Handbook of Legal Information Retrieval

edited by J. Bing

North-Holland

HANDBOOK OF LEGAL INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

edited by
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in cooperation with
Tove FJELDVIG
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and
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FOREWORD

In 1977, "Legal Decisions and Information Systems", written by Jon Bing and Trygve Harvold, was published by Norwegian University Press.

During subsequent discussions with North-Holland Publishing Company, there emerged an interest in a larger-sized, comprehensive and detailed Handbook, in which on the one hand the theoretical base would be broadened and updated, and on the other hand the descriptive coverage of retrieval systems around the world would be enlarged and brought up to date as well.

The result of these endeavours, for which Norwegian University Press kindly granted permission, now lies before you.

As testified to under "Acknowledgements", the generous help from a sizeable group of persons from many countries has been indispensable to us.

Further, recent work of the Norwegian Research Center for Computers and Law has been incorporated into the general parts (I and II), derived for instance from Jon Bing's thesis on legal communication processes, and Tove Fjeldvig and Trygve Harvold's work on the principles of text retrieval. Robert Svoboda has contributed with his practical experience from a large number of European operational systems in various countries.

The international survey has been greatly expanded and covers currently 25 countries. A historical introduction and a section on international organisations have been added. Also the survey of research in text retrieval has been enlarged.

It must be appreciated, however, that the book does not claim to be complete or correct in all details.

We hope that readers finding omissions, errors and misunderstandings will not hesitate to communicate these to the authors at the address of NRCCL (given at the end of the Foreword). We would also appreciate to be made aware of relevant literature, including newsletters published by legal information services for the benefit of their users. North-Holland has indicated that there may be a possibility for later editions of this Handbook, and we certainly will appreciate the possibility not only to report on further developments, but also to amend and further update the descriptions of the different systems.

This book is the result of team-work. For practical reasons, Jon Bing has written the text giving it a uniform style, while using contributions from the other authors - especially in Part II.

This implies that the book is written by someone not having English as his mother-tongue. This will be obvious from the idiosyncracies of the text. We hope the users will excuse the lack of elegance and the "nordicisms" of grammar, choice of words, etc.

The whole production up to a camera-ready copy has been made in Oslo. This implies also that the manuscript has been proof-read in Oslo - under the same limitations. We are painfully aware of the fact that there still are too many errors in the text, reflecting that the proof-reading proved to be a process we had grossly underestimated in terms of time and resources. However, without the expert help of Gunnar Bach, we would have been completely lost.

The production of this book has been organised as a project within the NRCCL research programme NORIS. The project has been partially funded by outside sources. We would like to thank the Royal Norwegian Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (NTNF), which has funded the NRCCL studies of text retrieval over the past years, the Bergen Bank Foundation which has made a study trip possible in 1983, and Emil Mostue who has made it possible for NRCCL to subscribe to several foreign legal information retrieval services. We also would like to thank our friends and colleagues for support and encouragement, which one more has proved the value of working within the framework of collective enthusiasm at the NRCCL.

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Lastly, we would like to thank Dr. K. Michielsen of North-Holland for his support and patience through the several years that this book has been in the making.

Skillebekk, March 1984.

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