

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 issues, and the issues, of 1984.

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 editions of the journal, then known as *The Law Librarian*, published 40 years ago ...

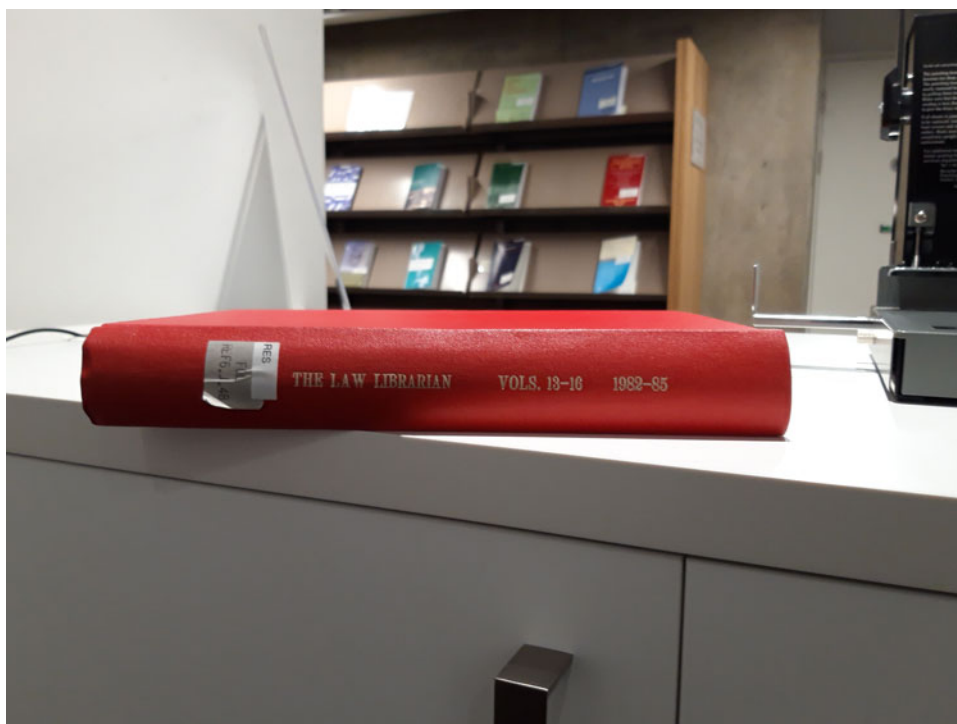
FRANKIE SAYS ...

One thing about 1984, it was nothing like the book. But that’s not to say it was a year without its share of drama, including assassinations, industrial disasters and a very

divisive and violent strike in the UK. Luckily, Frankie told us to *Relax*, so that helped.

One of the big stories of the year was the UK’s signing of the initial agreement to hand back Hong Kong to China, which was set for 1997 and did indeed happen then. Closer to home, the IRA attempted to assassinate UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher by planting a bomb in the Grand Hotel during the Conservative Party Conference in Brighton. While they failed to kill the PM, five people were left dead and 31 injured.

While Mrs Thatcher could think herself lucky, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was less so, being assassinated by two Sikh security guards, which then led to riots and the death of over 10,000 Sikhs in the Delhi area. Also in India, the worst industrial disaster in history occurred when there was a methyl isocyanate leak at the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, which killed 8000 people and injured over half a million. It’s been



Volume control: the LIM archive resides in the IALS collection in London

estimated that over 23,000 have died from those injuries in the years since.

There was more tragedy in Ethiopia, where a famine threatened up to 10 million people, and claimed a million lives by the end of '84. The world heard of this thanks to an incredibly moving and memorable report by Michael Buerk on the BBC. This led directly to the Band Aid single *Do They Know it's Christmas?* and then Live Aid the year after. Which shows the power of good television journalism.

Back in the UK journalists were mainly interested in the the miners' strike, which started this year, with the National Union of Mineworkers mobilising the majority of its members with the aim of preventing pit closures. It was an especially bitter dispute, marked with violent clashes between 'flying pickets' and the police.

There are few mines left in the UK now, indeed there is little heavy industry, really, and there was a hint of the changes to come in the business and manufacturing world in January of '84 when Steve Jobs launched the Macintosh Personal Computer in the US. In other early PC news, 1984 also saw the first Hackers Conference in California, as well as the birth of Mark Zuckerberg.

It was also a year in which a number of memorable movies – though I'm pretty sure we still called them films then – were released, including *Ghostbusters*; *Karate Kid*; *Footloose*; *The Terminator*; *Gremlins*; *Beverly Hills Cop* and *The Killing Fields*. There was also a film version of *1984* made this year, which proved to be much closer to George Orwell's dystopian classic than the year itself.

BACK IN THE USSR

There were just two editions of *The Law Librarian* in 1984, though the first was quite chunky and billed as "April / August", so really two in one. This kicked off with a very interesting piece by Barbara Tearle about a trip she had taken to the Soviet Union earlier that year, where she had visited the Institute of State and Law of the USSR Academy of Sciences (known as IGP), to study Soviet law libraries and its computer-assisted legal databases, and later to the Institute of Scientific Information for the Social Sciences (INION). Surprisingly, many people she met spoke excellent English, she reported, so there was not too much of a language barrier. As library adventures go, though, travelling to Russia at the height of the Cold War takes some beating.

Meanwhile, in The Chairman's Notes section John Jeffries looked at issues to do with the training of law librarians, noting that in a fairly recent survey it had been stated that there was "no such thing as a course in law librarianship, that is to say a course designed to train specialists in legal information only". Later on in the piece, though, there's happier news with the announcement of a joint honours degree in law and librarianship at Aberystwyth.

New technology, as always, was generating new questions, and the arrival of affordable photocopiers was also

troubling John Jeffries. "In the matter of library photocopying there is the question of 'fair dealing' and I imagine that most librarians will try to keep to the spirit of this concept even though they may be reduced to some unlikely expedients."

Later on in this edition there's an interesting piece on the Law Collection in the University of Benin Library. This Nigerian library – it's in Benin City rather than the country of the same name – was quite new, as the faculty of law had only been established in 1981, although the wider university library had been in existence since 1970. There's a nod to BIALL in the piece, too. "The British and Irish Association of Law Librarians' Sub Committee on standards for Law Librarians (1981) [wonder whatever happened to that?] defined the main purpose of a law library as 'to provide the organisation to which it belongs with the best possible library and information services within the scope of its activities'." Which sounds like good advice to this day.

The north-south divide was also very much an issue back in 1984, though an attempt at levelling up on the part of BIALL failed when a proposed workshop on 'On-line Legal Information' that was to take place in Sheffield had to be moved to London because of a lack of interest, "the organiser [of the London event] was almost immediately deluged with a surfeit of applications", we were then told.

This was probably because new technology was a hot topic in 1984 (unless you lived in Yorkshire, presumably), and this point was taken up in a review by Gillian Bull of a book entitled *The End of Libraries*, by James Thompson, which, wrote Gillian "is for those who want to frighten themselves with a book late at night; guaranteed to make you lie awake worrying about the future. It is composed chiefly of lists of recent technical developments which do look very formidable when so lumped together without any critical consideration of what they all mean." Sounds like the sort of thing that's being published today, so perhaps if we had nothing much to worry about in the future then, then the same can be said of now? We'll get back to you on that in 40 years.

SUPER STAR

If there is such a thing as a superstar law librarian then Willi Steiner was that person, and in the 'third' edition of the *Law Librarian* of 1984 the then BIALL Vice President Wallace Breem introduced an issue that was largely dedicated to the man and his achievements – he retired in 1982 and died in 2003 at the age of 85. Incidentally, it is interesting to speculate on whether there is actually anyone in the profession now who commands quite as much respect as Willi Steiner did in his day?

Back in 1984 Wallace Breem penned a lovely portrait of someone who, from reading this piece at least, seemed to possess a gentle and self-deprecating sense of humour. For instance, when Wallace and a colleague skipped one of Willi's talks because the sun was shining (they had

heard it before, to be fair), they felt they should confess as much when they ran into him later. Willi's reply was: "I would have done the same myself if only I had not been the speaker."

Wallace finished his homage with the words: "Like all the best professionals he cares more for the work than its rewards. He wears his learning so very lightly, deploying his talents with deceptive ease as befits the most distinguished member of our profession. His lien upon our affections is unassailable." Most people only get that sort of thing written about them in an obituary, which says much about the stature of the man during his lifetime.

Later in this edition there's a report on a seminar that was organised jointly by the Library Association and the Institute of Information Scientists (IIS) – these two organisations merged in 2002 to become CILIP – that was entitled 'Protect and Survive'. The seminar, that was attended by 100 librarians, was, John Jeffries told us, "an attempt to assess the effects of the cuts in public

expenditure on library and information services". One of the conclusions he took from the seminar was: "If we are really concerned about the fact that we live in a society with an information rich and an information poor then we need to get our act together a little more and state what it is that is good about what we are doing, and the value to the community of what we provide." As is often the case with this retrospective, that's still pretty much the case 40 years down the line.

Meanwhile, the 77th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries was held in San Diego, where "the closing surf and turf dinner [was] not a patch on BIALL's smoked salmon and roast duck", Vivien AA Fletcher reported. But while fish and meat combos might not have been up to scratch, the theme of '1984 – the Future is Now' certainly hit the spot, attracting 1692 attendees. Mind you, "four days in a sumptuous hotel overlooking a beautiful marina on the edge of the clear blue Pacific Ocean" might have had something to do with that, too.