

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 issues published in 2004.

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. This time we will look at the four editions of the journal that were published 20 years ago.

FACEBOOK AND FRIENDS

It’s amazing to think that something that is now a massive part of the lives of most of us – for good or for bad – was in its infancy just 20 years ago. We are, of course, talking about social media. And while Friendster and Myspace perhaps pioneered the ‘genre’, it was probably Facebook that took it to the dizzy, frankly scary, heights it’s at now. And this all began in a student’s room in 2004 when one Mark Zuckerberg launched The Facebook – later dropping the ‘The’.

Facebook was originally just for Harvard students, but it went global very soon – it now has over 2bn daily users! Mydoom also went global very quickly in 2004, indeed it was the fastest spreading email worm ever. It contained the message “Andy; I’m just doing my job, nothing personal, sorry”, which led many to believe the person who authored or spread it was paid – according to many in the cyber security business, by someone in Russia.

Later in this year Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Estonia, Romania, Lithuania and Latvia were admitted into NATO, the largest expansion of the security alliance ever. In another move guaranteed to annoy a certain Vladimir, who had already been Russian president for four years by then, 10 new countries were also admitted to the European Union in 2004, including the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

In sport, Euro 2004 was won by Greece in one of the biggest surprises ever in international football, while the 2004 Olympics were held in Athens, making it a great

year for the country that could justly claim to have invented sport in the first place.

Meanwhile in the USA, in August, for the first time there were more broadband internet connections than dial up (remember *eeh-eeh-eeh-eeh*, eeeeeeeee?), while there were also changes at the top, with George W Bush winning the Presidential election in November and going on to start a second term in 2005.

All big news stories, then, but the most momentous occurrence of 2004 was at the end of the year, when on Boxing Day an earthquake in the Indian Ocean – the third biggest ever recorded – caused one of the world’s largest and most destructive tsunamis, killing close to 230,000 people.

This year also saw the final episode of *Friends*, after a decade making us laugh. It has been said that it’s still quite possible to waste much of a Sunday watching back-to-back reruns of the show, but we wouldn’t know about that as we’re far too busy reading back-to-back issues of old LIMs, starting with Spring 2004 ...

CUP AND LUNCHBOX

... Which in itself was a start, for Spring 2004 was the first issue of LIM ever published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) – a two-decade relationship which is sadly coming to end at the end of 2025. In the Editorial Christine Miskin welcomed the change and, as was all the rage back then, she explained that the editorial board had also come up with a mission statement for the journal: “To be the journal of choice to all British and Irish legal information workers.”

Ironically, the first ever article in this brave new CUP world was not focussed on either Britain or Ireland, but rather the South Pacific island of Vanuatu, where Peter Murgatroyd was Law Librarian at the Emalus Campus of the University of the South Pacific at Port Vila. In a piece that was, as the abstract suggests “guaranteed to inspire envy in these cold and dark winter nights”, Peter told us that “Vanuatu is a tropical island paradise. Coconut palms, magnificent blood-red sunsets and great beaches.” To be fair, though, he also writes about the three-month cyclone season, when “electrical storms and power



Lithuania was admitted to both NATO and the European Union in 2004, which gives us an excuse to use a nice pic from its wonderful capital city, Vilnius

blackouts are common. Humidity levels hover in the high nineties and it's hot and sticky."

Sticking with the nice work if you can get it theme, Karen Skiffington told us about her job as a law librarian in Bermuda, where she produced the Bermuda Law Reports, which had been launched in 2002.

Now if the above makes you think that being a law librarian in 2004 was a little bit like being James Bond, then you'll be interested to read that there was also a piece on competitive intelligence in the legal market, though the writer, Arthur Weiss, made it very clear that "It is important to emphasise that competitive intelligence does not involve spying or espionage." Spoilsport.

With current worries about SQE, and what it might mean for the research skills of trainee solicitors, it's interesting to note that similar questions were being asked about the Legal Practice Course (LPC) back in 2004. There were a couple of pieces on this subject, and one was based on a questionnaire that had been sent to a number of former students who were then in practice. Interestingly, many said they wished they had learned more Practical Legal Research (PLR) on their courses. It might be interesting to quiz those who go through SQE in a similar vein in the coming years.

While the above might seem enough for one LIM, this is actually just a small selection from what was a bumper 85-page first issue for CUP, which finished with a few book reviews. These included Sir Oliver Popplewell's memoir *Benchmark: life, laughter and the law*. As the reviewer pointed out: "There are not many autobiographies of judges, and particularly not of High Court judges, and so they are always of interest when they appear." Sir Oliver, who died in the summer of 2024, was perhaps best-known for a comment he made about Linford Christie's 'lunchbox' which is discussed in the book. If you're not sure what that's all about, then look it up ... Actually, best not to do this at work.

MINE OF KNOWLEDGE

Leafing through these past issues what becomes clear is not just how much things change, but also how much they stay the same. Take the Summer 2004 edition of LIM, which featured an immigration resource guide put together by some people from the Immigration Appellate Information Service, "at a time when it doesn't seem possible to pick up a newspaper without the subject being in the headlines", writes the editor. The piece itself opens

with the line: “Before 1905 there were no immigration laws in the UK,” which in itself is very interesting.

There is also an article on Knowledge Management as a career, which points out that just five or so years before some saw KM as just another management fad which would fade in time – like Total Quality Management, which is forever mentioned in past issues of this journal from the '90s but never now, or in 2004. KM has proven to be much more resilient than that, of course.

But once again the really quotable lines are from the book review section, in which a work by FW Lancaster, *Indexing and abstracting in theory and practice*, contains the following passage in its introduction: “A word I have some difficulty in accepting is ‘mining’ (as in ‘text mining, speech mining’) which is often used as a synonym for ‘knowledge discovery’. My father spent many years as a hewer in a coal mine in the north of England. He worked long hours ... he hewed coal in a ‘wet seam’. Lying on his back or side in water in a passage with a very low ceiling. I’m not sure that this type of laborious extraction in semi-darkness is the analogy that ‘data miners’ really want us to use.” You have to say, he had a point.

CRATE EXPECTATIONS

There’s a moving article to kick off the Autumn issue of 2004, which is entitled: ‘Get a Move on. Or when your Firm Relocates’. This piece by Sara Berry, then the head of Information Sourcing at Clifford Chance, charts the firm’s move to Canary Wharf and it contains a useful checklist of items to consider, at the bottom of which is: “Wear old clothes on moving days and have plenty of chocolate and biscuits on hand!” Always good advice, that. We also learn that “most lawyers had the equivalent of 27 crates worth of paper in their offices!”

Returning to a theme first explored in the Spring issue, there’s another look at whether LPC students were really ready for practice. This was based on research conducted by Amanda Fancourt, and among its findings were that “standards of English have collapsed. [This is] one thing still needed that I see is not necessarily being provided.” This was from a training partner at a “niche legal aid firm”.

The SLS / BIALL Academic Law Library Survey 2002 / 2003 is also featured in this issue, with a number of interesting findings, including: “of the 79 responding law libraries 84% had a dedicated professional who could dedicate a significant proportion of their time to the needs of the law service.” This is a figure that would be far lower now, as librarians are asked to take on many other subject areas. Incidentally, we will be running an article on the

results of the most recent iteration of the academic law library survey in 2025, so look out for that.

I WILL SURVIVE

The Winter issue also started with some encouraging numbers, the editor reporting on a survey conducted by Sweet & Maxwell in which it quizzed library and information services within the top 100 law firms, finding that “the position and prospects of law librarians have improved greatly over the last few years”. The survey found that some law librarians, or legal information managers, oversaw huge global teams, one of them being responsible for 70 staff worldwide.

When you do have such a large and spread-out team training can be an issue, although this is something that’s perhaps not such a problem now thanks to any number of online programmes. But the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) was a relatively new space back in 2004, one that Marianne Barber explored in an article based on her paper from that year’s BIALL Annual Study Conference in Edinburgh. In her piece, which was largely to do with academic institutions, Marianne asks “whether or not it is better to ‘provide’ rather than ‘guide’ in the matter of information provision.” A question that’s as pertinent today as it was 20 years ago.

Of course, it’s really all a matter of getting the balance right, and that’s something that LIM rarely gets wrong. So, after starting the year on a South Sea island, we finished it in Alaska. In an article entitled ‘Libraries of “The Last Frontier”’, Cynthia Fellows charted the growth and development of its state court law libraries. But the piece starts off with some general history, including some of the bad press Alaska received. For instance, back in the 19th Century, when it was not yet a part of the United States, US Representative Benjamin Loan said: “To suppose that any one would willingly leave the mild climate and fruitful soil of the United States ... to seek a home ... in the regions of perpetual snow, is simply to suppose such a person to be insane.” Cynthia, who lived in Alaska and was clearly not insane, noted that, “this dismissive and climatologically inaccurate attitude towards Alaska persisted well into the 20th Century”.

Heading south a little – well, around 4000 miles! – Quebec hosted the CALL Conference in 2004, and Helen Ratcliffe was the lucky recipient of a BIALL bursary to attend the event. She loved it, too, although she did have to explain on occasion that she was from London, England and not London, Ontario. The closing dinner was at the Imperial Theatre, and Helen told us that “One hundred librarians on a tiny stage dancing to ‘I will Survive’ was a sight to be seen.” We will leave you with that image ...