

Book Reviews

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Review of LexisNexis Butterworths new online platform.

Reach for the stars: well, the rating stars, anyway. The new LexisNexis Butterworths (LNB) platform, ie revamped user interface, will by now have been launched, and I don't think you'll be disappointed. It is still being worked on prior to the launch at the end of June as I write this, so hopefully it will be even better by now.

Butterworths Direct (BD) has been in much the same format since it began a few years ago, when Ivan Darby, who was the Butterworths IT guru at the time, predicted that all information would be online in ten years and we wouldn't need books any more. Sadly it's taking a bit longer than that, but the new format gets closer to his prediction than practically any service I've yet seen.

The front page is clear, fairly self-explanatory, and gives easy access to the background databases, which are arranged mainly by genre, eg cases, commentary, rather than by subject.

The BD service is easy to use, but you have to know where to look for the sources that you want, especially in areas like corporate law. The FSA materials and old rulebooks aren't accessible via Corporate law direct, and a lot of very useful information is in the Company service which you would miss if you didn't know it was there.

The new platform gets around all that. You can search across all the sources – yes, every single one – or you can choose a group of sources by genre, eg legislation, or by individual source, eg Harvey on Employment law or the Customs and Excise manuals. This does mean that there is more chance of bad hits, but there is a lot of online help available, and all the connectors and how to use them are just a click away.

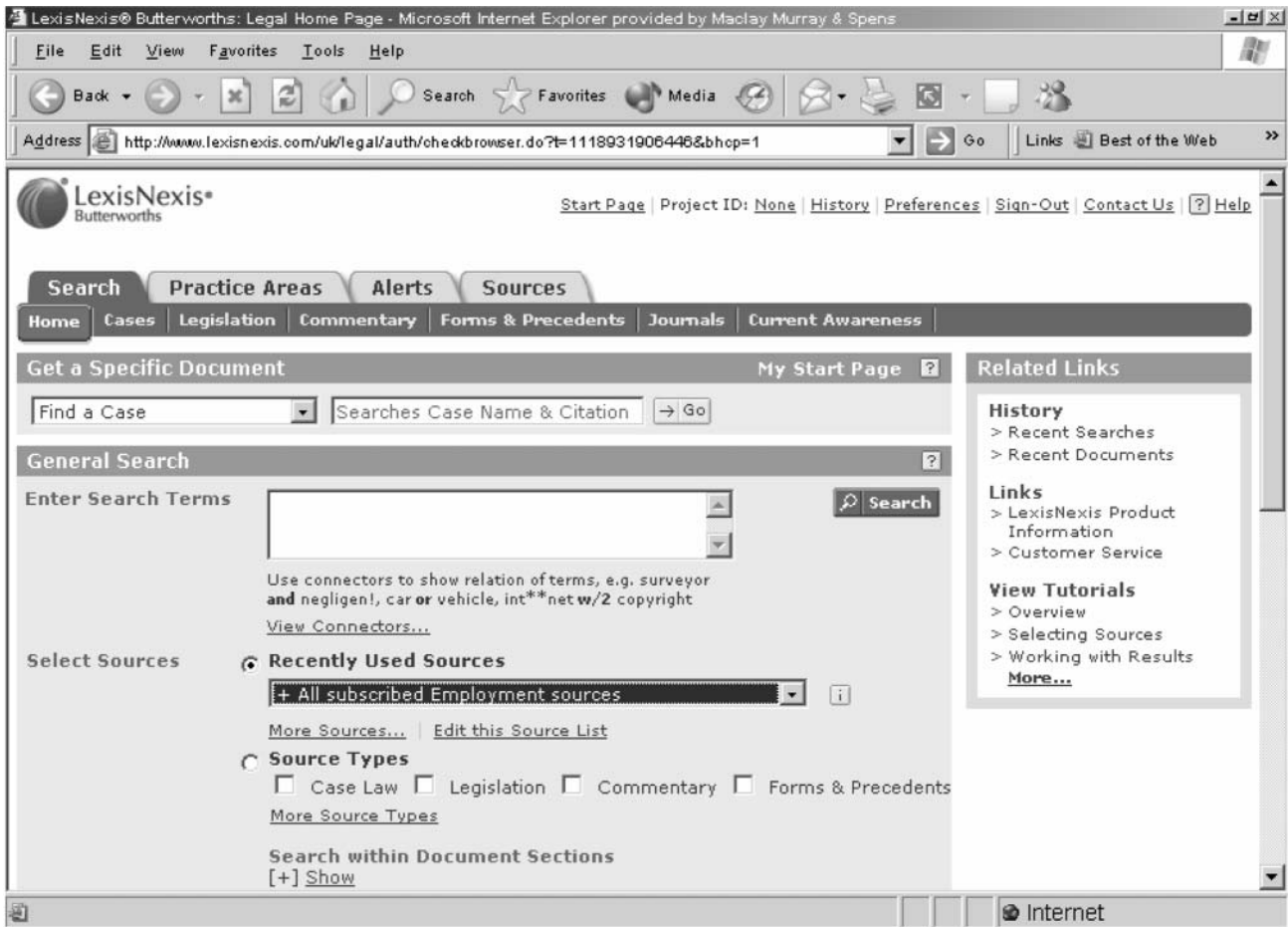


Figure 1. Front Page.

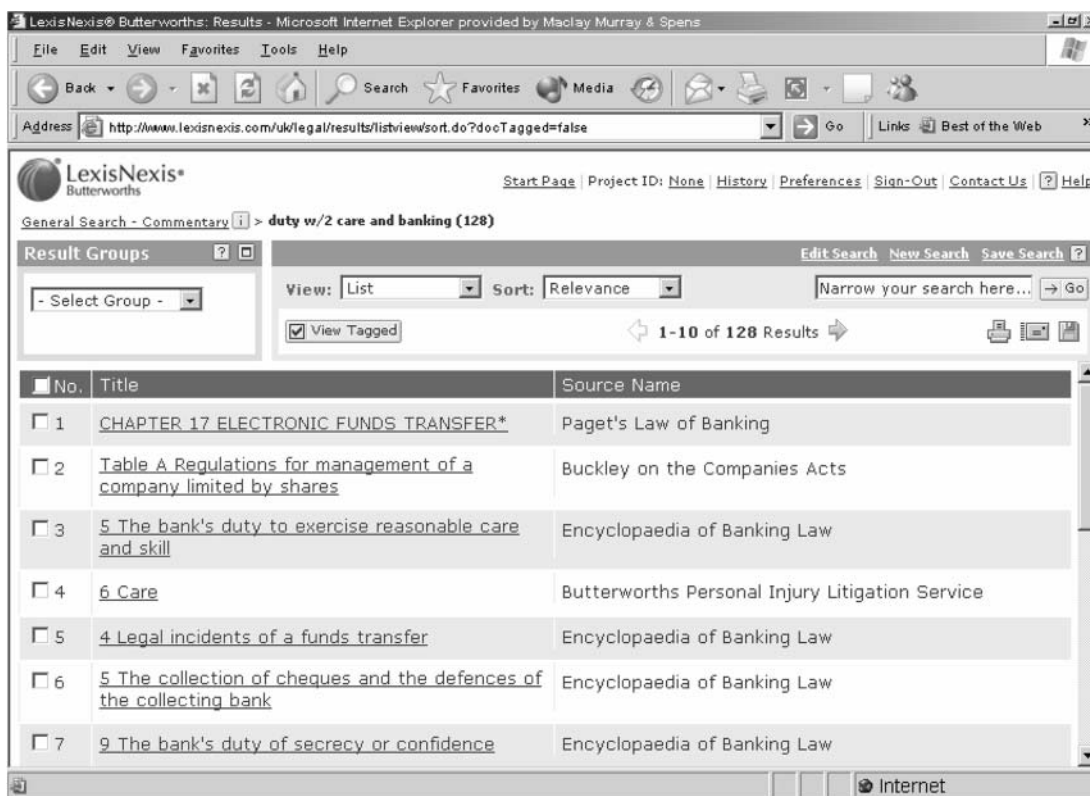


Figure 2. Search results.

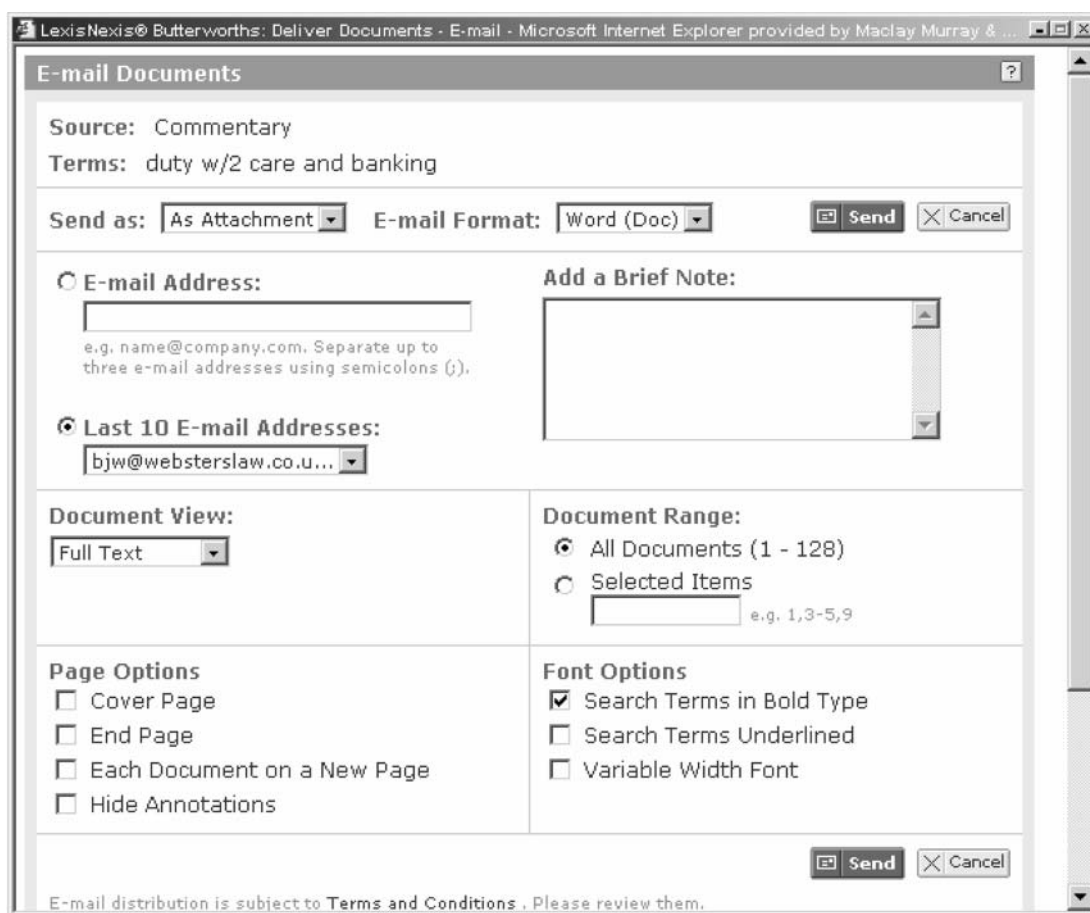


Figure 3. Option to email chosen hits.

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Search results are displayed quite well, either ranked by relevance or by source, and the source is listed against the result which is very helpful – the first version that I saw didn't do this, so thanks, Butterworths! – with the now to be expected options to download, print, or e-mail your chosen hits.

The narrative screens for these are great, much simpler than other similar services. I really like the fact that your search trail is on the results screen, and that you can also access recent searches.

Once you access a result, the service puts you into the source with a Table of contents in a left hand margin, so you can browse if you are using a commentary source – not particularly useful if you are looking at a case as you get the volume Table of contents; I've had to explain this quite carefully to our users.

Tagging of results is a useful option and you can see these full text or just print etc very quickly. All of these facilities will be familiar to many of you, but unlike the major competitor in this area, LNB seems so much easier to use.

There are drawbacks, partly owing to gaps in content, ie no pre-Scottish Parliament Scottish legislation, or sources that won't be included until after the launch, ie Scots Law Direct, as well as some sources that have been included on other services, eg Local Government law, which is worrying, or have been 'lost' owing to titles being sold to other publishers. On the whole, though, this is a good service which will hopefully continue to improve.

Is it value for money? That's a tough question to answer because it isn't cheap, but you do get a lot of Butterworths commentary, as well as updated legislation and cases. There is a journals index, but no list of the journals indexed, just that there are 120 selected titles – we really need to know which ones they are! – so still lots of room for improvement. I would say that if you can make some savings on cancelling looseleaves, etc, then that will go some way towards covering the cost, and you get more functionality as well as a lot of information that you may not have subscribed to on paper.

All in all, I'd say that if you can afford it, then try it – you might like it!

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HEWARD, Edmund *Lives of the judges - Jessel, Cairns, Bowen and Bramwell*. Chichester: Barry Rose Law Publishers Ltd, 2004. ISBN 1 902681 32 0: £22.00. xii, 264 p.

Legal history can be dry and uninteresting. However, an increasing number of legal students, lawyers and non-lawyers enjoy reading legal biographies. Barry Rose Law Publishers Ltd have been at the forefront of

providing books on legal history over the past decade or more. This Barry Rose publication is a quintessential example of an informative, erudite and interesting legal history book. It also goes a good deal of the way to dispelling the myth that legal biographies are not particularly interesting.

The book consists of the biographies of four distinguished Victorian judges who greatly assisted in forging the roots of the modern English legal system. The author, Edmund Heward C.B., is a former member of the judiciary. He draws on his extensive legal and judicial experience to analyse the lives and works of these four pillars of the Victorian legal establishment: Judges Jessel, Cairns, Bowen and Bramwell.

In order to curtail accusations of being too dry, Heward occasionally employs humour and candid comments to illustrate the true nature of the judges being profiled. He quotes, for example, Lord Bramwell's words "If I had a choice whether to be a great judge or a good judge, I should prefer the latter". This book allows one to see a clear sketch of the judges profiled. It shows them not only as judges, but as husbands, sons, politicians, patients and in all their humanity.¹

Sir George Jessel, in particular, is sympathetically described by Heward. As a Jew, Jessel faced much discrimination and unpopularity at the 19th century Bar. His elevation to be Master of the Rolls was a tribute to his legal abilities and intelligence. Much to his credit (and the discredit of the anti-semiticism of his era) he was the first Jew to reach such a high rank. His work as a judge can be described as just, brisk and efficient. At a time when litigation could take many months, if not years, he introduced in the courts over which he personally presided an exemplary manner of curtailing long-winded barristers' speeches and submissions. His courts would handle more work in one day than many others would handle in two if not three days.

Lord Cairns was a confidant and friend of Benjamin Disraeli. His rise within the legal world from a humble background in Northern Ireland was through his brilliant legal mind alone. However, his new found legal connections and the support of Prime Minister Disraeli secured him selection to the highest rungs of the judiciary and an appointment to Disraeli's cabinets as Lord Chancellor. Lord Cairns fought for the emancipation of women at a time when they were greatly discriminated against. He introduced the "Married Women's Property Act" which allowed married women to hold property in their own names rather than automatically having their wealth transferred to their husbands upon marriage.

Lord Bowen was unusual in certain respects: he could jump a cow as it stood, for instance. The son of a clergyman, his academic and athletic prowess won many prizes at Oxford University. His meteoric rise to become a Law Lord and the myriad of honours and awards that were piled upon him are tribute to his ability to deal with

¹P. 212 Heward, *op. cit.*

difficult legal cases. He was devoted to his work as a judge. Lord Justice Fry is reported as saying “*What impressed me most of all about him was his intense sense of duty in the discharge of his office.*”

Lord Bramwell was a lawyer’s judge. He was popular and greatly respected by his fellow barristers. His elevation to become a senior judge initially upset some lawyers since he became one of the strongest and opinionated judges of the nineteenth century, illustrated by a string of “firm” decisions on controversial subjects. At a time when the anti-alcohol Temperance movement was enjoying great influence, he had the strength and courage of his convictions to write a pamphlet in support of moderate alcohol intake as a beneficial act rather than an “evil” to be avoided. The comments he made were eagerly collected by his contemporaries. Some show a marked liberal streak in him. For instance, he stated in one case – against the prevailing attitude of the landowning masses of the time – “*If a man commits a trespass to land, the occupier (of the land) is not justified in shooting him.*” On the other hand, his stern nature is illustrated in the following classic Bramwell quote: “*Insanity is not a privilege but a misfortune. It must not be allowed to injure innocent persons.*”

The prose style of the book is reminiscent of the succinct phrases employed by the late Lord Denning, a notable Master of the Rolls and Law Lord. Indeed, Heward highlights the similarities between Lord Denning’s method, legal principle and thought and those of Sir George Jessel.

The index of the book is a model of clarity and useful for navigating this tightly written set of biographies. The bibliographies are compartmentalised at the end of each of the four biographies which is of great convenience for the legal researcher or reader. It is a manner of collating legal sources that could be beneficially copied by other legal historians.

This book provides students, lecturers and the judiciary with a reliable and accurate introduction to the judges profiled. It provided the reviewer of this work a candid and most enjoyable insight into the momentous legal changes wrought by these judges. The ramifications of their work and lives are still, in part, being felt in the legal profession of today. This book would be a useful addition to the library shelves of the Inns of Court, the Royal Courts of Justice and the law libraries of universities at home and abroad.

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ANDRETTA, S., *Information Literacy: a Practitioner’s Guide*. Oxford: Chandos, 2005. ISBN 1-84334-066-6 (hbk): £55.00, ISBN 1-84334-065-8 (pbk): £39.00. xxii, 208 p.

*... information literacy is the zeitgeist of the times ... an idea whose time has long last come. It is consonant with the reform agendas in government, in communications technology and in education ... with employers’ demands for an adaptable and responsive workforce. It is increasingly multi-disciplinary ... and it is consistent with the notion of lifelong learning and the fact that the only constant is change.*¹

Susie Andretta’s book provides a comprehensive examination of the concept of information literacy, focusing on the context of independent and lifelong learning. The practitioner in the title is not, as in the legal sector, the end-user of such training, but the educator of information literacy. Moreover the emphasis is almost entirely on higher education, where the author herself has developed her expertise. However, do not dismiss this book out of hand if working in other sectors, since it provides an excellent overview of the literature of the subject and plenty of practical examples which you could tailor to your own audience.

The book consists of two distinct parts. The first is a review of the literature and national frameworks for information literacy. The second consists of a practical and reflective description of how the author has implemented information literacy instruction in two courses at London Metropolitan University, where she is Senior Lecturer in Information Management.

The book commences by “Setting the Scene” – a chapter which makes up over a quarter of the text of the book – exploring the theories and debates concerning the independent learning aspects of information literacy, the concepts surrounding learning how to learn, and how well the approaches promoted in the USA, Australia and UK are integrated into the national learning agendas. Andretta suggests that while information literacy is well integrated into the US and Australian agenda for lifelong learning, the agenda in the UK is technology-driven and information literacy has yet to make much impact on national learning strategy.

This chapter is followed by an examination of the information literacy frameworks developed for higher education in each of the three regions – ACRL in the US, ANZIIL in Australia and New Zealand and SCONUL in the UK. The frameworks are reproduced in the first three appendices. The book claims to be the first to systematically compare these three models and Andretta draws out the strengths of each model to advocate strategies which foster high-order thinking and promote partnerships within the HE institution.

The second half of the book consists of two case studies. The first is a Year One information literacy module for social science undergraduates. Students complete a formal diagnostic questionnaire at the start of the course to assess their learning needs and determine which classes they would need to attend to achieve the learning outcomes and so succeed in the

¹Candy, P. (1996) quoted in S. Andretta. *Information Literacy: a Practitioner’s Guide* p xix.

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assessment. The second case study focuses on an Advanced Information Research module for MA in Information Services Management. Andretta describes each module in detail, whilst drawing on the literature of information literacy and learning to explain the reasoning for her approach. The case studies and appendices are full of examples used in her teaching, from diagnostic tests (complete with results!) and the wording of a tutorial on how to formulate a search in Google, to the guidelines she gives students for their book review exercise (take note of page 115 all potential reviewers for LIM!).

For those in higher education, this book is stacked full of ideas, together with reflections on past research reported in the literature, which could be incorporated

into your information literacy programmes. The first chapters, though at times reading like a PhD literature review, are a thorough examination of information literacy in the context of lifelong learning and feed into a rich bibliography. There is also a helpful index. This book deserves a place on the shelves of any information professional striving to develop information literacy programmes in higher education, and would provide nuggets of inspiration for those in other sectors.

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