

Effective Legal Research, Irene Nemes and Graeme Coss, Sydney: Butterworths, 1998.

This eight chapter book was written by two widely known university lecturers with the aim of providing a "a book on legal research skills which canvasses most of the research resources relevant to Australian law, both print-based and electronic" (p.1). The book has a peculiar character, being a cross between an explanatory guide to the techniques of research, and an exhaustive list of the available resources. From this form of presentation it is unclear whether the book was intended to serve as guide to legal research, or as a more general introductory text for law students. Whatever the intention behind its production was, it is doubtful that a book of this kind will rank as a best seller, or be able to corner the market in its field. It would appear, moreover, that the authors have fallen into a number of stylistic traps and have subsequently produced a book that is packed with useful information presented in a format which makes it difficult to use. Certainly a novice researcher coming into the law library looking for a basic guide to the sources of law would not be aided by such a complex format.

The chapters arrange the material into some familiar categories: the first five comprising brief guides to researching skills, and the latter three outlining techniques for locating legal information within the three major sources – case law, legislation and secondary sources. The presentation of the material within chapters is by way of headed sections and small numbered paragraphs, often followed by 'boxed' hints, warnings, rules or 'screen saves'. The information collated could prove to be quite useful in guiding those wanting to locate legal information or wanting to learn about the uses of particular resources. That is of course if they have the time and inclination to wade through the often repetitive and patronising commentary which connects the sections in a 'teacher to student' like discourse. There are, however, some glaring gaps and problems with the logic of organisation of information, which, if treated differently, could have added substantially to the quality of the book, and turned it into a popular resource for legal researchers of various degrees of experience.

Chapter One forms the introduction to the book, basically as a description of the subsequent chapters of the book. Included in this chapter is the authors' brief explanation of why they chose to write the book. Their main reason is stated thus:

"It occurred to each of us, when we started teaching legal research to undergraduate students at our respective faculties, that no textbook existed that explained 'how' to undertake basic research" (p.1).

From that position, however, the authors divert their interest from *how to undertake research* to '*how to use*' the array of '*legal resources*'. Although

the difference may be a fine one, the lack of any real distinction between these processes has resulted in the development of a book without any precise aim. I would think that the authors' initial position was one worthy of becoming a text for undergraduates, but having adopted the latter position many of the more critical phases and skills necessary for effective legal research have been omitted, and the book has become little more than a step-by-step guide to accessing the masses of resources.

Of course research is a two-phase process, requiring the researcher to locate primary and secondary materials, and then to determine whether and how that information can be used in the given task. Had the book included some discussion about the steps taken after locating the information in the library it may well have become the ideal legal research text for undergraduates. It would be extremely valuable to include further comments on related skills, such as:

- how to understand what is being asked of the student in the given task;
- how to identify relevant material;
- what to do when the material is not available;
- how to skim read the material effectively to determine whether it is on point;
- how to stay focused on the topic in an ocean of information;
- how to find more material not on the database;
- how to extract the information required; and
- how that information can be incorporated into the student's work.

Chapter Two is devoted to citation, commencing with a chatty coverage of the aim of citation and the various conventions for citation. An explanation of abbreviations and a list of various resources that assist in deciphering them follow this. The chapter is then divided into Primary Sources and Secondary Sources. Unfortunately, the authors have not taken the golden opportunity to provide an explanation of primary sources, although they have vaguely done so for secondary sources (both in this chapter and later in Chapter Six). The Primary Sources section is further subdivided into 'Cases' and 'Statutes' with numerous sub-headings in each, providing various examples and thorough explanations of them. Curiously some matters are considered in this section, but relate to citation generally. The division of some information into these categories is unnecessary and creates repetition. A more general category at the commencement or close of the chapter would have been more suitable for a discussion of the types of brackets used, italicisation of the name of the source, avoidance of Latinisms, acknowledging sources, and use of repeat citations. This style reduces the ease with which information can be accessed and detracts from the potential user friendliness of the book as a resource for students who would perhaps find greater comfort in uncluttered, straightforward instructions.

Citation of secondary sources is more clearly dealt with by the authors, and in being more concise the authors have provided the reader with a suitable section for continued reference. However, a caveat in boxed and highlighted form should have been provided to the reader here, as reference should always be made to their own faculty style guide for certainty about the appropriate style to be adopted in assignments or theses. This point was made in the previous chapter, but is one that should be emphasised again. It should also be remembered that the comments made about citation are the opinion of the authors, and therefore should be viewed as critically as any other secondary source.

On occasion the authors state their opinion as to the most appropriate form of citation and even make recommendations for adoption of certain practices. For example, the authors recommend that 'R' or 'DPP' be abandoned "in favour of the name of the accused" to provide uniformity to citation of criminal cases (p.19). They also recommend the citation of first and last pages of journal articles on the basis that it encourages students to actually *sight* the reference, not just include it without having actually read it (p.33). It should of course be stressed that students should not quote these recommendations in assignments to support their adoption of them over the preferred faculty style. It should also be remembered that citation arguably should be true to the source. For example if *Stingel* appears as *Stingel v The Queen* in the authorised report being used then it should be cited as such, but when quoting from a secondary source, the citation used there should be true to that form (which would probably be: *Stingel v R*).

It is understood that the authors intended only to canvass research resources. However, the inclusion of an extremely brief table of abbreviations of Courts, Judges and Parties as an appendix to Chapter Two fails to provide readers with adequate knowledge of the sources they are confronted with, even just within this book. A section of easily accessible tables for standard abbreviations of commonly used law reports, journals, jurisdictions, personal roles and common items would have greatly increased the usefulness of the book as a student resource. This would also have been more likely to result in the book being placed in a more competitive position next to the often-recommended text by Enright, *Studying Law*.

The authors briefly focus on aspects of planning, organisation and scope of research in Chapter Three, 'Strategy and Technique'. In my understanding of these concepts, they would be more suitably described as belonging to the former category – strategy, the latter being more effectively represented by the material in the remainder of the book. Here the authors attempt to explain what legal research is, why it is important, and ways to make research easier. A number of pointers are designed to build up student confidence with researching, and highlight problems that may be encountered. However, there are a number of terms used which assume the reader has both the knowledge and the skills neces-

sary to understand what is expected of them. For example, the authors recommend students "identify the issue". Assuming all readers know what 'issues' are, a brief paragraph directs the reader "to write each issue on a separate card or piece of paper" and to "append the results" of their research as they progress (p. 50). There is no definition of a legal issue, and no supporting discussion of how the reader might identify them. One hypothetical situation is presented, which I believe fails to take the reader through the basic steps, and instead takes a rather large leap into damage and duty of care. The process undertaken and conclusions reached may be obvious to someone with more experience, but the first few questions, and how they were arrived at, should be spelled out for those of less experience. To provide an effective example of the strategies needed, the authors should perhaps consider the reader's knowledge of an area as more like *tabula rasa* and then proceed from there. If the example used is to be of more general benefit, applicable to other areas of law, it needs to demonstrate the process of identification of the issues more clearly, perhaps in more concrete terms.

The authors recommend that students become familiar with the layout of their library. This is certainly true, but perhaps does not go far enough. Students should also be aware of other resources in the library, like Hansard, which may not be kept in readily accessible areas; and the location of materials in associated disciplines that may from time to time contain discussions about the law. Likewise students should be made aware of inter-library loans and copying services, or the location of other libraries for those times when, for whatever reason, the desired materials are unavailable in their own library.

As to the authors' opinion that it is better to start with some secondary materials (p.51), I would think that this would depend totally on the task at hand. Where a lecturer asks students to comment on the state of law at a certain point in time, by for example reflecting on an extract from a judgment, then obviously the judgment should be read to place the quoted words in context. Then depending upon what is said there, preceding or subsequent decisions should perhaps be consulted prior to any secondary material. The value of the response "it depends" should never be underestimated.

The remainder of the chapter provides the reader with some important clues about organisation, recording procedures and details, and when to stop researching. Some of this information is repetitive, but is useful to the student, and perhaps cannot be stressed enough. Bullet points assist with accentuating these clues, and provide a useful summary for continued reference. This style is perhaps the most attractive used in the book, and should have been more widely adopted to encourage students to return to the book time after time.

The topic 'Electronic Searching' is given some consideration in Chapter Four, through a discussion of advantages and disadvantages of computer assisted searching, introducing some commonly used terms, and

providing some tips for successful searching. This chapter is relatively short and concise, but provides some useful background information to computer aided searching. Like Chapter Three, this chapter is relatively well written and leaves the relevant information readily available to the reader in an uncluttered style. Armed with this knowledge the reader may be able to better understand the capabilities of this type of tool, and its limitations. However, some of the information in 'Tips for Successful Searching' seems to repeat what has been said in the 'Explanation of Common Terms', whilst some common terms appearing in the tips are not explained at all. This leaves the reader without a reliable glossary of terms to which they may return during their research. The repetition may have been minimised by structuring the chapter to accommodate this information more concisely under one heading.

There is, however, a notable omission from this chapter, being a discussion of OPAC systems. The authors have left this to be discussed in Chapter Six, which deals with secondary sources. This odd placement of instructions on how to use OPAC systems confuses the topics covered in that chapter, and reduces the quality of the book as a student resource. By placing more general instructions in the chapter on electronic searching the authors may have aided in the reader's familiarisation with the system, and created a useful guide to it. This reflects what has been said earlier about the authors not having a clear purpose in mind for the book, and raises questions about presentation of this type of material. Clearly the authors needed to establish a method of presentation suitable for the purpose. There is evidence in some chapters that an attempt has been made to separate the information into more understandable and accessible forms, but this has not been consistently followed. Obviously personal preferences enter into this debate, but from the perspective of a novice, clarity would surely be beneficial, as would consistency of style.

The all-important 'Introduction to the Internet' is given some space in Chapter Five. Here the authors are well aware of the problem of currency of their information in printed form, but attempt a brief overview of the Internet as a tool for researching. Within this ten page discussion the authors have avoided giving step-by-step instructions on how to access the most popular legal information sites, but have instead referred the reader to a number of other books which will provide that information. For my money I would prefer to have seen this book done thoroughly, and to have provided the reader with the information in one neat resource. Having to refer to several other guides for assistance is not what students need. Anyone having attempted legal research would be familiar with the problem of having several books to juggle at once. It would be more efficient to have one book that critiques resources and guides students through them without the need for even more books.

A few examples of legal information Web sites are illustrated and their links are briefly discussed. The scope of information available through this medium is enormous, and is growing rapidly. Wisely enough the

authors have not attempted to delve into too much detail about the use of sites, or the information to be retrieved, as these are apt to change just as rapidly. It would be useful, however, for those who are not so versed in computer skills to be walked through a connection to the Web from both the university/library and personal computers. I feel the authors have again assumed too much and omitted some important steps here, which the less confident computer researcher would appreciate. Often, having a simple guide builds enough confidence in a student to allow them to get started, and to return to that tool in the future. Wouldn't any lecturer encourage this form of research, especially when it may be the only way students will become absorbed in the process?

Other problems with this chapter include the failure to provide the reader with sufficient links back to the terms used in Chapter Four which are also relevant to Internet searching; and to add further explanations of some Internet-specific terms. For example, the term "search engine" is used in reference to retrieval of information from sites on the Internet (p. 74). However, it is not explained for the reader that search engines are readily accessible on the Internet by using an address such as "www.altavista.com", from where search terms are entered in a similar method to searching by CD-ROM, or by use of the categories provided. Search engines search the Web for home pages containing the terms selected by the user, and list them in various ways. Hypertext links allow the user to move from site to site, accessing information as they go. A bookmark can also be used to provide ready access to search engines.

I feel that in their cursory discussion, the authors overlooked a very relevant search engine for an Australian centred book, and also failed to recognise the American bias of the search engines they did mention. I should think that "ANZWERS" deserved a mention, as it at least has an Australian/New Zealand bias, and readily provides links to sites like AUSTLII. This would certainly be one way of reducing the amount of information retrieved by this type of search. Another matter overlooked by the authors was availability of search engines on most service provider home pages. Here the user is offered a number of search engines that can be accessed simply by button selection, and results may be compared by moving in and out of the screens. This is more specific to home users, but is nevertheless important for students who have access to the Internet from home.

It appears that it is too easy to assume the reader has some knowledge of Internet searching, and to skim over important facts for the first timer. Knowing how to access search engines may be essential for the reader setting-up access to the Internet from their personal computer, a somewhat different process to that comfortable access established by most universities. I suspect the lack of clear definition in this chapter reflects the authors' limited knowledge of the area rather than any prophetic foresight that the information will become outdated.

The authors claim in Chapter Six that they have attempted:

"...to list the principal secondary sources, together with directions on *what* tools to use to track them down, *how* to use those tools, including worked examples which will strive to point out pitfalls." (p. 86)

However, in that presentation the authors have not taken heed of their own advice that:

"it is wise to try to maintain a clear distinction between the materials you are seeking, and the tools employed in that search task." (p.83)

In this 125-page chapter we see the authors extend their discussion from a critique of available resources to a basic step-by-step guide of them. This lengthy and very cluttered perusal of secondary sources takes detailed account of a very broad range of tools. This is in stark contrast to the summary glances reproduced in the preceding chapters, which would appear to have been designed to filter out the necessity for consideration of many of the tools in this chapter. Instead the authors have elaborated on much of the material previously presented, or as mentioned earlier, only included it here when it could have been more effectively dealt with elsewhere. This has added to the repetitiveness of the information, and reduced the ease with which the reader can access the material required during their research.

This chapter, especially, is in need of a list of its contents, as it attempts to cover all the sources from legal dictionaries, through textbooks, journal articles, law reform publications, encyclopaedias, to current awareness services, in detail. The subheadings utilised are somewhat lost amongst numerous exercises, hints, and screen saves, and the lengthy examination of the processes involved in tracking down "discussions of the law". Indeed, more defined breaks could have been employed by the publishers, and some of the detail could have been placed elsewhere by the authors. For example, the details of "how to use" the electronic form of journal indexes could have been treated effectively in Chapter Four. Instead the authors have chosen to produce tables here that provide an explanation of the terms (such as searching, operators, truncation, printing and downloading) briefly outlined in the earlier chapter. The logic of the categories used throughout the book by the authors must again be questioned. Is it possible that there may be a better way to present this information to the reader?

In this chapter the peculiarity of providing details of the use of electronic resources, acknowledged by the authors as potentially reducing the relevance of the information to a minimum in a very short period, is brought to the fore. Taking into consideration the number of detailed instructions included, much of this chapter is prone to becoming outdated in a very short period of time. In fact, with on-line access to AustROM databases, some of it already has. Perhaps the authors are so ambitious as to believe that updated instructions will be required for subsequent edi-

tions of their book. To condense much of the information relating to AustROM in a table may prove beneficial. In that type of format, the similarities could easily be detected, and the differences highlighted for both print-base and electronic versions, without the need for the length of discourse included. Such a table could have been presented in Chapter Four, and included some discussion on the advantages and disadvantages associated with each form.

The sections dealing with legal dictionaries and textbooks could have been reduced somewhat by a more careful consideration of OPAC systems in Chapter Four. Likewise much of the information on Journal Indexes, Case Citators and Digests could have been more effectively discussed in Chapter Three which deals with 'Strategy and Technique'. Had this information been filtered out, students of law may have been alerted to the distinction between 'the tools' and 'the material sought' referred to by the authors. The sections on encyclopaedias and current awareness services, although they have similar problems to the earlier sections, do include some evidence of secondary material, but this is somewhat obscured by the density of surrounding material. Discussion of these resources necessarily includes some reference to the material related to primary sources. Unfortunately, inclusion of this information may result in some confusion for students in the early part of their degree. Taking into consideration the authoritative tone, and extracts used particularly in encyclopaedias, the authors would have done well to have provided a clear explanation of this form of "discussion of the law", and perhaps supported this with other examples found in journal articles and textbooks. The repetition of information throughout this chapter has certainly added to the length of the book, but has not added to the value of the book in any substantial way. In fact, as stated so often before, I believe it detracts from the usefulness of the book as an aid to student research skills. It would appear from the style of this chapter that the authors were eager to provide examples of the research process, but not of what might be found as a result of that process.

The location of 'Case Law' from several "different starting points" is the focus of Chapter Seven. The authors have provided a list of these, which include location by:

"subject; legislative reference; words and phrases; unreported cases; noting up; casenotes; case citations; browsing; and searching." (p. 210)

The authors have by choice excluded any discussion of "the fascinating areas of case analysis, the doctrine of precedent, court hierarchies, *ratio decidendi*, *obiter dictum* and other such fancy Latin phrases" (p. 209). This does perhaps aid in keeping the book "down to a manageable size", but also limits the scope and sophistication of the book. Pruning may have been better practiced elsewhere in the book.

This chapter is opened without making the distinction between pri-

mary and secondary sources clear. The newcomer to legal research should be forgiven if, after reading this section they are left with the impression that a case located on a summary database, in a casenote, or in a digest would be considered as a primary source of law. It should be remembered that a book such as this may be picked up and read from any point within it, and not necessarily from cover to cover. Throughout the section on 'Locating Cases By Subject' the authors have made no clear effort to persuade the reader otherwise, or to warn them that cases extracted in secondary sources are not considered to be the equivalent of the primary sources – the authorised reports. Likewise there are no warnings in the relevant sections about the problems associated with citing cases retrieved from CD-ROM or the Internet. Apart from these oversights, the authors have provided some useful tips on locating cases, and some useful guides to the resources used along the way. Some tables setting out information relating to pertinent resources in a clear and meaningful way have been included. These add to the usefulness of the book as a reliable reference resource, but again this beneficial touch has been clouded by the addition of information that could have been discussed in other chapters.

In approximately sixty pages Chapter Eight concentrates on a discussion of 'Legislation' through the topics: types of legislation and how to locate them; updating; locating legislation by subject; commentaries prior to enactment; and commentaries subsequent to enactment. It should be immediately apparent that the last topic includes references to cases and journals, both covered in earlier chapters. To reduce the repetition of this information the reader could perhaps be referred to the relevant section, where they would find the comprehensive details. The heading "Types of Legislation" may lead the reader to believe that a discussion of various categories of statutes would ensue, encompassing the distinctions to be made between the relevant jurisdictions, and making some reference to the Interpretation Acts. Instead the section discusses access of information relating to Bills, principal, amending, reprinted and consolidated Acts. A brief discussion of accessing information about legislation via the "principal tools" of *Australian Legal Monthly Digest*, *Australian Current Law Legislation* and *Looseleaf Services* is included. Location of the official legislation by name and number, in print and electronic form is also given brief consideration. An example of an Act is presented after this information, and the parts briefly defined for the reader. This may have been more effectively included prior to the sections dealing with location of an Act by name and number.

The following section relates to currency of the information located, and techniques for 'Updating'. There are quite a few good examples of both print and electronic updates that assist with the reader's understanding of the techniques required. The authors have made good use of these examples, which do not appear to clutter the section, or overshadow the explanations. 'Location of Legislation by Subject' is given adequate treatment in the next section, and the tools for doing this are once again revis-

ited, but this is fortunately kept to a minimum. The section dealing with 'Commentaries Prior to Enactment' is also brief, but provides sufficient background information on the topic, and outlines techniques for locating them. In all, this chapter is neatly presented, and providing less specific detail of the techniques involved reduces the effect of repetition of information.

With reference to the book generally, it is difficult to imagine what other purpose it may have, than as a student aid or text to accompany a course on legal research. However, therein lies a problem for the publishers. Convincing university lecturers that this book could be used by students undertaking a course in legal research may prove to be more difficult than first anticipated. By way of example I refer to the legal research courses conducted as a component of the subject Legal System and Method in the first year of a Bachelor of Laws course at this University. The very able Law Librarian, Peter Sidorko, composes course materials offered. They are comprised of current legal research information and related student exercises. Throughout the course students are given structured lessons in the sources of law, and techniques for accessing them. The exercises are functional, because they relate to other components of the subject, and encourage students to record the methods used to locate the information that will be used in actual assignments. The materials are reviewed each year, and reproduced in an appropriate 'manual' format for use throughout the course. Armed with the essential skills for research and knowledge of the main sources, it is highly unlikely that *Effective Legal Research* will be consulted frequently by students attending this or a similar course at one of the more competitive law schools in Australia. In this way the potential for use as a text has been greatly reduced, instead the book will probably only be infrequently consulted by unsuspecting novice legal researchers.

Whether intentional or not, there is also evidence of a bias toward research techniques utilised by solicitors and barristers. The emphasis of this type of research being on accessing information for the purpose of developing an argument, relevant to one particular case. It would appear from the examples given in the book that the style of teaching preferred by the authors, or perhaps their purpose for lecturing in legal research courses is to train future solicitors in quick, easy research. Although mentioned in a few places throughout the book, research for more academic purposes appears to be denied significant recognition, there being little consideration of the needs of those who undertake research for postgraduate theses, or for law related employment, other than practising solicitors and barristers. It would appear that the authors have overlooked the fact that research of an academic kind usually goes much deeper, and attempts to make some comment about the state of the law or to critique some other commentary, by means of analysis and criticism of a range of available materials. Whilst the physical techniques employed at the research point may be exactly the same, the critical thinking which is necessary for

selectivity of material leads to quite different results. Some comments to this effect could have been included in Chapter Three.

One aspect of the book that I personally found objectionable was the patronising tone noticeable throughout. That approach to their audience earned the authors no affection from this reader. It would also appear from several of the authors' comments that they assume their audience will be comprised of young high school graduates, who have little knowledge of academic life, and no real passion for research as an art form. Such students are portrayed as participating in research only as it provides a means to an end – acquiring their law degree! I found these positions both naive and offensive. The authors should not need to be reminded that some people who choose to undertake studies in law have already attained professional status in other areas, and bring with them a wealth of worldly experience. Research, to some of us is of special value, and has great significance to our understanding of law.

One particular example which left me feeling somewhat angered is illustrated by the following comment. I believe this is little more than an attempt at justifying the authors' roles as lecturers of the 'bitter law school pill' – legal research; and at self-adulation for the timely release of their solution to the contemporary electronic research dilemma. With reference to past methods of legal education, the authors state:

"As a result, there are now many lawyers over the age of 30 who have little or no legal research skills. Ask a solicitor how she researches a legal problem and often you will hear the response, 'Brief Counsel'." (p. 45)

I am sure that this is an exaggeration, out of all proportion to reality. No doubt there are many solicitors who would take offence to a comment that effectively strips them of all their expertise, (whether acquired through university studies or not) and portrays them in a position of dependence upon counsel for easily accessible information, bereft of any research skills of their own. In addition, it is surely naive to assume that solicitors over 30 years of age did in fact complete their law degree during the 'dark ages' of study which the authors refer to. I would expect there are significant numbers of lawyers, like myself, who have entered the game only after attaining some maturity of years. Should the authors really be left to misguide their readers as to the company they will be keeping when they finally enter the realms of legal practice? Comments such as these don't really encourage the young, first year undergraduate to acquire perfect legal research skills, and they could just as well have been left out of the text, even if they do reflect the authors' own beliefs.

Likewise, the tone taken by the authors often reflects a dislike for legal research. Comments speckled throughout the book give some indication of this lack of passion for research, and paint a picture of tedium, for example:

"For a more specific examination of a given topic, *law journal articles* may be more appropriate – then it is to journal indexes that your feet will initially drag you." (p. 84)

As subtle as it is, this sentiment may be passed on to the readers, who internalise the negative attitude and develop the same dislike for the most fundamental and beneficial component of learning. A concomitant of such a perspective is a feeling of oppressive weight and boredom, which turns the task into a chore, and the student into a reluctant beast of burden. Of course, by contrast to courtroom advocacy, legal research is not the most exciting or glamorous task of the lawyer, but it is crucial to so many aspects of the law. The development of finely tuned research skills is arguably as essential to a solicitor as it is to an academic lawyer. So why do the authors choose the language of weariness and boredom to describe the student undertaking research?

In a practical sense, the book is small enough, at approximately 380 pages, to be carried about easily for use at each location in the library, and thumbed through for hints on research techniques. The soft cover is a bonus for those who are conscious of the weight and bulk being carried around campus. The illustration included on the front cover conjures images of the relative inaccessibility of student research aids, and perhaps adds a visual dimension to the authors' reasons for writing such a book. However, there are some pitfalls with style that make its use as a 'ready reckoner', awkward. For myself, this would mean that the student is not really much better off with this book in their possession. Perhaps consulting other more helpful sources found on site like posters, indexes, 'How to use' pages, 'Help' files, other students, or librarians would result in more success, at a more reasonable pace. One possibility for improvement would be to create a comprehensive flow chart that identifies the steps to be taken in research, illustrating all the alternative sources that could be consulted. Such a chart could also be coded so as to identify the chapter(s) and sections that deal with the various details of that source. Another possibility for improvement is for reorganisation of the information into a more logical and accessible format. The authors would perhaps argue that they have succeeded in doing this, but there are those of us who would disagree. Of course it would be extremely difficult to avoid any repetition of information no matter how it was organised, but the use of examples relating to 'how to use' electronic resources is presently far too repetitive. Much simpler methods of presenting this information could be devised to reduce this effect, and to increase the fluency of the book in several respects. The entire structure of the book could be reviewed with an eye to presenting the information from the point of techniques and tools, rather than clinging to the more traditional categories of primary and secondary sources which obviously has not worked for this book.

What I have come to expect from a legal textbook is a solid basis for an understanding of the areas covered, which can be referred back to well

after the completion of the undergraduate course it was purchased for. Of course currency of the material can be checked after the memory has been prodded by a familiar and easily located resource, but it is the ongoing usefulness of this type of text that I find adds to its value. It would be virtually impossible for a student to absorb all of the information provided in this text during a legal research course. Revisiting the same text with a different attitude, approach, or simply more experience may develop further understanding of an area. For that reason the text should be designed to cater for students returning to it as a reference source and for those who are just starting out. For the more advanced law student, this book provides some useful hints, but for the newcomer it may prove to be a difficult resource to cope with. The index is not a straightforward, alphabetical listing of the topics, but requires some familiarity with the structure of the book and the authors' groupings of resources. In this type of student reference book the index should be much more comprehensive, allowing for different approaches and degrees of knowledge. A complete novice should be able to pick up the book and locate information with as much ease as the more experienced researcher. There is also too much assumed knowledge necessary for effective use of the book. The organisation of the information does not assist with an understanding of the diverse processes involved in effective legal research, nor does it provide a readily accessible bank of information in logical categories. There is a need to flick back and forth through the chapters for adequate explanations, and for reference to other resources for information deliberately omitted. I believe the present form of this book does not lend enough support to the acquisition of legal research skills by modern day students. The problems are, however, primarily stylistic ones, and could be greatly alleviated by varying the methods of organisation and presentation.

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