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Canberra Times editor Michelle Grattan said quality is a critical issue facing the media at the moment because it relates directly to its credibility. The media's image in the community is extremely low; people do not believe or trust it. While the public are not always right in their judgement of the media, the media cannot ignore public perceptions. There are significant pressures on the ability of the media to provide quality, including:

- speed of production;
- the temptation or need to produce news that sells;
- commercial pressures, resulting in a focus on presentation and selling rather than conveying information;
- the general ethos and organisation of new offices, with not enough attention to accuracy.

Grattan saw a need for changes in the newspaper office. The current system did not allow enough emphasis on accuracy and more background research was needed, with support from specialist researchers. She said the culture needed to change so that the brightest journalists were not automatically siphoned off into executive positions. Senior writers should be valued and put on a par with managers. She also wondered if journalism was attracting the best talent. She deplored the fact that journalism has become over-bureaucratized, and that there is no longer a place for 'mavericks'.

These thoughts were echoed by Sam Lipski (*Australian Jewish News*) who said the minimum requirements to improve standards are that journalists should be better educated, and more motivated to stay journalists for the rest of their lives. His recommended intellectual diet for journalists was based on the staples of history, language, ethics and law rather than subjects like media studies, journalism, sociology, English literature.

He noted that the pressures of the daily deadline could easily leave journalists exhausted, dispirited and socially isolated. They need to be given the opportunity to refresh their careers midway, take time out, to travel or work in another area altogether for a while, Lipski said. He concluded by stressing that back in the news room, the primacy of the writing reporter must be acknowledged, and journalists must be given time if they are to achieve real job satisfaction. □



Not the Full Guide

CU recently received a copy of the 1994 edition of a publication entitled *The Guide to Australian Lawyers*.

This 222-page directory is intended to provide guidance for people seeking lawyers with particular expertise, and also for journalists looking for comments from lawyers who are willing to speak to the media on their subject area.

Admirable aims. But on leafing through, CU was struck by some prominent omissions from this publication in this magazine's areas of interest - areas which have seen a positive explosion in legal specialisation in the last decade or so. For example, although *Encore* magazine in a special supplement last year listed over 30 firms specialising in film and television related law, only nine firms are listed here under the general heading 'Entertainment' and they do not include such well known film lawyers as Michael Frankel or Martin Cooper.

Under Media, a mere six firms are listed; under Telecommunications, four firms. And while these include some of the major specialist firms, some other large and/or highly competent firms (we won't give them a free plug by naming them) are not listed.

It should be noted that the Communications Law Centre is not listed either!

The explanation is not hard to find. Lawyers have to pay to be listed in this directory, and apparently a substantial number of lawyers did not judge it to be worth their while.

If you are still interested, *The Guide to Australian Lawyers*, second edition 1994, edited by Christine Tilbury and published by PB Marketing and Media Pty Ltd, is available at \$35.00 from Butterworths. □