

# LPSS News

Law and Political Science Section

Volume 7, Number 1

ALA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## Information Literacy for Environmental Issues

The LPSS program at the 1991 ALA Annual Conference in Atlanta was "Empowering the Public: Information Literacy for Environmental Issues." The program, by GODORT, the SRRT Peace Information Exchange, and the SRRT Task Force on Environment, included speakers who each covered a different aspect of environmental literacy, thus giving a complete picture of the issues involved as well as the information needs of environmentalists. The speakers were John Applegate, professor of administrative law at the University of Cincinnati; Gayle Alston, health education specialist at the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry; Michael McCloskey, chair of the Sierra Club; and Bruce Kennedy, head of reference at the Georgetown University Law Library.

### Environmental Law

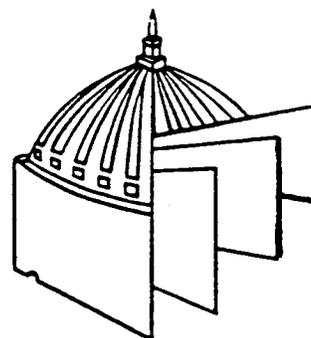
John Applegate spoke about the three main areas of environmental law: conservation, pollution control, and regulation of hazardous materials. Conservation deals primarily with land management and with creating a balance between preservation, recreation, and resource usage. The problem of balance is complicated because different agencies run different programs. The National Park Service aims to keep the land as is, for example, while the National Forest Service is concerned with exploiting the resources. The result is that the two agencies send mixed messages and at times are at odds with each other in the debate between preservation and development. Pollution control is divided by medium (air, water, and land), with different criteria about how pollutants can be discarded into each medium. This division by medium makes it possible for polluters to shift the pollution from one medium to the other, from air to land, for example. While the original concern of pollution control was aesthetic, as toxicology developed and the health effects of pollutants became known, the third area of environmental law, regulation of hazardous materials, evolved. This area of the law, strictly concerned with the health aspect of environmental pollution and legislation, is focused on the risk to human health.

Two major areas of legislation that empower the public regarding environmental issues are the "Superfund" and the "Right to Know" laws. The Superfund legislation puts the financial responsibility for cleaning up sites on those who caused the pollution. The Right to Know legislation requires the reporting of the release of hazardous chemicals into the environment.

### ATSDR

One government agency that monitors the release of hazardous chemicals into the environment is the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), the health agency for the EPA. Gayle Alston, the head of the educational information services at the agency, gave an overview of ATSDR's functions. One of its most important products is the Toxic Chemicals Release Inventory, TCRI, which identifies the sources and the quantities of toxic chemicals released in the United States. The agency also provides toxicological profiles of chemicals found at hazardous waste sites, health assessment of sites, and factual information for governments about companies involved in producing hazardous chemicals. The agency provides a wealth of information to governments and the public in print, online,

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November 1991

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## Environmental Issues *(continued)*

and CD ROM formats which it is required by law to disseminate. As a result, the chemical profiles are made available to depository libraries.

### Environmental Organizations

Environmental organizations, as well as governments, use information about sources of pollution and the effects of hazardous chemicals on health. Michael McCloskey, chair of the Sierra Club, addressed the issue of information needs and information use by environmental organizations. Environmental organizations, once concerned primarily with the preservation of natural beauty and resources, now include health, pollution, and conservation, as well as the preservation of natural habitats, within their purview. The environmental movement is divided into three categories: mainstream organizations, interested in public policy; radical organizations who see governmental action as ineffective; and conservative organizations, who are not involved in lobbying. The Sierra Club, belonging to the first group, is heavily involved in lobbying and litigation. McCloskey then talked about the information needs of environmental organizations. The major issue is information overload. The Sierra Club does not rely heavily on periodical literature or books since this literature shows only general trends and is not very timely. Governmental and private think tank reports and newspaper clippings are much more important. Much of the useful information is proprietary and therefore expensive. The Sierra Club maintains its own database of congressional voting records and uses other databases as well. Since very few libraries have extensive environmental collections, environmental organizations do not generally rely heavily on public or academic libraries. In addition, libraries set up barriers to the use of their collections; the Library of Congress, for example, does not permit stack access to the Sierra Club. Instead, the Sierra Club has its own libraries around the country as well as an archive, housed at the Bancroft Library, at the University of California, Berkeley, all of which are open to the public. McCloskey gave his vision of what functions and services libraries should perform. Given the information overload, libraries should provide clipping services, collect computer catalogs, accept orders by phone, provide overnight deliveries, and make research assistance available by phone. Some of these services are already in libraries, others are not. Consequently, the Sierra Club gets most of its information from commercial services.

### Environmental Research

Bruce Kennedy, head of the reference department at the Georgetown University Law Center, described the methods involved in doing environmental research, which consists first in defining the environmental problem and then analyzing its legal aspects. The first step is basic research into the specifics about which substances were emitted and what their chemical actions are, and who emitted the substance. This research is done in the appropriate literature, like physics, chemistry, or business, that covers the topic. Librarians know well the periodical indexes or abstracts, bibliographies, and online databases which are useful. The second step is legal research, which can be broken down into distinct stages: background research, using secondary sources which lead to primary sources such as laws and statutes; the validation process, which insures that the law has not been overturned; and, finally, the analysis stage, when relevant articles that discuss the law have to be consulted. The tools used in legal research are available both in printed form and online.

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*This program was sponsored by GODORT, the SRRT Peace Information Exchange, and the SRRT Task Force on Environment. Summary contributed by Sever Bordeianu, University of New Mexico.*

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## *Political Science Dictionaries and Encyclopedias*

Clearly defined terminology is of major importance to any discipline. The hard sciences have achieved clarity because scientific terminology is inherently precise. As the social sciences increasingly use scientific methods and data analysis, clear and unambiguous terminology is becoming equally important in these disciplines as well. It is important for scholars and lay persons alike to be able to understand and agree on the definitions of the terms used. Jack Plano, series editor for the *Clio Dictionaries in Political Science*, states that "the political and social sciences suffer more than most disciplines from semantic confusion ... [which] is due, in part, to popular use ..." (*The Dictionary of Political Analysis*, p. ix). Scholars have tried to address the need for clarification by creating helpful tools. This essay will analyze five such tools, major political science dictionaries and encyclopedias which were originally identified in the *Political Science Pathfinder* by the Committee on Bibliographies. The titles of the books are:

*The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Thought*, edited by David Miller. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987. 570 p.

*The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Institutions*, edited by Vernon Bogdanor. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987. 667 p.

*The Dictionary of Political Analysis*, second edition, by Jack Plano, Robert E. Riggs, and Helenan S. Robin. Santa Barbara and Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 1983. 197 p.

*The Dictionary of Political Thought*, by Roger Scruton. London and Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1982. 499 p.

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## *ACRL LPSS Meeting Schedule--San Antonio*

Saturday, January 25, 1992

9-11	Executive Board Meeting
11:30	Lunch
2-4	Conference Program Planning Committee (New Orleans, 1993)

Sunday, January 26, 1992

9-11	Bibliographies Committee
9-11	Conference Program Planning Committee (San Francisco, 1992)
11:30-12:30	Review and Planning Committee
2-4	Publications Committee
2-4	Membership Committee

Monday, January 27, 1992

9-11	Library Instruction Discussion Group
2-4	Business Meeting

### **New Editor for LPSS News**

*Karen L. Whittlesey-First is the editor of the LPSS News beginning with this issue. Karen has been head of copy cataloging and database management at the Harvard Law School Library since October, 1989, and a member of the American Association of Law Libraries since then. She is also a member of the American Library Association (ACRL) and the Law Librarians of New England. Before becoming a librarian, she worked several years as a reporter and editor on a suburban newspaper.*

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SUMMARY

### ACRL

It is recommended that Barbara Ford continue to oversee funding for programs. Under the democratic process of program funding evaluation which she set up, everyone has a say in what program warrants funding. Those with the best chance of funding are well written and well thought out requests.

### Officer duties

Chair #5 (oversees LPSS program at Annual) change to — Continues as ex officio; Secretary #6 (serves as publicity/information officer of LPSS; publicizes LPSS programs and other activities in appropriate media) move to Publication Committee; Publication Committee add note to select someone to write summary of the program for Newsletter and submit something to Cognotes.

### Committee changes

Conference program planning #1 add budget; #2 (to submit a summary of program content for publication in LPSS News) move to Publications Committee; add vice chair as ex officio.

### Changes to section brochure

Remove variable material to side. Brochure will go out to new members of ALA.

### Bibliographies committee

One bibliography is complete and in latest newsletter; another will be ready for fall and the committee will contact vendors.

### San Francisco program planning

Jean has speakers set up for program "Voluntary Action in the Non-Profit Sector."

### Library instruction

Pathfinder is finished. Discussion group on library instruction issues is being formed.

### Membership committee

Exploring mentorship program; may consult with NMRT and LAMA.

### Publications

Section manual revision is necessary by Midwinter.

### Review and planning

An inventory of goals has been submitted to ACRL.

### Liaison to AALL

Jim Hart will take brochures to AALL.

### Censorship on Israel (David Williams)

Perhaps do a program on censorship in democracies for New Orleans in 1993.

### Ideas, writers needed

*What would you like to see in the LPSS News? What is of interest to you? What can you contribute? We would like both ideas and people to put ideas into words for this newsletter so that it is the most informative and best newsletter it can be for you. Send a suggestion or an article to Karen L. Whittlesey-First at the Harvard Law School Library, 1545 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138 (or telephone 617-495-4295).*

## *Computer-based Reference Sources Topic of New Discussion Group*

The Library Instruction Committee of the Law and Political Science Section of ACRL will sponsor a discussion group at the ALA Midwinter meeting in San Antonio (Monday, January 27, 1992, from 9 to 11; location to be announced). The discussion will focus on the following issues related to computer-based reference sources and information products:

What compact disc products does your library provide for law and political science students? How do you evaluate these products for purchase? What kind of instructional services do you offer for use of compact discs?

Does your library provide general access to LEXIS/NEXIS? What has been your experience with this service?

What has been your experience with textual databases for law and political science? How do instructional strategies differ for bibliographic and textual databases?

What has been the impact of increased government information being produced in electronic format? How is your library meeting user needs for instruction in accessing these new formats? How are you planning to deal with the 1990 census?

Does your library catalog provide access to ICPSR tapes? Do you have any instructional services related to these tapes (handouts, workshops, individual consultation)?

Questions about the discussion group may be addressed to Judy Solberg, University of Maryland at College Park (phone 301-405-9120; Internet JS145@UMAIL.UMD.EDU) or Laura Bartolo, Kent State University (phone 216-672-3045; Internet LBARTOLO@KENTVM.KENT.EDU)

ANNUAL MEETING, ATLANTA, 1991

## *Business Meeting Summary*

### **ACRL**

Present process of every section ranking proposals will be formalized. Should the idea of a liaison to ACRL board be formalized? New liaison to ACRL in Utah is Pat Chisholm.

### **Section brochure**

Need to look for ways to distribute. Membership committee will send letter to people who have not re-joined LPSS and arrange a social in San Francisco.

### **Bibliographies**

Review of Sage Public Administration Abstracts ready to go to editor. There will be a session with vendors at San Francisco.

### **Annual meeting 1992**

San Francisco program on philanthropy will have four speakers. BRASS has been asked to co-sponsor. We will co-sponsor a CD ROM program at GODORT's request.

**Midwinter will feature something new this year. The Library Instruction Committee is sponsoring an open discussion group on issues relating to computer-based reference sources and information products. All are welcome to bring ideas, programs, and handouts. See accompanying story.**

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## Political Science Bibliography

(continued)

*Political Science Thesaurus II: Revised and Expanded Second Edition*, by Carl Beck, Thomas McKechnie, and Paul Evan Peters. Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, 1979. 675 p.

The two Blackwell encyclopedias are similar both in terms of arrangement and of coverage. The signed articles are written by scholars affiliated with major universities in North America, Britain, and western Europe. Each volume has more than a hundred contributors. The entries are arranged alphabetically and vary in length from half a page to four pages. The majority of the entries contain bibliographies listing books which deal in depth with the particular topic. The bibliographic citations are very complete, which is a welcome feature for the reader interested in pursuing the subject further. Each volume has an excellent index which serves as a cross reference for terms and also indicates occurrences of the term in related articles.

The *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Thought* covers, according to the introduction, the major doctrines and ideas that influence the modern world. The emphasis is on the western tradition, with Chinese, Hindu, and Islamic political thought being covered only in broad survey articles. This volume does not emphasize political institutions, which is the domain of the companion volume, the *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Institutions*. The institutions referred to in this latter volume are identified in the introduction as those of "advanced industrial societies." There are obvious limitations to any one-volume work that tries to cover an entire discipline, and for the two Blackwell encyclopedias they are spelled out from the start. The emphasis of both books is on western political thought and institutions. Keeping this emphasis in mind, the coverage of both volumes is good and the articles are of excellent quality.

There is a problem with the two books in terms of predicting overlap of coverage. The "political thought" volume covers institutions and the "political institutions" volume covers concepts. Both volumes have biographical articles of major historical figures connected with politics or political theory. There does not seem to be a pattern to the overlap. The result is that some topics, both institutional and conceptual, are covered in both encyclopedias while others occur in only one or the other. In the case where topics are covered in both books, the articles are not identical, since they are written by different contributors. This is advantageous since the reader actually gets more material. It is also a good argument for owning both encyclopedias, which in this day of high prices is unfortunate.

Another problem which applies individually to each encyclopedia is the inability of the reader to predict what has been omitted and for what reason. There does not seem to be a clear pattern of omission. One example from the "institutions" volume is the term *Parliament* which does not get its own article, but is mentioned in other articles, such as the ones on *Constitutional Law* and *Legislatures*. The *Supreme Soviet* is treated in a similar way, and the Israeli Knesset is completely omitted. On the other hand, the term *Congress* has its own lengthy article. This kind of coverage makes it imperative for any serious user to ignore the alphabetical arrangement of the books and rely entirely on the indexes for complete access to the contents.

The two Blackwell encyclopedias are of excellent quality and integrity and resemble in approach but not in scale, the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Because of the nature of the topics covered, the articles are, in many instances, interpretative rather than expository. This can lead to problems of validity, given that different school of thought disagree on many topics. This difficulty is acknowledged in the introduction, however, and the editor made the effort of identifying top scholars in the field, the assumption being that each scholar can be unbiased.

The *Dictionary of Political Analysis* is the third volume in the *Clio Dictionaries in Political Science* series. Its narrow focus is to define concepts used by social scientists and then to discuss their significance to political science. This dictionary covers only abstract concepts, with heavy emphasis on scientific and statistical terminology and

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methods. There are no biographical entries. Typical entries are *Biopolitics*, *Group Control*, *Induction*, and *Operation Research*. Each entry has two parts, the definition proper and the significance analysis of the term. The entries are arranged alphabetically and are approximately one page long. Most entries also include cross references that refer the reader to other relevant articles. There is also a very useful index at the end of the book which enhances access to its contents. Seven selected bibliographies on general political science, international and comparative analysis, general social science, science and philosophy of science, methodology and research techniques, and statistical analysis are also included at the end of the book, right before the index. This is a highly theoretical book which can be used by both the advanced scholar interested in new areas of research or by the new researcher in need of guidance.

The *Dictionary of Political Thought* is a traditional specialized dictionary. It covers mainly theoretical concepts but also includes biographical entries for individuals considered important by the author. The entries vary in length from a quarter of a page to one page. Cross references are indicated by asterisks. This is an excellent source for quick, short, clear, and concise definitions. It does not, however, include bibliographies and does not contain an index. Given its alphabetical arrangement and extensive use of cross references, the absence of an index is a minor weakness but it can definitely hinder access to some topics. For instance, *Dante Alighieri* is entered under his first name and there is no cross reference from his last name. At least in this case, an index would have been useful. An index could enhance access that is not available through cross references alone by indicating the occurrence of a term in more than one article. This minor weakness aside, the *Dictionary of Political Thought* is a quality research tool.

The *Political Science Thesaurus* is the tool that standardizes the vocabulary of political science the same way the *ERIC Thesaurus* does for education, the *Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms* does for psychology, and the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* does for monographs. It is the result of an effort by the Committee on Scientific Information Exchange of the American Political Science Association in response to the needs of political scientists to cope with the information explosion. The work is done at the University of Pittsburgh, where the United States Political Science Information Services abstracts, indexes, and provides literature searches for users in more than 150 political science journals. The committee set specific guidelines for the creation of the first edition of the thesaurus, which appeared in 1975. In order to address deficiencies, omissions, and new developments, it has created rules which anticipate periodic changes and updates. Elaborate steps are taken to analyze and categorize terms by subject specialists. The *Thesaurus* is divided into three parts. Part One is the thesaurus of terms. Part Two is the permuted subject index. Part Three is the hierarchical index. Like all the other major subject thesauri, the *Political Science Thesaurus* has an excellent cross reference system which indicates broader terms (BT), related terms (RT), narrower terms (NT), and incorrect terms (UF). The appendices list the source journals which were used to extract the terms included in the first and second editions.

It is very interesting to note that work on this thesaurus began in the early 1970s, when online searching was not readily available. As online database searching is becoming increasingly frequent, the need for a thesaurus increases. A standardized subject vocabulary is the only way to ensure that searching is accurate and comprehensive. This thesaurus fulfills that mission very well.

The *Thesaurus* is now out of print. However, an update produced by the NASA Industrial Applications Center, in Pittsburgh, is available. This update contains all the terms but does not include any references. The cost is \$100.00 and it can be ordered from the institute at the address given in the 1979 *Thesaurus*.

The five works discussed in this essay are important tools in political science research. Together they provide a good scholarly foundation to the terminology of political science. They are indispensable for any library reference collection.

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*"The Political Science Thesaurus is the tool that standardizes the vocabulary of political science the same way the ERIC Thesaurus does for education, the Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms does for psychology, and the Library of Congress Subject Headings does for monographs."*

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## **Business Meeting Summary** *(continued)*

### **Library instruction**

Will revise pathfinder that was already distributed at the program. This will include title change and some editing before submission to Newsletter. It will be loaded on List Serves and E-mail, and sent to LOEX. A pathfinder will be done for San Francisco program and a draft ready at Midwinter.

### **Membership committee**

Will try to send brochures to library schools and leave at the ACRL booth.

### **Publications committee**

The ACRL Task Force on Newsletters and newsletter editors would like to identify hidden costs now covered by home institutions (for example, phone calls); standardize newsletter process by allowing only a two-week period for receipt of newsletters in Chicago; save money by agreeing on one color and one kind of paper for all newsletters, and by sending newsletters via 3rd class mail, which would save \$3000 per issue. The committee is looking for someone to do a survey on List Serves that are available on political science and law.

### **Review and planning**

Preparations are underway for the next review. Proposals are being taken for how to gather the archives, how to enhance review activities (by delegating more responsibility to other committees), and sending out members to committees to talk about what is being done.

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