Editorial

Muriel Anderson

We start this issue with a tribute to the life and work of Muriel Anderson, who died earlier this summer. Muriel devoted the large majority of her career to law librarianship and much of that time was spent at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, where she worked in close harmony with Willi Steiner. For those of us who had the pleasure of working with her, she will be most fondly remembered. For those of us who met her at Conferences, Jules Winterton's finely crafted appreciation will remind us of her lovely smile and her willingness to have a good time!

Sources of free legal information

The main theme of this issue is sources of free legal information. BAILII has recently embarked on its Open Law Project and Philip Leith has written about the beginnings of BAILII, starting with the idea put forward by the Society for Computers and Law in the early 1970s for a National Law Library, which it was hoped would be a government-sponsored free repository of English law. The reality is a little different, with the Statute Law Database finally on-line – after an extremely long and difficult gestation period, BAILII is providing an excellent source of free legal information and there is no doubt that it is here to stay, possibly to the chagrin of the major legal publishers.

We are pleased to publish the dissertation results of Thomas Shaw, who was supervised by Sue Pettit, who has recently retired as Law Librarian at Bristol University. Thomas focussed on in-depth interviews with academic and law firm librarians to try and obtain an understanding of their attitudes towards free and for fee legal information. Although he used a small sample, his conclusions make interesting reading.

This issue bears a debt of gratitude to the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, as no less than six members of staff there have contributed material to this issue – Jules Winterton, Heather Memess, Steve Whittle, Laura Griffiths, Gerry Power and Katherine Read.

Heather Memess and Steve Whittle have written a comprehensive article about the recently relaunched law portal – Intute: Law, previously known as SOSIG. The portal contains a wealth of information about legal databases which, though primarily intended as a tool for our academic colleagues, will also be extremely useful to those of us working in other legal information areas.

Laura Griffiths has contributed an article on the free sources of legal information which are either hosted or produced at the Institute, including FLAG, FLARE CALIM eagle-I and theses database.

Diane Gwynne-Smith, who has left law librarianship after many years of working in the City of London, has written about the project she has recently undertaken at the Social Care Institute for Excellence to update and improve the Social Care Online database – the largest free source of information in the social care field. Diane is keen to emphasise that she and her team will always be willing to help law librarians who need to retrieve information in the social care field.

Diane Raper, who has returned to law librarianship after a break of four years working for the NHS, has written an account of her new project as Faculty Liaison Librarian for Law at Kent University, on updating the very popular Lawlinks portal, started by Sarah Carter. We will look forward with eager anticipation to the new-look site when it is relaunched in the Spring of 2007.

We must not forget our own home-grown free source of legal information. James Mullan, Chair of LIG, has updated us on LORD and its contents and he urges you to contact him or Emily Allbon to offer to write reviews of the online products featured on the database, as these will greatly enhance its usability.

Current topics

Melanie Mancino from Eversheds has written a fascinating article about the revolutionary new centralised enquiry service which has been set up to cater to the multi-site nature of the firm. There are lots of good ideas to be gleaned from this article and we are hoping to persuade other law firm librarians to describe their systems for us in future issues.

The presenters of the BIALL Training the Trainer Seminar, Karen Gray, Diane Miller, Karen Scott and Kate Stanfield, have delivered a bonus for us by not only writing an article about the rationale for providing training and the preparation necessary to deliver effective training, but they have also produced our Checklist for this issue on the same topic.

Gerry Power tells us about his experiences of delivering a course on internet legal research at the University of Jos in Nigeria – dealing with power cuts was one of the least of his problems!

BIALL Conference 2006

This issue contains two further Conference papers by Nicola Wakefield and Liz Polding on the theme of delivering training within the academic environment, using the latest tools for e-learning.

This is a bumper issue and we hope that it will contain something of interest for all our readers.

Christine Miskin