The rumors had been swirling around the legal information community for months. Ever since the Mead Corporation announced that they were looking to sell their Mead Data Central (MDC) division, librarians and other information professionals have been wondering just who would be the new owner of LEXIS/NEXIS (MDC's most successful product.)

And the winner is . . . Reed Elsevier, Public Limited Corporation. Newspaper reports have suggested the British-Dutch publishing giant is paying Mead $1.5 billion for the division, outbidding such formidable competitors as the Times Mirror Co. (Matthew Bender Co.) and Thomson Corporation. The deal also includes the MDC subsidiaries: the Folio Corporation, Jurisoft, and the Michie Company. The transaction, which is conditional upon United States antitrust clearance, is expected to be complete by the first of the year.

The transfer from a U.S. based company to a foreign based company continues a trend the legal information community has witnessed over the past 10 years. Most notably, Canadian based Thomson Corporation has purchased Lawyers Cooperative Publishing, Warren/Gorham/Lamont, Clark/Boardman/Callaghan, Prentice-Hall Information Services, Carswell, and the Research Institute of America. Many industry experts credit Europe's expanding, and less expensive, telecommunications market as the reason so many foreign companies want to gain access to already established electronic legal products that can then easily be introduced to this new market.

Although MDC has been a major player in the U.S.'s dominance of the electronic information marketplace, growing competition within the U.S. has cut into MDC's share of the market. Many have credited the recent intense competition to develop a truly "user friendly" language for database searching as a key reason Mead is pulling out. Mead, however, states that the company wants to refocus its energy and finances toward its traditional base of paper and packaging products.

Addressing the American Association of Law Libraries annual conference this summer, MDC President Rod Everhart insisted that the sale should not be viewed as a desperate act by Mead, but as a chance for both companies (Mead and MDC) to expand in two different directions. After the sale, Everhart, who will continue as President of MDC, said "We have found a strategic partner who can ensure that we will achieve our vision to grow the business."

Reed Elsevier Chief Financial Officer, Nigel Stapleton, echoed Everhart's spirit of growth when he was quoted in the Wall Street Journal shortly after the purchase announcement. While the new owners clearly have their sights set on the European marketplace, Stapleton noted that "there's a lot of growth to come purely from better penetration [of law firms] in the U.S. market." That...
growth, the Wall Street Journal concluded, should come from applying the skills Reed Elsevier has developed as a publisher--editing, indexing, preparing extracts--to their new electronic information products.

So how does all of this effect the average law student? In theory the change of ownership should be transparent to LEXIS/NEXIS users. Initially, at least, the LEXIS/NEXIS databases will not change; the LEXIS student representatives will continue to be available to help you; and all other LEXIS/NEXIS projects will continue as planned. What you might notice in the years ahead is a change in the types of information that are available. Clearly, more international databases will begin to appear as the customer base shifts to a more global audience. Additionally, because Reed Elsevier has been a major source of scientific and medical information for years, MDC may begin to offer access to more "hard science" databases. On the down side, some industry insiders suggest that many current LEXIS/NEXIS database suppliers (mostly publishers) may view the new owner as a competitor and, thus, choose not to renew their database contracts. Still, at least in the short run, students should see little or no change in LEXIS/NEXIS products and services.

MURDER, THEY WRITE

If you ever get tired of writing airtight contracts or mundane legal briefs, you might want to try your hand at composing a murder mystery or perhaps an emotional courtroom drama. A number of attorneys have combined the two professions and in a couple of cases, have found the merger to be enormously profitable. Unless you have been living under a mold-encrusted rock for the past few years, you've surely witnessed the astounding success of Scott Turow and John Grisham. If you haven't read Turow's Presumed Innocent or Grisham's The Firm by now, chances are you have at least seen the movies. But they are by no means the only attorneys venturing out to find a place in the literary sun. Other writing lawyers--with hopes of making more money from literature than the law--churn out thousands of pages of fiction every year.

The following is a short list of lesser known but equally engaging lawyer-authors and the legal melodramas they've published. You might want to check them out over the holiday break. Several of them border on trashy, but you can always justify it by saying it's relevant trash.

Christine McGuire - Until Proven Guilty. McGuire's heroine, Kathryn Mackay, is a star prosecutor specializing in murder and sex crimes and constantly struggling for emotional detachment.

Philip Friedman - Friedman's novels, Reasonable Doubt and Inadmissible Evidence are detailed courtroom dramas that often turn on rules of discovery or pieces of evidence.

Richard North Patterson - Degree of Guilt - Attorney Christopher Paget agrees to defend the estranged mother of his young son who has been accused of murdering a famous writer whom she claims raped her. Did you catch all that?

Grif Stockley - Expert Testimony, Probable Cause - Stockley's books feature Gideon Page, a solo practitioner who takes cases other lawyers shun, such as a woman seeking a refund when her pit bull flunks his "spiritual development" classes and a man who brings a product liability action for his missing toupee. Humor combined with intrigue has garnered Stockley rave reviews.

Janet Miller - Practice to Deceive - Revolves around an ingenious plot to murder the senior partners of a prominent law firm. Miller says she was inspired by recurring fantasies she had in law school about killing off her professors. Mmm.

This list is by no means exhaustive as more John Grisham wannabes appear in the bookstores every day. Clearly, for many attorneys, writing (and reading) legal fiction can be a great escape from the grim realities of writing contracts and briefs and yes, even taking final exams.

Nonie Watt, Head of Technical Service

SURFING THE INTERNET FOR FOREIGN AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

Where can you find the Magna Charta, U.S. Department of State Travel Advisories, and the Aloha Chant? These documents, and a wide variety of others related to foreign and international law, are all accessible in electronic format via the Internet.
For those who haven’t tried it, the Internet can be searched using any of several “browser” programs, including Cello, Mosaic, and Netscape, all of which are available on the Law School server. (To gain access to the Law School server from the computer labs, select "departmental servers," then "Law School server," and then "Windows - EXPERIMENTAL!," after rebooting the machine.) Having selected one of these browsers, you can search the Internet most conveniently by selecting the World Wide Web Virtual Library for Law from the Law School Home Page.

Here you will find a number of gopher and web servers that provide access to foreign and international law documents. At this point, many are quite new, and contain little, if any documentation of consequence; however, several harbor a wealth of hard-to-find documents. The most developed sites are the Multilateral Conventions database, produced by the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and the UNDP (United Nations Development Program) gopher. The former contains the full text of many of the most important multilateral treaties. The latter provides access to Security Council, General Assembly, and Economic and Social Council resolutions, within hours of their adoption, as well as other official documents, such as General Assembly agendas, etc. The UNDP gopher also provides access to the documentation of international conferences sponsored by the U.N., such as the recent conference on population, held in Cairo this past September. Here you can find the draft text of the population conference final act, which will not be available in paper for some time.

Other Internet sites worth mention are the Canadian Open Government Project, which includes the text of Canadian Supreme Court decisions, as well as various administrative documents; a variety of gophers located at German universities (e.g., Göttingen, Berlin, Saarbrücken, Stuttgart), which provide access to German statutes in German; the University of Montreal gopher, which provides access to a variety of U.N. documents; and the Lund University gopher, which provides access to Swedish statutes, in Swedish; and, for something a little different, the Perspectives in Hawaiian Sovereignty gopher, which has a variety of documents related to the sovereignty movement in Hawaii. (Hint: this might be a good place to look for the Aloha Chant, but be warned that you need to have a computer with a sound board to hear it.)

Admittedly, the collection of documents available via the Internet is arbitrary and spotty at this point. In addition, documents contain typographical errors, and cannot be checked for accuracy. Many documents require the ability to read a foreign language. But despite these problems, the Internet is already a valuable source, especially for United Nations documents and multilateral treaties, and undoubtedly will become an ever more important source in the next several years. Why not be the first on your block to browse through it for international and foreign documents of potential use in your research?

Ralph Gaebler,
Foreign & International Librarian
EXPANDED LIBRARY SERVICES FOR FINAL EXAMS

The Library has made its semi-annual switch in scheduling and procedures in order to accommodate students' needs. Here are the most important changes as well as a few tips on taking advantage of the Library collection.

The Library's extended hours are:

- Dec. 3  Saturday  8 a.m.-12 midnight
- Dec. 4  Sunday  11 a.m.-2 a.m.
- Dec. 5-9  Mon.-Fri.  7:30 a.m.-2 a.m.
- Dec. 10  Saturday  8 a.m.-12 midnight
- Dec. 11  Sunday  11 a.m.-2 a.m.
- Dec. 12-15  Mon.-Thurs.  7:30 a.m.-2 a.m.
- Dec. 16  Friday  7:30 a.m.-6 p.m.

As you might expect, demand for a number of study materials dramatically increases during the exam period, and the Library has shortened circulation periods for these heavily used items. Hornbooks and nutshells, which usually circulate overnight, only circulate for four hours during exams, so please bear in mind that you must renew these materials on a frequent basis if you wish to keep them. If they are in heavy demand, renewals may not be possible. If you're not sure what subjects are covered by the Library's collection of hornbooks and nutshells, you'll find a complete listing of these study aids at the Circulation Desk.

During your exam preparations, don't forget the Library's extensive collection of non-print sources. The Library carries audio-visual tapes and computer-assisted legal instructional series, both of which are designed to provide better understanding of classes such as contracts, torts, civil procedure, labor law and evidence. A guide to the Library's audio-visual collection is available at the Circulation Desk, while CALI's computerized legal instruction programs have been installed on all the computers in the Library's Computer Center. And speaking of computers, if you plan to use the CALI programs, or need to prepare/print notes and outlines, please remember that exam time is one of the busiest times in the Computer Center.

For those of you who intend to work in the Library over the Christmas/semester break, the Library will be open for limited daytime hours on the weekdays. We will be posting breaks hours in the very near future. If you plan on using a law school library at another university during the break, remember that many universities require advanced notice of your visits and that you may need assistance in getting permission to use other collections. Be sure to contact a librarian to make any arrangements.

Please feel free to contact the Library staff if you have any comments or suggestions as to how we can assist you during exams!

Keith Buckley, Reference Librarian

WORKING THE HALLS

Happy December Birthday to:

Professor Craig Bradley on December 5th;
Assistant Dean Lauren Robel on the 8th;
Jennifer Underwood in the Admissions Office on the 14th; and
Professor Ann Gellis on the 22nd.

Happy January Birthday to:

Keith Palmer from the Associate Dean's Office on January 3rd;
Professor Lynne Henderson on the 13th;
Chris Zonkel on the 3rd floor on the 18th;
Professor Roger Dworkin on the 19th;
Jackie Hickey in the Library Media Center on the 22nd;
Professor Alex Tanford on the 23rd;
Library Director Colleen Pauwels on the 25th; and
Phyllis Kenworthy in the Community Legal Clinic and Professor Aviva Orenstein on the 27th.

Hope you all have a great day!!!