

Vancouver Association of Law Libraries

VALLReview

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Contributors

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## EDITORIAL

At the June monthly luncheon meeting of the Vancouver Association of Law Libraries I volunteered to oversee the inauguration of an association newsletter to serve the needs of our membership. At that time I hoped that this newsletter would grow, in time, from a organ of communication for the law library community in British Columbia to a publication which could proudly contribute to the body of knowledge and expertise which motivates and sustains legal librarianship in Canada today.

Now, merely four months later, I am honoured to deliver the first issue of a publication which is well on its way to fulfilling those vaunted expectations. I hasten to admit that this review, as I have fashioned it, has not been conceived in a vacuum. I owe debts of gratitude to a wide variety of individuals and organisations for their contributions and generosity. I will not name them here for fear of inadvertently leaving someone out, but, again, I thank you all.

VALL has prospered because there was an obvious need for a cohesive entity in its constituency. This publication reflects that prosperity and confidence. It is my personal hope that you enjoy reading the VALLReview.

Edward Lentz  
Editor  
October 6, 1988

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Forming V.A.L.L. is definitely a timely idea. In March, when Joan Mulholland hosted a meeting of "those interested," we were surprised when almost 40 of us arrived, instead of the expected 10 or 15. The monthly meetings that followed were chaired and supported by various willing people. Over the summer, nominations and elections by mail ballot produced an executive, ready-formed, for the September 15 meeting.

The results of our spring and summer efforts are beginning to appear: this newsletter (thanks, Edward), a bank balance (thanks, Catherine), a membership directory (thanks, Carol), minutes, job postings and general orderliness (thanks, Anne), and an exciting line-up of programmes (thanks, Peter). Most of all, I would like to thank the membership for your support, interest and enthusiasm. Please make your ideas and complaints known so they can be reflected in your organisation. This means articles for the newsletter, assistance with programmes and cooperation in making our meetings lively and fast-paced.

I see V.A.L.L.'s function as a sort of mutual aid society. If we can't band together to ease our daily burdens, who will do it for us? I am hoping there will be equal participation from and benefit to all members. If the delivery of legal information functions smoothly, then we all succeed.

Nitty-gritty: 1) the cost of lunch has been increased to \$14.00 due to increased costs at the Hotel Georgia; 2) membership will remain at \$15.00 per year; 3) directories will be sent to members as soon as printed and they will be available to non-members at \$5.00 each; 4) blurbs about V.A.L.L. have been sent to the editor of the BCLA Reporter and the regional coordinator for the CALL Bulletin; 5) we are continuing with lunch programmes this fall. In the spring we may be able to branch out into a ½ day workshop. Your executive is working hard to provide the sort of programmes you indicated you want. Please play your part by attending, supporting and giving us your feedback.

Here are some questions to ponder: Do we want to become a lobby group pressing for changes from publishers, etc.? Do we want to provide ourselves with more formal continuing education in law and/or librarianship? Are we strong enough to sponsor

or co-sponsor workshops in the future? (Don't forget that CALL is in Vancouver in 1990.) Could we occasionally have joint meetings with other groups such as VALA (legal administrators) or the Vancouver legal research group? These questions do not require immediate answers, but I'll be interested in your response, either personally or at meetings.

In the meantime, let's look forward to a successful first year in V.A.L.L.

Pam Clancy  
President  
September 28, 1988

1988 ELECTION RESULTS

PRESIDENT:	Pam Clancy	Librarian Campney & Murphy
TREASURER:	Catherine Kerr	Technical Services Supervisor B.C. Courthouse Library Society
SECRETARY:	Anne Beresford (by acclamation)	Librarian Ladner, Downs
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY:	Carol Saxon	Librarian Owen, Bird; Angus McClellan; Lindsay, Kenny
PROGRAMMES:	Peter Bark (by acclamation)	Librarian Lawrence & Shaw
NEWSLETTER EDITOR:	Edward Lentz (by acclamation)	Library Science Student U.B.C. SLAIS

Number of ballots sent: 57  
Number of ballots returned: 47

Report submitted to VALL  
meeting, September 15, 1988 by

Diana Inselberg, Librarian  
Russell & DuMoulin  
Elections Chair 1988

FEATURED ARTICLE

The Librarian Saved or Victimised  
by the Computer

by Shukrieh Merlet

The advent of automation and the use of computers has been hailed as the beginning of a new era and welcomed by most professionals in the field: as a saviour to the librarian, eliminating daily, monotonous chores, speeding input and performing miracles with retrieval and research. As thousands of articles flooded the market advocating the practical advantages and the use of computers and machines became an integral part of the setup of most libraries, the librarian found herself facing the aftermath of cultural shock and adjustment. It is undisputed what computers can achieve in terms of speed and accuracy, but does that mean that the traditional librarian is now an endangered species? No, indeed she is not!

While the machine can't discriminate and will respond in robot-like manner to a command, the mind behind it is that of the operator - programming, data input and retrieval will remain the librarian's forte. And I continue to have strong faith in the professional competency, discretionary ability and devotion to service of the librarian. However, a great number of librarians are displaced either directly or indirectly and it is regarding this issue that I would like to devote this article and share some of the tips and remedies that I can offer to whomever finds herself in this dilemma. The number of librarians the market can absorb is now trimmed because computers can take over some of the duties that they previously performed and carry out the routine chores at a faster pace. As a result, the market not only has fewer openings, but also displaced personnel. Also, if you don't have computer skills, you don't qualify for most of the new jobs that are created and based on computer use. How do you re-adjust your career, if after serving as a librarian for a number of years you perceive there is no place for you? Start by taking a good hard look at yourself, assess your skills and achievements, and do it in detail and in writing. Spend hours, if need be, writing down every single job you held and what skills it took you to perform it. Once you have discovered who you are and what you have to offer, create a resume reflecting these skills. During that period of analysis, dwell on your goals, set up precise objectives, short-term and long-term. Unless you know where you are heading, you can't prepare yourself or know where your career search will lead to.

Research the market. Now that you have the tools, approach the market. The B.C.L.A. job line (430-6411) is still one of the most direct means of knowing what is being advertised - listen to this recorded message once a week. Draw up a list of all the major libraries in the area, and start contacting them. It is unfortunate that the two biggest libraries, U.B.C. and S.F.U., are not receiving the necessary endowment, and due to shortage of funds are not only limiting new openings but also restructuring present ones. Some colleges, such as Vancouver Community College, seem to offer only contract work, which is short-term and very unsettling for a professional.

But now that the academic institutions that may have the greatest number of openings are out, does that mean that your chances of finding employment are nil? It is here that your resilience will come into the fore. Start thinking of other alternatives - what other fields you are competent in, that you can either resume or draw upon in conjunction with library work. Can you go into research? Can you set up filing systems? Can you provide bibliographic or indexing services?

Approach prospective employers, directly through referral letters or by phone. Circulate and get to be known. Join associations: Vancouver Online Users' Group (VOLUG) and the

Vancouver Association of Law Libraries (VALL) are good vehicles. Or renew memberships in the B.C.L.A. or C.L.A. or any particular society serving archivists or librarians. You will know what is happening in the field.

Another valuable experience is volunteering. Not only will this show you are not idle, but it will prove you can still practice your profession and are currently active. It gives you a feeling of satisfaction that you are contributing to the community as well as gives you the structured time that you need, because being idle and rejected can cause a depressed state. In addition volunteering may earn you credit, either by obtaining a good reference from the grateful party or including it in your resume as a reflection of your character.

Do not limit yourself to thinking of librarianship as a stereotyped role in a traditional facility. Expand your horizon and examine what other places may use books and information data - corporations, publishers, societies, schools, organisations. Approach them. Prepare yourself for at least three months, working a full 45 hours a week, because job hunting is a full-time job. Realise it will take at least about 19 interviews before you get a job and it takes 21 calls or applications to land an interview. Prepare yourself for about 400 calls, budget adequately to see you through during these months and don't forget to save for a professional suit, shoes, raincoat, etc. I can't overemphasize the importance of appearance. Most impressions are created in the first 45 seconds and it may break you.

Job searching is a very stressful time, not only in the loss of the meaning of life, self-worth, and secure income but in the devastating emotional effect it can have on the individual if she allows it. Lack of confidence - I am no good, no one wants me, I am an antique and can't catch up with what's happening with all these machines - can all be flashes of thought that cross your mind. Don't lose confidence in yourself and let the fear of rejection become a vicious circle entrapping and pulling you down. If you are feeling bad, take a breather - treat yourself to something that will further your career, but keep your eyes on your goals, and don't abandon your search even if something seems promising. Remember, a deal is only a cheque; don't have false expectations and only believe the job offer after it is in your hand and preferably in writing. Look at each rejection positively: this is the sixth interview - I didn't get the job... I am all the more closer to my 19th interview.

Another opportunity may be in jobs that have such headings as Coordinator. You will find a lot of these positions can use the skills that you possess as a librarian. Don't be afraid to venture into a new field, or even take a part-time or lower position and work into something that may be a stepping stone and will lead to your dream.

Alvin Tofler, in his book Future Shock, says the modern man may have to prepare himself for three careers. You may see this as a turning point and decide you have done that line of work enough, and you are getting in a rut or burnt out. Is what you have been doing in the past what you want to do for the rest of your life? You may, at this point, pick up on something totally unrelated and start a new career: either in private business, a new vocation or course of study, or you may set up shop as a freelancer and there are a number of these people who work for several firms, catalogue on a contract basis, or offer services as consultants.

Do not rely solely on jobs that are advertised: at the expense of placing an ad about services that you offer in professional journals or papers, you may reap some results. Only 13% of all jobs are advertised. There is a hidden market and between 74 and 80% of all jobs are filled directly by the employer who chooses people that he knows, trusts, likes and has established a rapport with or who were referred to him by a colleague who may know that person or had them previously work for him.

Instead of seeing your present unemployment period as a

tragedy and a setback, look at it as an opportunity, a venture: it is at endings that beginnings are made.

I'd like to close with the famous popularized Arabic saying, "Hate no evil lest it is for your good." No matter what hardship may befall you in life, use it as a turning point and start the journey now. The longest journey starts with the first step, and enjoy what you discover on the way. It is the search that is the meaning. Happy hunting and good luck!

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INFOBITS

For Sale:

Speiser, Stuart M. The Negligence Case: Res Ipsa Loquitur. Rochester, N.Y.: The Lawyers' Co-operative Pub.; San Francisco: Bancroft-Whitney, 1972. 2 vols. with Cumulative Supplement to August 1988. \$US149.00 list plus \$US47.00 for the supplement. "Good buy at half price. In great shape, would look sharp on your library shelves."

Contact: 661-6699 (Heather) or 661-6960 (Grace) for info or to make offer. ICBC Corporate Library

For Sale:

Di Castri, Victor. Registration of Title to Land. Toronto: Carswell, 1987. 2 vols. (loose-leaf) with first and only (so far) release for June 1988. Current to 1987. 4 cased, untouched, sets for sale. \$156.00 list, will sell for \$125.00/set or OBO.

Contact: Anna Holeton 263-6127 (leave message). U.B.C. SLAIS student.

Announcement:

Congratulations are due to Shukrieh Merlet, freelance librarian, who has recently been awarded certification as an interpreter in Arabic from the Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia. Well done, Shukrieh!

BOOK REVIEWS

Steger, Debra P. A Concise Guide to the  
Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement.  
Toronto: Carswell, 1988. ISBN 0-459-31721-0

by Christopher Thomas

Free trade has emerged to become the number one issue on Canada's public policy agenda. No doubt it will be the central issue of the federal election. It has engendered an enormous amount of debate. It is viewed variously as a "sell-out" and the saviour of the Canadian economy. Yet there has been an appalling lack of credible information about the Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Regrettably, neither side of the debate is blameless on that account.

Hence the need for concise guides to the Free Trade Agreement. Debra Steger's work is designed to be a timely contribution to the debate and was written in the first few months of this year. Although Steger is known to be a proponent of the FTA, her exposition of the issues does not tend to be tilted in its favour.

The book is a short one (96 pages plus a directory, a glossary of trade and related issues, and an index). It takes the main chapters of the FTA and describes the status quo and what changes the Agreement would effect, if implemented. While one can quibble with some of the commentary there is little to complain about in terms of lucidity or accuracy.

Indeed, my main comment is that in striving to be timely and concise, the author focuses too much on reiterating the FTA's substantive obligations rather than placing them in context. For example, there is virtually no discussion of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) - the international agreement that has governed Canada-U.S. trade for over 40 years. Yet the FTA is riddled with references to GATT rules and GATT Codes (agreements negotiated in the 1970's to elaborate upon basic provisions of the General Agreement itself) and cannot properly be understood without a concomitant understanding of those obligations.

Similarly, although when introducing each chapter an attempt is made to describe the issues or problems that the FTA is intended to address, it might have been more helpful to discuss the issues at greater length prior to launching into the FTA's provisions. This, of course, is no mean feat; hundreds of volumes have been written on the problems of international agricultural trade, for example, and one cannot expect a concise guide to discuss the issues comprehensively. Nevertheless, in my view a bit more contextual information would have been helpful.

The upshot of these shortcomings is that the book is indeed a concise guide to the FTA but in a way it is so concise that only trade policy experts can fully appreciate it and they have little need for it. For the lay person the book may assume a level of sophistication that is not there.

Perhaps these quibbles reflect a longing for the book that is yet to be written. One cannot fault the author for inaccuracy and the Concise Guide should not be unduly criticised for being something less than it is: an important first step in clarifying a complex and important issue of public policy.

Harvey, Cameron, ed. Legal Wit and Whimsy:  
An Anthology of Legal Humour. Toronto: Carswell,  
1988. 156 p. \$19.95 ISBN 0-459-31671-0

by J. McRee (Mac) Elrod

Mr. Harvey, a professor of law at the University of Manitoba, has selected for this slim volume his favourite parodies, short stories, essays, poems and cartoons. Jokes and anecdotes are not included. Also included are notes on the pieces selected and copious references to similar material in other collections.

Through his intensive interest in legal humour, Mr. Harvey has evolved his own categories, into which he has divided the material he has selected: Parodies; Poetry; Fables and Fairy Tales; Essays; Entertainments and Short Stories; and Judicial Humour.

There is something included to appeal to most legal specialties, civil or criminal. British, American and Canadian sources have been used.

The style of the selections is very uneven, ranging from sophomoric to fairly literate. As with the strange, reality is often funnier than fiction. The essay recounting an actual appearance before the United States Supreme Court ("The Supreme Moment" by Asher Rubin) and quotations from actual decisions are the more amusing selections. Of particular note are selections from Mr. Justice Scollin of the Court of Queen's Bench of the Province of Manitoba: "The law of nuisance is strewn with a miscellany of silos, pipes, wires, poles, canabalistic minks and traumatized chickens..."; "It is impossible to pick through the rubble of a broken marriage with tweezers when even a bulldozer might have difficulty"; "This is another costly epitaph to the cheap will... The hope for judicial telepathy with the dead has generated much learned hacking through the jungles of imprecision..." But my favourite is this from J. Franfurter: "No single one of these circumstances alone would in my opinion justify a reversal... [but] in combination they bring the result below the Plimsoll line of 'due process.'" Mr. Harvey kindly provides a footnote (one of many) which explicates the origin of the Plimsoll line as the mark beyond which a ship could not be safely loaded.

This selection of legal humour might well be worth a check-out from your favourite legal library.

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