



THE DISK OF LETTERS

by Peter Breen; published by Data Base Management Services, Box 62, Brighton 3186 (Ph.(03)523 5947); PC disk and booklet; price approx. \$50 depending on disk required.

Sydney Solicitor Peter Breen has shown it is possible to develop a successful "computer law" product from a very simple idea.

He first published *The Book of Letters*, a compilation of commonly required business and official letters - letters of demand, letters of complaint to government departments and the like - and the first edition sold 10,000 copies. The market was principally small businesses and individuals.

He has now converted the book into *The Disk of Letters*, so his readers who have word processors can use and modify his form letters to their own requirements without retyping them.

In computing terms, there is nothing fancy about *The Disk of Letters*: it simply contains one 90K ASCII text file which contains all the letters, and may be opened by most word processors.

The first page of this file is a table of contents which identifies each of the letters by a unique reference number (e.g., "Letter as to water damage": REF:3A). Documents are retrieved by using the word-processor's "search" or "find" option to locate this reference number.

Not even a simple database, let alone full-text retrieval or CD-ROMs, yet the *Disk of Letters* has been commercially successful!

Marketing text on disk is in its infancy in Australia and precedents (or "templates") have mainly been marketed to the legal profession.

Peter Breen must be one of the first to bring these ideas to the (business) person in the street, but he surely won't be the last. Be watching for a review of *Document Modeller* in a forthcoming issue of *Computers & Law*.



THE DISTRIBUTION OF MICROCOMPUTER SOFTWARE

Continuing Legal Education Committee Washington State Bar Association, 1985

The proceedings of a conference organised last July by the Pacific Rim Computer Law Institute associated with the University of Washington School of Law, this book is actually a loose leaf compendium of over 300 A4 pages of small print.

It consists of thirty "chapters", which are actually conference papers, of ten page average length, covering all aspects of the distribution of computer software under United States law.

Issues covered include U.S. computer export regulations, use of software as a security, the Semiconductor Chip Protection Act, several papers on contracts between software developers and publishers and issues concerning end-users such as performance warranties, trade secrets, copyright, piracy, site licences, statutory warranties and shrink-wrap licences.

There are also two anomalous but useful papers on a computer primer for lawyers and on software protection and distribution under Japanese law.

If the papers had been grouped by

topics it would have made a more useful book.

As is inevitable with publications of this type, the papers vary considerably: some provide detailed argument concerning their topics, but a few are little more than a "shopping list" of issues. Some papers have useful appendices such as U.S. export regulations.

Most of the papers are written from a practitioner's perspective. For specialists in this area, it would be a worthwhile acquisition.

Lecturer at large

Jay Bloembecker, Director of the National Center for Computer Crime Data, a Los Angeles Research firm, plans a trip to Australia in November.

He is looking for opportunities to lecture on computer crime and security and to learn about Australian developments on these areas; he is available to present a three day (or less) seminar.

Bloembecker may be contacted at the Center, 2700 N. Cahuenga Blvd. Suite 2113, Los Angeles, CA 90068 Tel. (213)874-8233.

SOCIETY NEWS SOCIETY NEWS SOCIETY NEWS

VICTORIAN SCL

The President of the VSCL is Alistair Dowling, and the Editor of VSCL publications is Sydney Low.

The VSCL held two meetings in early 1986. Roger Clarke, Reader in Information Systems at A.N.U., spoke on the proposed National Identification Scheme [see separate story this issue concerning the Australia Card: Ed.].

Professor Wolfgang Kilian from Hannover, West Germany, addressed the Society on a range of current computer law issues in Europe, including moves toward some standard certification for software performance and the need to train arbitrators in computer-related disputes.

WASCL

WASCL now has 36 individual members, 5 corporate members and 4 student members.

The office holders are John Gladstone (President), Tony Sutherland (Vice-President), Paul Genoni (Secretary) and Mark Stoney (Treasurer).

Recent meeting topics:

- "Computer-Related Contracts" by Geoffrey Vickridge, Tony Parker and John Gladstone);
- A demonstration /seminar on hardware and software for the legal profession by Geoffrey Harris from the Computer Consultancy Division of KMG Hungerfords;