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The last word



WHAT A TOP JUDGE SAYS ABOUT LAW LIBRARIES

Former High Court Justice William Gummow left office six months ago after a long and distinguished career, just before his 70th birthday. Only the year before, in 2011, he was placed second in *Crikey's* listing of the top law and order power brokers in Australia. *Crikey* described him as 'the intellectual leader of the nation's most powerful court'.

Our law librarians will know Bill Gummow as one of the most influential judges in recent Australian history, but for members in other sectors, the brief bio is this: University of Sydney, first job in law firm Allen Allen & Hemsley (made partner after just three years), steady rise from barrister to federal court judge, while also finding time to lecture at the University of Sydney and to write about the law.

We asked the former judge to tell us about his experience of law libraries and he told us he has been a prolific user of library services throughout his career.

'I have found myself visiting a law library virtually every working day as an appellate judge. My favourite by far has been the High Court collection'. He has great respect for the role of law librarians, 'An exceptional law librarian has perseverance'. Out of the many he has known over the years, he says, 'I remember Maisie Watkins at Allens, 40 years ago; Lynn Pollock at the Law Courts in Sydney, and Jacqui Elliott at the High Court. The thorniest problem a law librarian has helped me solve was tracking down appellate materials in the House of Lords Library. This archival material has not been transferred to the new Supreme Court collection in the UK.'

Bill Gummow has earned the deep respect of fellow judges overseas and has often travelled to international conferences as both a delegate and a speaker. He told us when he mentioned Australian law libraries to international colleagues, he felt they envied him, 'I think Australian law libraries and law librarians compare very well indeed with those in other developed countries, but there are difficulties with libraries in newer law schools.' He didn't elaborate on this point but we would be interested to hear what our law librarian members think of this comment.

In his retirement, reading for pleasure will be a feature, so we asked 'do you use an ereader?' No, he replied, 'definitely the printed word'. We should have known the answer from our front cover shot of the former judge sitting, surrounded by legal volumes and holding a weighty tome in his hand. We wish him well in his retirement and hope that he won't be a stranger to libraries.



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