Yearbook of Law Computers and Technology, Leicester Polytechnic School of Law, Leicester, 1984, 174 pp. By subscription £12.

Articles on computers and the law seem to fall into three basic categories. First, there is the "Oh Dear, Oh Dear, the *new technology* is advancing ever so much faster than the law and we really must do *something* before it is too late" type of paper. The author is always a little vague as to exactly what the "new technology" is doing, but is never vague as to the proper remedy: form a new Institute with the author as "director".

The second type of article is the "Gee Whiz! Computers are really useful! Here is this great idea that I have for a really important research project" paper. The authors of these papers possibly do have an idea which would be useful if developed, but it may be necessary to wait a very long time to see the product of the proposed research.

The third type of paper actually reports some research. This may be some useful information concerning the law as it relates to computers, e.g., copyright or contract. Less often it is some application of computers to law, e.g., computer aided instruction programs, data bases, etc.

Editors should, but do not, weed out the first type of paper. Probably they should weed out the second type as well, but they no doubt have considerable sympathy with the struggling academics who must publish *something* about their research before it is finished. It would be nicer if they could at least wait until it was begun.

The third type of paper is rare for a very good reason. Research is time consuming and difficult, particularly the non-traditional (at least for lawyers) research which requires the authors to write lessons or programs and then test them out over a period of time.

The *Yearbook* has seven "articles", seven "commentaries", a "technical section" and seven book reviews. Some of the book reviews are interesting, particularly Jon Bing's review of Colin Tapper's *Computer Law*. Others are less interesting.

The Technical Section is concerned with computer aided instruction, particularly choosing an "authoring language". Ms Smith, of Leicester Polytechnic, advises us of the extreme importance of choosing a language which is "portable", i.e., which will run on a wide variety of computers. Ms/Mr Jones extols the virtues of STAF2, an authoring language developed at Leicester Polytechnic; it turns out that the language is available on the Burroughs 6800 mainframe computer as well as MIMI and Research machines at LPSLRC, whatever that may mean. You may be interested in STAF2 if you have your own Burroughs.

Unfortunately, the articles and the commentaries fall, for the most part, into the first two categories mentioned above; several of them are more suitable for popular press articles than for a scholarly journal.

As a crude measure of the standard, six of the articles have a combined total of only eleven references to other works; authors on such important topics as legal protection of software, computer aided instruction and the place of retrieval systems in legal education appear either to be unaware of the thousands of articles and the real research that has been done in these areas or to be unwilling to share their knowledge with the reader.

This lack of acknowledgement is offensive enough in purely legal areas, but is doubly so when the topic is one such as computer aided

instruction. Lawyers seem to have an uncanny ability to ignore the immense amount of work which has been done by educationists in the area. Even more offensive is the suspicion that they believe, with no evidence whatsoever, that law is different and that the other work is therefore irrelevant.

This criticism might be less relevant if the *Yearbook* was intended to be some kind of a popular introduction for the uninitiated to the important area of computers and the law. But according to the editorial, it purports to be an English journal "of the quality and depth . . . [of] the Jurimetrics Journal of Law, Science and Technology or the Rutgers Journal of Computers, Technology and Law".

If you are interested in Computers and the Law, I would suggest that you spend your money on one of these other journals.

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