Membership

Membership is open to everyone with an interest in the provision of legal information. The activities of the Group are, however, usually held in and around the City of London. Membership of CLIG costs £18 and members will find the cost of attending their first seminar is almost offset by the saving they make through joining. In addition to a significant reduction in attending events, benefits of CLIG membership include:

- A quarterly newsletter
- Opportunities to network with other information professionals
- Updates on meetings and events planned throughout the year sent directly to you by email or paper copy
- Only members are eligible to join the Committee

CLIG's short term plans

With the advent of broadband and much quicker transfer speeds of information across the web, CLIG has been giving serious thought to overhauling its website and making information available to its members as soon as possible after a seminar or event has been run. This would mean no member would have to wait three or so months to receive information in newsletter format. CLIG proposes improving its website to better facilitate the storage and retrieval of information and to make use of software which will allow it to make information available to members in a much accelerated timeframe, say through RSS feeds.

Bursaries

CLIG continues to welcome applications for its wide range of bursaries. This includes bursaries to attend the annual BIALL conference and study weekends and bursaries for international conferences run by BIALL's sister organisations in many Commonwealth countries and common law jurisdictions, such as the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), Canadian Association of Law Libraries (CALL), International Association of Law Libraries (IALL) etc.

Particular consideration is given to applications from those who have not had the opportunity to attend such conferences before, or who have not previously been in receipt of a CLIG bursary.

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Will Librarians Be Needed in 2010? The Future of the Job Market

Abstract: In a paper given at the 39th Annual BIALL Conference held in Dublin in June 2008, Sue Hill MD of *Sue Hill Recruitment*, discusses the current issues affecting law librarianship and looks at potential future changes. She then suggests how legal information professionals can stay ahead of the game.
Keywords: law librarians; legal information managers; social networking; professional development

Introduction

Over twenty years ago I gave my first talk at the late Institute of Information Scientists conference. The topic was not dissimilar to that of today. It was concerned with the arrival of computers into the workplace and the skills that would be needed to use them. The topic of that talk was something along the lines of "Would there be jobs for information scientists in the new Millennium?" That was years before anyone had worked out that we were all to be doomed at the stroke of midnight on 31 December 1999 by the imminent arrival of the deadly millennium bug. Of course we weren't but, for those who celebrated in London and waited up to see the non-event fireworks, they must have wondered if the soothsayers had been right. First, the bug would mess up the fireworks, and then attack our then version of cyberspace.

In 2007, when I wrote the outline proposal for this paper, 2010 seemed near but vaguely remote. Now in mid-2008 I already have calendar entries on my diary and plans for 2010 and beyond. It is very near, so if it is going to affect us we should certainly be planning what we do now.

I want to talk about:

- Current issues affecting law librarianship
- Future changes/what's coming?
- Is this affecting you?
- How to stay ahead of the game
- What are you doing to ensure your future?

Current issues affecting law librarianship

Some of us here will have already seen the effects of similar belt-tightening that the current credit crunch is likely to bring. At present the effects are being felt more strongly in the city and in finance, but doubtless the ripple effect will spread to those areas such as law that service this sector in different ways. Partners in law firms, like any business owners, are invariably concerned about the pound in their pocket at the end of the day. As a small business owner I can vouch for that.

Economic circumstances always affect our work. However, the economy is cyclical and people's memories are often short. Jobs and departments have come and gone in the past and will continue to do so. The influence of different individuals in management is usually the reason for these changes, as well as differences in thought leadership from person to person and decade to decade. Not quite 'what goes around comes around' but almost.

Financial structures and strategy will cause our employers to look at ways of working smarter. For us that might mean following the TUC model and ensuring that "Productive time improvement increases the time that you, your staff or your organisation has available for front-line service delivery; and making sure that time is being used to best effect - "working smarter" by:

- doing the right things - (eliminate unnecessary work)
- the right way - (use standard, streamlined processes)
- with the right people - (right skills, availability, location)
- using the right tools and equipment."

For your employers it might have an entirely different meaning. It may mean looking at cutting the head count and wages budget by introducing outsourcing or off-shoring as a working model for some of the work that is not seen as vital.

McKinsey & Co probably kick-started the move to off-shore work in India and other low economy, high level education, English speaking countries. Other organisations soon followed their lead. Particularly in financial services, information jobs disappeared and re-emerged in Mumbai, Bangalore, Madras and more. Departments of 40-plus information researchers disappeared. Many of those people had not come to information work through the traditional route, but merely had good degrees and transferable skills and were snapped up to work as information researchers. For many that meant the simplest and most repetitive work. At the same time, technology was enabling the ubiquitous end-users to have information at their fingertips on the desk top. The routine work disappeared.

Of course as those jobs disappeared, some new ones were created: to train offshore workers, to act in quality control functions, or as gatekeepers, liaising with the end user and the remote researcher.

Future changes/what's coming? Is this affecting you?

All of that, and more, is changing what we do, but now – the topic of a panel and much discussion yesterday - Web 2.0 has come of age and is seen as a legitimate work tool. The potential is seemingly unlimited. Businesses see it as more than the better known social networking side, e.g. Facebook, Bebo, MySpace, etc, and we must effectively grasp all that it offers to increase our profile and widen the service that we can offer.

Probably the most amazing aspect of Web 2.0 is that it doesn't bring legacy software and high costs. The cost of introducing effective tools is, in monetary terms, quite low. The biggest barrier is probably the leap of faith needed by those in power to say 'go for it' and to understand the immense potential.

Part of a slide presentation given by Chris Adie at the eFoundations Symposium run by Eduserve (www.eduserv.org.uk), and reported by Brian Kelly on his UK Web Focus blog (http://ukwebfocus.wordpress.com) - incidentally itself an example of decentralised me, since wordpress is a web-hosted blogging application - suggested the following:

- Web 1.0 = "Centralised Them"
- Web 2.0 = "Distributed Us"
- Web 3.0 = "Decentralised Me"

By 'decentralised' he meant using desktop applications on the web – i.e. no applications/software or data stored locally on PC or server.

What do you know about?

- Web 2.0
- Web 3.0/4.0
- Social Software
- del.icio.us
- RSS
- Blogs
- Tag Clouds

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- Folksonomies
- Wikis
- Mash-Ups
- Tomorrow's World

And, more importantly, how do you plan to align these new applications to your work and business strategy?

Your organisation's strategic plan and Web 2.0

Firstly let's look at the strategic aims and direction of your own organisation. If you don't know the answer to the question: "What is the strategic plan for your firm?" how can you develop a plan for your own work or department to match that aim? If you don't have a mission statement for your department, how can you plan or attend to your CPD?

Is there a plan within your firm to introduce any of the above Web 2.0 stuff? Have you thought about ways you could use aspects of it in delivering your information service?

Kevin O'Keefe's Real Lawyers Have Blogs – [http://kevin.lexblog.com] noted on 11 November 2007 "UK Law Firm Clifford Chance sponsors third party's law blog" which went on to say: "Not sure I've seen a leading law firm in the States sponsor a third party's blog, but Steve Matthews caught that Clifford Chance, one of the world's leading law firms with 27 offices in 20 countries and 3,800 legal advisers, is sponsoring Conflict of Laws, a well trafficked blog on private international law. Steve suggests we may be looking at a trend. He also has reason to fear that law firms sponsoring blogs will be seen as an alternative to blogging themselves.

Clifford Chance has both the resources and in-house expertise to do so, but may not have been able to make the business case internally, due to busy attorneys, a lack of time, and so forth. That's too bad. I'm a big believer in firms owning web properties, and the associated audience and relationships. This may not get reflected in a traditional ROI equation, but the value is there - new business relationships with targeted decision makers, marketing collateral, search rankings, referral networks - the list is extensive. Clifford Chance gets some of those things with this move, but it isn't their audience, and long term I'd rather see those assets under Clifford Chance management".

This is an interesting view and angle.

The US election

The hottest campaign in recent memory in the US election threw up an interesting statistic - that the difference in successful fundraising seems to be down to savvy use of the internet and social networking. To quote Andrew Sullivan in the *Sunday Times* May 25, 2008: "Clinton was still AOL; Obama was Facebook. Clinton was the PC; Obama was a Mac. ….. Although Hillary has built the best campaign that has ever been done in Democratic politics on the old model – she raised more money than anyone before her….. the Obama team realised that online social networking made such physical fundraisers redundant; and it also realised that a much better point of entry wasn't the new limit of $2,300 but less than one-tenth of that: $200. It transformed its website into a social networking zone, and its appeal to the young made this strategy viral. Last month's $31 m haul – almost all of it accrued online – is all the more impressive when you discover that 94% of it came in sums of $200 or less. A million little donors became the model. One of the men Obama hired to set up this new effort certainly knew what he was doing: Chris Hughes is a co-founder of Facebook…. Obama has more than 1.5 m individual donors, who come with their own e-mail address books and social networks. And since most have not donated anything like the maximum amount, he doesn't just have a list of names to thank; he has a huge list of names to ask for more. This is a money machine unlike any other." We need to find a way to transfer that model to our business needs.

How to stay ahead of the game

We have talked about business drivers and corporate strategy having a potential effect on our survival and we should also consider the influx of the Generation Y people. They are both educated and influenced socially to communicate and work in a completely different way to preceding generations.

What are the magic circle laws firms up to? When questioned, one responded "We are currently sampling wikis, though nothing has been officially launched yet, and about to trial RSS. Our IT department is slow on the uptake, as they are concerned not to destabilise our environment with new applications. They are comfortable with MS SharePoint and we are using it in a way that can be associated with Web 2.0 technologies as we create - within this more secure environment - team sites, discussions list, blogs, etc. Facebook is big and users can access it from within our IT environment and there are 1000s of us on it!"

www.lawyersweekly.com stated that in November 2007 ***Linklaters***' ***Facebook*** group had 913 members; Allen & Overy had 866; Baker & McKenzie had 699, and DLA Piper, 632. Today (1 June 2008) I searched Google and found references to Linklaters having over 1,500 members and found lots of sites that had really informative reports on what different law firms were doing. That was from a quick google search using the keywords ***Linklaters*** and ***Facebook***. I tried ***Law firms*** and ***Facebook*** but everything that popped up was American. Allen & Overy of course famously banned Facebook in mid-2007, but then did an about-face when lawyers revolted.

In my view this shows that, while we in libraries and information roles are afraid for the future, the IT people are really worried. Don't think IT people know it all either. I asked one of the software companies, which we use to supply specialist recruitment web technology software, what they were able to do to incorporate RSS feeds and our Technical Account Manager came back to ask me what an RSS feed was!

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What are you doing to ensure your future?

If you have any fear about the future then you must do something about it now. I am a firm believer in CPD. This will not and cannot always come through the work environment. There is much available to us to access in our own time. If you want to know more about social networking applications, and how you can do something with them, use one of them to get some simple free training. For example – YouTube - Lee LeFever (The Common Craft Show) and Mike Wesch (Digital Ethnography Studies at Kansas State University) are just two people who have good instructive short videos on You Tube, which tell you just how simple, and how effective, tools like Web 2.0, del.icio.us, RSS, Wikis Blogs, Tag Clouds and other social software applications are to use.

In May 2008 I went to a short seminar run by IFEG, the Institute for Energy Group on Web 2.0. Four speakers gave excellent overviews and insights into what they, or their organizations, were doing. I do not exaggerate when I say that from a business point of view much of the wool was pulled from my eyes and I could see immense potential on how some of the different applications could benefit our everyday working life. I am not Generation Y, nor am I particularly technical, but that won't stop me embracing the potential.

How you act and react to these and other issues affecting your future will doubtless have an effect on your survival. It doesn't help that 'we' often don't know who we are. We can justifiably be accused of not looking or acting as a cohesive or coherent voice. The identity of our profession (for that is what we like to think we have) is confused. Our profession as a whole doesn't have a clear and unified voice. I belong to over 30 groups that represent information in one way or another. These are individual groups, not sub-groups of CILIP. Often one group doesn't know, or want to know, about another group, when in fact they could share resources and knowledge (isn't that what information work is about?).

A quick sift through permanent and temporary legal information jobs that we have been asked to source candidates for in the last 5 or 6 years certainly shows a broadening of jobs titles. When I started recruiting in this sector over 20 years ago, the titles didn't vary much from Assistant Librarian, Information Officer or Researcher and the job content was much the same. Changing job titles can mean changing job functions.

Our figures for 2007 and 2008 show a slight decrease in the number of vacancies in legal firms. Certainly we have seen a decrease in the numbers of candidates available. Much of this is due to the move away from taking new information graduates in and training them. A decision probably based on economies of both money and time. We know too, that when things look rough up ahead, people stop job searching and stay with what they have, or know best, as they don't want to be caught up in the 'last in first out' scenarios. (There is another scenario doing the rounds in respect of cuts due to outsourcing – 'Mumbai, Shanghai or Bye-bye'). While this can result in highly skilled people being on the job market, quite often this is the time that encourages those people to let go and reconsider their future and concerns - some to become consultants, some to new geographic horizons, and some to new careers.

Conclusion

Positive action is needed to stay ahead of the game. Attend to your CPD. Keep your profile high. Align yourself to corporate strategy and work out how to monitor and report on the metrics. As well as being directional, you need to be flexible. Don't be afraid of innovation and technology. Find a way to make it work for you. There are plenty of those who say "I cant, we won't, It won't work." Don't be one of those. Dare to be different. Dare to lead.

Failure to look outward, move onward and develop upward could make the demise of the law librarian a self-fulfilling prophesy.

If YOU want a happy ending - It is YOU who needs to do something.

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Biography

Sue Hill FREC FCLIP (Hon) is currently the CEO of Sue Hill Recruitment & Services – the largest independent recruitment agency for the information field – and has over 30 years experience of library work.

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