

## 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 of 1974.

**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 three editions of the journal, then known as *The Law Librarian*, published 50 years ago ...

### NEW LEADERS AND OLD BONES

Just like in 2024, in 1974 there was a general election in the UK. In fact, there were two. The first, in February, resulted in a hung Parliament and Prime Minister Edward Heath then stood down, having failed to form a coalition, which left the way open for Harold Wilson and Labour

to form a minority government. Labour then went on to win a slender three-seat majority in the second election in October. Meanwhile, in the US, Richard Nixon resigned in the wake of the Watergate scandal, with Gerald Ford taking his place as president.

There were also changes at the top in Ethiopia, where Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed by the Derg, a Marxist-Leninist group, thus bringing the Solomonic dynasty, which had ruled since 1270, to a close.

Also in Ethiopia, a very well-preserved skeleton, AL 288–I, commonly known as ‘Lucy’, a hominid species *Australopithecus afarensis*, was discovered. And if you do dig a bit of archaeology this was not the only dramatic find of 1974, as in China a discovery by a group of farmers in Xi’an led to the uncovering of the Terracotta Army of Qin Shi Huang.

Meanwhile, in Germany Volkswagen launched its Golf, which at the time was touted as a replacement for the Beetle but went on to become an automotive legend in



*This famous puzzle was invented by Erno Rubik in 1974*

its own right, while in Brighton Abba won the Eurovision Song Contest with *Waterloo*.

Also that year, a Hungarian sculptor and professor of architecture called Erno Rubik invented an infuriating little puzzle involving a cube with different coloured panels on each face. Rubik's Cube went on to become very popular in the early '80s, but back in 1974 the thing to have if you were "a real tough boy" was a Tonka Toy – model trucks, diggers and other macho machinery.

Talking of tough boys, while there was a World Cup in 1974 which was won by Germany, it was a fight that has stayed in the memory as far as sport is concerned. The so-called 'Rumble in the Jungle' between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman took place in Kinshasa, the capital of Zaire – now the Democratic Republic of the Congo – and it was one of the most watched televised events of all time, with some estimates putting the viewing figures worldwide at one billion. That seems a bit of a stretch, as there were only four billion people on the planet in 1974. Then again, 26 million people are reckoned to have watched it on the BBC in the UK, which was close to half of the 56 million population at that time, so maybe a billion is not so far out. If you missed it, Ali won.

Among the big names born this year were Penelope Cruz, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Jas Breslin – but don't tell her I told you (Lucky for some we won't have a retrospective for 1964, eh? [JB]).

## GREY'S MATTER

Talking of old things, the first of 1974's three issues kicked off with a surprisingly entertaining history of Grey's Inn Library, which was established in 1555. Among the many nuggets of knowledge contained in this piece is a refutation that Sir Francis Bacon founded the library, while there was also a story of a poor fellow who was fined £200 – which in 1669 was equivalent to around £30,000 now – for simply being too ill to attend to his duties as Reader. He was allowed to "continue at the bench and enjoy the privileges of a bencher" if he paid the sum, though, which he did. Half the money was put to good use repairing the walks, while the remainder was spent on volumes for the library. We also learn that in 1750, Fergus Clavering, who was then the Librarian, had a pay rise to £30 a year. He was both overjoyed and shocked on hearing the news, so much so that he dropped dead soon after, we're told.

But perhaps the bleakest time for the Grey's Inn Library was during WWII, when it was destroyed by bombing in 1941. Not only was the building completely wrecked, but all the books, around 30,000, also went up in smoke (luckily, the more valuable volumes and manuscripts had been put in a safe place earlier in the war). The Library did not really recover from this until the late 1950s, largely thanks to "the loyalty of its members and staff and through the generosity of friends in all parts of the world".

Since 1973 the UK had been part of the European Community and an in-depth guide to its law was also included in this issue. As RR Churchill, who wrote the piece, concludes, "the law librarian's task has been made considerably more complex and difficult with the advent of Community law". Things are no less complex going the other way, of course, as can be seen from our article on the REUL Act 2023 on page 36 of this edition of LIM.

## PAGE RAGE AND SWEET MONEY

One of the idiosyncrasies of the 1974 editions of *The Law Librarian* is a habit of shifting text that won't quite fit into the space provided for an article onto a page elsewhere in the journal. In the second edition, for example, a piece on the Bristol University Law Library abruptly finishes on page 20 with "Continued on page 29", where we find a third of a column. Now, for some, this may simply have brought an element of suspense into the reading experience, but for most it must have been just a little bit irritating. Jumping ahead a bit, this gets even more confusing in the third issue where an article runs out of space on page 45 and then continues on page 43!

But turning back from page 29 to the main body text of that article on Bristol University Law Library, among the many interesting passages is this: "Responsibility for the day to day running of the reading room lies with the Law Librarian, a member of the University Library staff, who is appointed to work full time in the Law Library." These days this sort of specialisation is becoming increasingly rare in the academic sector, where people are often expected to wear many different hats.

Elsewhere in this issue Sweet and Maxwell, then the publishers of *The Law Librarian* and still one of the biggest players in the industry (now more commonly known as Thomson Reuters), provided the first of a two-part history of the company, written by then chairman WW Maxwell, to commemorate its 175 years of law publishing. Though, as Mr Maxwell points out, when the business started out at the close of the 18th Century, "there was no such thing as a law publisher, there were only law booksellers".

One of the many interesting aspects of this piece is a table showing how much authors and editors were paid, which until the late 1890s did not involve royalties but a full payment. For instance, as quoted from an 1852 agreement: "*Smith's Mercantile Law*, 5th edition. Mr Dowdeswell to be paid the sum of £175 if published in June 1853, but if not published until after that time the sum of £150 only." That payment, assuming old Dowdy got his finger out and met the deadline, is worth around £30,000 today, which is pretty decent for a book.

Elsewhere in the second edition there's a small box-out filling a corner of a page about a weekend course on Law Literature that was organised by the Training Sub-Committee (was this the precursor to the Legal Foundations course still run today?). The fact that this needed to be held at the weekend makes you wonder

how keen employers of 50 years ago were on what we now call professional development. *Continued on page 1012 ...*

## SAUSAGE AND CHIPS

Back in the '70s BIALl President was actually an honorary position, filled from 1972 until '76 by Professor Owen Hood Phillips QC, DCL, JP, who was actually the first to be given this title – the Chair was what we would call President now. In the third edition of 1974 the learned professor provided an interesting article entitled 'Legal Publications: Past, Present and Future', which contains this wonderful passage on legal interpretation, and why dictionaries are of limited use when it comes to the law. "A typical example of the verbal kind of question is, not 'What is a sausage?' Or 'What does the word sausage mean?' but 'Does this concoction, with these ingredients put together in these proportions, fall within the description of a sausage?'"

As far as the future was concerned, Professor Hood Phillips did not see much room for computers in law, simply because of costs. "It would cost over £1,000,000 to computerise about 460 million words of case law, a large computer storage space would be required, and the

search fee would be about £600 a time." That is over £6000 in today's money. So, he was bang on with the sausage, but underestimated the chips.

This year also saw the fifth annual conference, which was held in Wills Hall at the University of Bristol, where "there were over 70 delegates attending, and we were particularly pleased to welcome those from Australia, Canada and the United States". We're also told that, "After the preliminary flexing of professional and cerebral muscles we relaxed and partook of the first of a number of parties hosted by the publishers who now regularly attend the conferences". So, no change there, then.

Another thing that has not changed is that BIALl is still very much about members helping members. While these days this will often involve a quick email, back in 1974 it would be a letter, and towards the end of both the second and third editions there's this little notice: "Need help? Members, particularly those operating libraries in some degree of isolation, who may have bibliographical or other problems relating to any aspect of law library administration, are invited to send their enquiries in writing to the Hon. Secretary. He does not guarantee to answer them all himself but will act as a clearing house for information required." We think this is rather nice.