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OFFER OF BOOKS FROM FREEHILLS, MELBOURNE

In early April **Belinda Tuinenburg**, Librarian at Freehill Hollingdale & Page in Melbourne, kindly offered some spare law reports, digests, and acts for the Pacific Twinning Programme. Twin libraries in Kiribati, Fiji and Tonga immediately requested a number of the titles. Many thanks to Belinda and to those law librarians who have organised to send the material to their twin libraries. It is very time-consuming work but well worth it when you hear how much your efforts are appreciated.

FIJI

Australian Youth Ambassador – ‘Doing it Tough in Fiji!’

Following is an interesting account by **Josephine Timcke** of her recent work in Fiji. If you are interested in the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development program, you can contact Josephine as below.

When my original assignment in the Solomon Islands fell through, I was horrified. I had just arranged six months leave without pay and panicked at the thought of nothing to do. Thankfully, I had heard from a lawyer who was also part of the same volunteer program, Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development, that my skills were needed in Fiji. So, I received my new airline ticket the day before I left, and armed with the Solomon Islands Lonely Planet, I left Australia for six months in Fiji!!!

Not knowing too much about Fiji, or about the project I was going to, didn't seem to matter, I was greatly relieved that I was going somewhere!

*I arrived in Suva, the capital of Fiji, at about 7pm when it was pouring with rain (This, I was later to discover, was a daily occurrence.) Two days later I went to work in the Library of the Attorney-General's Department. The Librarian, **Mina Shandil**, had only been with the Department for four months and so together we tried to work out exactly what the administrators wanted me to do.*

With little background knowledge about Fiji, I arrived with few expectations. My workplace

was in the Government Buildings where the Courts were located. It was an old building with wooden floorboards and very little air ventilation (certainly not air-conditioning) In fact, the windows in the library had shelving in front of them as space was at a premium. The High Court Library was right next door and the Library of the Director of Public Prosecutions was also in the same building. Aside from USP and the small law collection at the Fiji Law Reform Commission, these were the only law libraries in Fiji.

My major task was to reclassify the textbook collection. As there had been a number of librarians in a short space of time, and a period of time when there was no librarian, some books were classified, and others were simply put on the shelf next to a book of similar topic. Using Moys and the Enterprise Thesaurus, I began writing out the catalogue cards. There was no database to enter the information onto and no typewriter to type the cards. A lot of the materials are donations from legal officers or from embassies and other organisations. The materials are quite old and are a mixture of British, New Zealand, Australian, Canadian and a small amount of Pacific Island information.

At the same time (because I just couldn't cope with cataloguing all day!), I was working on smaller projects. Removing all the annual reports from the textbook collection, creating a

holdings list of journals and reports and creating a subject guide to the collection, were just some of the smaller tasks I was able to complete.

The volunteering program I was associated with, the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development program, was based on the principle of skills sharing and transfer. This meant that while I was able to reorganise the collection, I also needed to train Mina in cataloguing so she could continue. So I wrote up notes on using Moys and the Thesaurus and we went through the whole cataloguing process so that she understood what I was doing.

Similarly, I was also able to put together an Internet training manual for library staff and legal officers to help them understand the amount of material that was electronically available and how they could access it. While there was only one computer with Internet access and a VERY slow connection, it was better than nothing!

While I was in Suva, the Department moved to a new (air-conditioned!) building. While this was exciting, it was also a rather daunting task. It was announced on Thursday that we would be moving and had to be out of the Government Building by Monday. I think I lost all the weight that I had gained that weekend packing and carrying boxes in the humidity of

Suva. Unpacking was actually more of a challenge since there was not enough shelving in the new building (and the shelving that was there collapsed when it was filled with books!)

With the new building came new computers and database software to enable us to create a computerised library system. Unfortunately, this was only a month before my departure and with getting shelving and unpacking boxes a priority, we were unable to get this started

Working within the Department was quite different from my work in Australia, and I often found myself shaking my head in disbelief. Most of the judgments are filed in alphabetical order by first name. I found this a bit tricky to deal with, while those who had worked with this system for a while didn't see the problem. Not having a telephone in the Library was another strange concept for me, although I quite enjoyed the quiet! Although it was a more relaxed lifestyle in general, there were still court deadlines to meet and legal officers leaving things until the last minute and having unrealistic expectations.

I can't say it was all hard work, though! I was able to travel around Fiji on the weekend and got to see some of the most beautiful beaches and islands in the world. I also met some fantastic people from Fiji and volunteers from all over the world

I have to thank Piper Alderman Lawyers for allowing me the six months leave and for also helping to financially support the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development program. Without their support, I would not have had such a great opportunity. It was the most rewarding experience of my life and I was very sad to leave. Having returned home, I feel like I have left a part of myself in Fiji - certainly the part about wearing proper shoes, my poor feet are still not used to closed shoes with high heels, give me flip-flops any day!

I would also like to thank many of the Australian law librarians who often answered my calls for help and were always able to assist. Being in a position where there were very few other law librarians, I have come to appreciate our network with a whole new approach.

I'm more than happy to talk about Fiji, my work there, and the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development program, so please do not hesitate to contact me if you want to know anything further.

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