turn to page 272 to read Susanna Winter's assessment of it.

Meanwhile, our regular trawl through the LIM archives starts on page 274 and this time we travel back to 2004, which ties in rather nicely with the start of this Editorial. There are still no hover cars, though, only glimpses of a past that was very different, and yet in many ways much the same.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, a big thanks to our contacts at Cambridge University Press (CUP), Jamie Davidson and Craig Baxter, for all their help in the wake of the cyber-attack the publisher suffered back in June. They are almost back on track now, as is LIM, and we're hoping the Spring issue will be with you in, er ... well, the spring!

We should also offer a big thanks to our proofreaders, who have turned this issue around very soon after the previous one, which is again due to problems that arose after the cyber-attack. Thanks also to Katherine Read and Heather Memess, for putting together the Current Awareness section at the end of the journal.

Once again, we think we have an eclectic issue, and we're extremely grateful to all those who have contributed articles. Like to join them in the pages of LIM? Well, if you have an idea you would like to develop into an article then please get in touch ([limeditor@biall.org.uk](mailto:limeditor@biall.org.uk)), as we're always on the lookout for new contributors. First one to contact us gets a hover car!



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