

PUBLISHERS' LIAISON

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Publishers' Liaison Committee – a Review of Our Objectives

The PLC was established in 1993 with five clear objectives. However, as was raised at the 1999 ALLG biannual meeting in Hobart, there have been significant changes to the nature of legal publishing since the PLC's beginnings and perhaps it is time for the ALLG membership to revisit the committee's objectives. The following amendments are therefore offered. Any feedback is appreciated and should be directed to Greig Williams

1) **Current objective:**

To encourage constructive communication between legal publishers and law librarians.

Proposed amended objective:

Encourage constructive communication between law librarians and legal publishers, resulting in the free exchange of ideas on the development of products, in order to improve the work process efficiency

2) **Current objective:**

To lobby vendors to address the range, number and quality of publications

Proposed amended objective:

Promote open discussion with legal publishers to assist in setting a strategic direction for publishing which is acceptable to both publisher and ALLG members

3) **Current objective:**

To investigate complaints and assist in satisfactory resolutions

Proposed amended objective:

Investigate those complaints not resolved at a local level and assist in finding a satisfactory solution at a state or national level, as is relevant, by enlisting the cooperation of the respective publishers.

4) **Current objective:**

To address the need for more cooperation in publishing

Proposed amended objective:

Foster an environment of cooperation and trust between the ALLG members and legal publishers which will work towards the creation of customer preferred products.

5) **Current objective:**

To monitor prices.

Proposed amended objective:

Monitor prices and give feedback on usage patterns and user behaviour to arrive at innovative and flexible pricing and license arrangements

Additional proposed objective:

Demonstrate leadership through impartial assessment of products and assist publishers to develop standards of excellence in electronic publishing

Thank you to Fay O'Grady at the NSW College of Law, for gathering input from legal publishers' to assist in the revision of PLC objectives.

Folio 4 software installation

In the last PLC column LBC set out their decision to migrate to Folio 4 software and Butterworths explained their decision not to do so.

LBC has since released products with Folio 4 and customers have discovered a change to the installation procedure that requires individual workstation installation. LBC offered the following statement shortly after the software was released:

"The easiest way to install the software onto individual PCs in a network is to run the installation from the desktop. On most operating systems, the installation of our products would not take longer than 5 minutes. This could be done by either an IT person or the end user themselves as it requires no technical knowledge, nor is the user prompted to insert any information in the installation procedure. However, we appreciate that a number of our customers prefer not to use this process. In these cases, we recommend that the IT department creates a batch file which will run the workstation installation automatically when a user logs in. Our technical people have indicated that this is a fairly simple and standard procedure and have already talked a number of users through the process."

If your own IT personnel have not yet designed a way around having to install the software at individual workstations, LBC have developed a customised workstation installer to help make the process easier. The installer and associated documentation will be ready from around mid December 1999. LBC's Digital Support team can email it to customers on request. If you have not already registered to receive this material then you may call LBC's Digital Support team on 1800 020 548 to request the material.

Although I have received some reports of workstations crashing when LBC's Folio 4 CDs were first received and installed, LBC note they have heard of very few instances. If you have attempted to install Folio 4 yourself and have experienced workstation problems, then please let me know so that I can follow this up on behalf of ALLG members. Even if the problem has been remedied, I am still eager to hear the process you undertook to resolve it.

LBC/Thomson's new principal user pricing policy

ALLG members have contacted the PLC regarding LBC's recently introduced Principal User Pricing Policy. LBC customers have expressed concern that applying the new pricing policy, particularly to the more general research products, for example the Complete Legal Research System, will result in

significant price increases. A second concern is that it is often difficult to identify who within an organisation uses a product frequently enough to be deemed a 'principal user'.

Members' concerns have been raised with LBC and the following statement has been provided as a result:

"Thank you for bringing to our attention your concerns with regard to our electronic pricing policy. We appreciate your feedback and understand your concerns about the policy and its interpretation."

Please rest assured that we are presently addressing these issues and will reply to you ASAP."

This is an issue that many ALLG members will have to face in the new year as CD-ROM subscriptions come up for renewal. As LBC are now aware of the concerns and have offered to address the issues, feedback from ALLG members is being collected regarding what effect the new policy will have within your organisation. If you have an example you can provide showing how this policy will be good, bad or indifferent within your organisation, please email Greig Williams with the specifics.

Butterworths – changes to service and bookshops

In December Butterworths implemented some significant changes and initiatives at both national and state levels. The publishing company explains that many of these changes are the result of talking to customers about the standard of service Butterworths has provided in the past. Many customers believed that service levels could be significantly improved. As a result of this feedback, Butterworths is refocusing its resources and is taking what it believes are the necessary steps to ensure that an increased level of service is provided to customers in 2000. The key changes that Butterworths believe will allow the company to improve service include:

- A significant restructure of the Sydney team, including the creation of a number of new positions. Butterworths is consolidating its back-office functions in Sydney where a larger team can provide greater continuity of service and have direct

access to decision-makers. In this new structure Butterworths believe they will be able to solve problems more quickly and directly but also ensure that fewer problems arise in the first place.

- Butterworths will no longer maintain their own bookshops. Butterworths report that a bookshop devoted to a single publishers' titles has not proven to be economically viable in recent years. Butterworths note however, that contact is being made with other local bookshops with a view to having them increase their stocks of Butterworths publications. In compensation for the closure of local Butterworths bookshops, the company notes it is arranging for expedited delivery from the Victorian warehouse.
- A focus on local resources, specifically people who support our customers 'face-to-face' around the country with a greater customer focus and a wider mandate to solve issues
- Major account customers will now deal with a Customer Relationship Manager whose main function is to ensure a high level of service rather than to sell products
- Fixed service plans and similar large scale projects will be handled directly by the Sydney office.
- In the new year, Butterworths will extend customer support to 8 pm Sydney time to cover the working day across all of Australia. In addition, the customer support line will now be available during all working days except national public holidays

With these changes occurring late in 1999 there has been little time for customers to assess any impact before the year's end. However, when you are back in the swing of things again early in 2000, the PLC would appreciate feedback from ALLG members with comments on the Butterworths changes and initiatives and would particularly be interested to hear about improved service levels or, alternatively, any difficulties you are experiencing. Please email Greig Williams with your feedback.

New look for Butterworths statements and invoices

Butterworths are intending to make changes to the way their statements and invoices look to make them easier

to use and understand. The publisher is seeking customer feedback on the changes before they are finalised. I encourage you to take a look at the proposed statements and invoices and offer constructive suggestions. ALLG members frequently comment that increased consultation opportunities with publishers would be appreciated before changes or new services are introduced so here is your opportunity. Samples of the new look are available on the Butterworths website at: www.butterworths.com.au/customersupport/new.htm

Publishers' liaison on the ALLG website

The Publishers' Liaison section of the website is split into four areas. They are:

Hot Topics

Alerting members to current issues being dealt with by Publishers' Liaison representatives.

Legal Publishers

Providing links to the websites of legal publishers

What's New from Publishers

Publishers are invited to post brief notices about new developments they believe will be of interest to ALLG members.

Reports

Hosts the full text of reports that may be of interest to ALLG members, for example the group's submission on the Federal Register of Legislative Instruments.

Your ideas for the website

If you have a suggestion about how the Publishers' Liaison section of the website can be enhanced, please contact Anne Gardner or Greig Williams.

Your PLC state representatives

Changes to the contact details for Publishers' Liaison representatives in each state will be amended on the Publishers' Liaison section of the ALLG website at: www.allg.asn.au/