

Quo Vadis Supply-Side Information? Or What's in a Name?

Upon the recent recommendation of the IALL Board of Directors and beginning with this first issue of 1982, the title of the *International Journal of Law Libraries* (ISSN 0340-045X) has been changed to *International Journal of Legal Information* (ISSN 0731-1265).

Why?

The change in title is felt appropriate for several reasons.

Perhaps, the foremost among these is the recognition that the supply of legal information throughout the world continues to develop unabated. This fact, together with the realization that if the *Journal* is to continue to serve, at least, some of the practical needs of legal researchers, dictates the need for a responsive editorial policy in the *Journal* which should reflect, to the extent possible, an attempt to meet this challenge.

Yet, the change in title should not be mistakenly construed to add one more professional voice to the already existing multitude to rally to the cause of universal and systematic access to information which was so often heard during the 60's information explosion. The rallying cries of "documents to the people," "information on demand" have captured the imagination of information specialists and succeeded in laying the foundation for a major redistribution of our information wealth. Where government printers did not respond with sufficient alacrity to this democratic ideal, enterprise publishing is now satisfying our felt needs with reams of raw data and files of unprocessed information. Our *Journal's* title change, however, is not intended to herald our new era of "supply-side" information publishing with its attendant "trickle-down" promises of instant availability through the high-technology devices of miniaturization into microfilms and full-text computer data bases with their blinding speed and seemingly infinite storage capacities. To the information-starved masses, the tantalizing promises of a Library of Congress in every terminal fills our sensibilities with a seductive, siren-call much as the political promise of the depression era slogan of "a chicken in every pot" tantalized the senses of an earlier generation. With few exceptions most of us know what to do with this proverbial chicken in a pot. However, when faced with the bewildering and often exotic, array of information ingredients now available which are served to us with ever-increasing efficiency, productivity and costs, we find ourselves increasingly at a loss as to where to begin.

Given this dilemma, it is ironic to think that although our ability to clone and to reproduce the vast information resources of research collections through high-technology seems to be a greater reality than

do the experiments of genetic engineers, we do not appear to share the scientific community's concomitant concerns in the event of success.

Clearly, we do share a common concern. Although the amount of information available to us is enormous and rapidly increasing, our ability to make intelligent use of it seems to be declining. As one commentator described the problem, "so much has been written about everything that you can't find out anything about it." Consequently, our *Journal's* title change and, indeed, the editorial board's particular choice of terminology in the new name, reflects an awareness that as specialists in today's highly complex information society we ought to focus more directly on the value and utility of information itself as a first priority rather than on the forms and places in which it is distributed and located. In some significant measure, we are all compelled to such a conclusion by the practical considerations of budgets, space and time.

Although micro-publishing will undoubtedly enable us to squeeze more information into already well-defined physical space and high-technology will be invaluable in obtaining desired information more efficiently, human readers, even those of the researcher variety, can only absorb so much. Unfortunately, information indisposes us to reading whether from the printed page, microform or video-display units of computer terminals, and "there's the rub". Indeed, our limits in this regard are dramatically illustrated by the fact that an avid reader consuming 2 books per week during a projected adult reading life-span of 50 years can only be expected to work through approximately 5,000 books in a lifetime. One needs only to compare this accomplishment against current annual world wide book production figures which are in the range of 750,000 titles per year to understand the magnitude of the challenge which confronts us.

Clearly, choices must be made. It is the goal of the editorial board of the *Journal* to shed some light on what is available and from which sources. In this effort we will be guided by a quote from Francis Bacon, "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested."