

Book Reviews

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KNOWLES, J. *Effective legal research*. Second edition. London: Sweet and Maxwell, 2009. ISBN 1-847038-18-0: £18.95 x, 177 p.

This title is a classic that has been available for 30 years with various authors, and was first published as Dane and Thomas *How to Use a Law Library*. This is the first edition that has one author solely responsible. It is one of a series of titles published by Sweet and Maxwell in the Legal Skills series aimed at students and it is therefore sensibly brief and fairly easy to access. First impressions are that it has a very clear typeface with effective use of colour. The Contents list allows easy scanning in order to find a relevant section, as it is a reference aid, designed to be dipped into. Tips stand out well and give wise advice about the process of locating relevant information.

Each chapter starts with a useful introduction about the subject to be covered giving relevant background information. There is good use of English and sentences are short and easily understood. Each chapter then endeavours to give information about the products that can be used to locate the relevant information both in print and online. It is at this point that I start to question its relevance to the current generation of law students.

As I was going through the title for review purposes and working my way consecutively through the book chapter by chapter, I felt that I needed greater direction than I was getting. With the students that I know and work with each day, sitting on my shoulders, I was not sure that the book was aiming too well at its audience. With my novice legal researchers in mind, I wanted greater clarity of direction. Which of these sources was going to be the best for me to use? I only needed one to get to the information, unless the first route failed me. It is hard to think of many students who would have the patience to use the print forms of once standard reference works such as the *Directory of British Associations or Councils Committees and Boards*. To get my novice legal researchers on side, I would have been tempted to always order the e-research version first, backed up by the print version, with a brief indication of the strong points of the latter.

The other point that stood out fairly clearly was just how difficult it is to write and publish a title that attempts to cover both print and online. There are very few changes being made to print research tools, but the e-versions are changing constantly and at the date of writing this review (December 2009) I am surprised at how many very recent changes there have been this year to the e-research tools discussed. E-books get an early mention in the text and the reader is told that there is usually a year's delay before their publication. How much

has changed in a year. So many publishers are now varying from this.

Inevitably services have changed their names (Lexis) and from where they are available (POLIS). I felt that there was a slight conflict of interest in that the publisher of this text is part of the group that owns Westlaw. There were very many mentions of the advantages of using Westlaw and sometimes I felt that a student was not being given all the options. I still find that there is more detail for older case digests when using the CaseSearch facility on Lexis than when using Case Analysis on Westlaw, yet I cannot recall CaseSearch getting a mention.

Add to this the availability of PDFs of many cases now being available on all the major services, no mention at all of the Journals Index service on Lexis, the statement that there is no overlap between the journals available on Lexis and Westlaw, no mention of the difficulty most students have at getting to grip with locating non-UK published journals sources on both Lexis and Westlaw, without using an intermediary journals locator service, etc, etc. I am not sure that it is useful to recommend particular services. Perhaps it would be better to give an indication that services have their pluses and minuses and it may be best to get very good at using one, with the back-up of a second in case the first one fails, for whatever reason, to provide the answer. That coupled with a reminder that all the online services keep their own tutorials and help advice up-to-date, even if students resist using them, might have given this book a longer currency. It would also be useful to explain that e-versions of journals are not static and that access to them seems to move from service to service. I also found the point about PDFs of journals strange, "the text of the articles cannot be copied into word-processed texts", as I always recommend them to students as much easier to read and easier to cite from, because the pagination is clear.

While the introductory paragraphs of each chapter and the chapter on Making the Most of a Law Library were very clear, I felt that some sections, e.g. on database searching or European Union Law (why plug a difficult to use service such as the Europa website when Westlaw is much easier) were confusing. At this level I want my users to believe that with a bit of practice they can acquire the skills that will stand them in good stead. If online is available, most students I know will go online first. Quite often one or two searches will get them further with less effort than trying to understand a print service which, although when originally designed was the only way to access material, cannot compete with online in terms of flexibility and currency.

So to make this title more relevant to new students, I would like to see more illustrations and the inclusion of flow charts giving alternatives. I would also like to see a better index. Although the contents pages were good, the index left much to be desired. There are no primary entries for Halsbury's Laws, yet plenty of mentions in the text.

If LIM asked its reviewers to give titles stars (cf iPhone apps or restaurant reviews) this one would get just two.

Diane Raper

Academic Liaison Librarian (Law)
University of Kent

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ENGARD, Nicole C. (ed.), *Library mashups: exploring new ways to deliver library data*. London: Facet Publishing., 2009. ISBN 9781856047036 (pbk): £29.95. xvii, 334 pp.

This is a gloriously practical book and I shall admit at once to a great partiality for practical books. The accompanying website is still at an early stage but, if it fulfils its promise to update URLs and case studies cited in the book, it will be a valuable addition, which many others would benefit from following. Chapter 9 (page 113) usefully defines mashups as "... more than a consolidation of information: they involve the use of existing tools or the creation of entirely new interfaces to explore and expose information in new ways". The ethos of the book is to enable librarians without programming knowledge to re-use third party data to enrich their own library resources.

For a work by so many different authors there is a pleasing uniformity of tone, making the book very readable. Throughout there is good use of screenshots and figures. Although some chapters make better use of these in step-by-step guides, none are intrusive or over-used. The guide for putting bookmarks into 'Delicious', to use as an easily maintained subject guide, is an excellent example of a straightforward step-by-step guide. Several of the example mashups have more immediate relevance to public and academic libraries than law firm libraries, but even initially irrelevant options could be adapted. For example, the mashup for electronic dissertations could be used for seminars, or know-how, within firms.

The opening chapters cover commonly used mashups including Google-maps to show library locations with overlay windows giving contact details and opening hours, or Google Books and Preview used within OPACs to show book covers and previews (if available), or tags and reviews from LibraryThing to enrich the user's understanding of an item's interest and help to locate it on the shelves. This could easily be adapted to use as an acquisitions page with book covers and reviews. Drawbacks with some OPACs, such as a lack of spell checker, could be overcome by mashups, and OPAC searches that reveal no matches could show how to

contact a librarian for further help, rather than leaving users frustrated by a lack of success.

There are other mashup books available, such as *Working with Yahoo! Pipes, No Programming Required* by Loton, but there do not appear to be any others aimed particularly at librarians. It is worthwhile to have practical case studies which readers are encouraged to copy as trial runs before introducing new mashups to their own libraries. Focusing on librarians as a target readership means that all the examples and case studies are relevant to at least one section of the library community, or produce readily adaptable ideas. Some of the general mashup titles require more imagination about use in a library context, whereas this book clearly illustrates what can be achieved now without prior expertise. The author of the chapter on Yahoo Pipes mentions reading many articles about Yahoo Pipes before one practical article illustrated how it could be used. The entire book has that inspiring quality of practical, achievable ideas.

No attempt is made to gloss over potential drawbacks such as mashups making it difficult to identify where information has been drawn from and hence its reliability and the question of how long some organisations are likely to make data streams available. Mashups are still held up as a worthwhile enrichment beyond a simple list of links to other websites. Simple additions can transform a list of events, or training sessions, into a calendar of library events with the option for users to add an item to their personal calendar, or automatically be emailed details of relevant forthcoming events. Many Web 2.0 sites already encourage embedding their content without requiring programming expertise by using options such as "get our widget" or "embed this video by copying and pasting" without knowledge of HTML.

The introduction claims the book will cover not just technical guidance, but also copyright issues. Many of the chapters do mention copyright but, probably understandably in a book of this size, there is no detailed coverage of intellectual property, which could be a key issue for commercial libraries wishing to reuse images, or videos, and disappointingly there is no suggested further reading. There are websites and references at the end of each chapter and in the first appendix, but suggested further reading would have been a useful addition. The glossary and index are good, but the glossary omits the keyword "Ruby on Rails" which is mentioned throughout Chapter 9.

Users are more aware of sophisticated websites mixing information and feel static lists and old-fashioned OPACs look dated. On the whole the book is refreshingly enthusiastic, with a positive attitude to trying out mashups, which should inspire even the least experienced technophobe to attempt something which could enhance their library offerings and improve currency.

Mandy Webster

Library & Information Services Manager
Browne Jacobson LLP