

OBITUARY

Donald Raistrick 1944–2017

When law librarians see the name ‘Raistrick’ the likelihood is that they think of the *Index of Legal Citations*. However, Donald Raistrick, who died on 11 September 2017, not only contributed a standard reference tool to the field of law librarianship, but was also an enthusiastic supporter of BIALL throughout his professional career, and played an active role in the Association’s development during its early years.

Don entered the world of law librarianship in the mid-1960s, when he was appointed Librarian of the Law Commission, then under the chairmanship of Lord Scarman. He was the first professional librarian to work in the Lord Chancellor’s Department (as it was then). Before he moved to London, he had worked at MIRA (the Motor Industry Research Association), an ideal job for someone with an enduring passion for cars. Nevertheless, Don embraced his new role in London, and he and the library became a pivotal part of the Law Commission’s work; it was there he first became involved in authorship, editing volumes of the Commission’s reports and working papers. It was also whilst he was at the Law Commission that he joined BIALL, attending early conferences of the Association. He would often refer to these latterly with wry affection, and to point out how far BIALL had come since its early days. Most importantly it was at this time that he met Fleurette, with whom he shared almost 46 years of marriage.



Figure 1. Don Raistrick.

In 1977 Don succeeded Betty Moys as editor of *The Law Librarian*, a position he held for several years (in my recollection occasionally with a certain amount of frustration, the lot of those chasing copy to meet a deadline!). 1977 was also the year in which Professional Books first published *Lawyers’ Law Books* for the first time which Don co-authored with John Rees (a third edition was published in 1997); and in 1981 the *Index to Legal Citations* was published, the ‘now-classic index’, which Sweet & Maxwell published in its fourth edition in 2013. So by the time I first met Don, when he was appointed Supreme Court Librarian in 1982 (not the Supreme Court which now resides in Parliament Square, but then a collective description for all the courts sitting in the Royal Courts of Justice), his name was becoming known in law libraries not just in Britain and Ireland but in America, Australia, Canada and New Zealand as well.

I was an assistant librarian in the Supreme Court Library when Don arrived, at a time when working in the Royal Courts of Justice (RCJ) was an interesting (and possibly unique) experience. There was a wide spectrum of personalities with whom it was necessary to establish a rapport in order to successfully manage the (three) libraries and the supply and distribution of books: these ranged from the Administrator to Appeal Court and High Court judges and their clerks, to registrars and barristers and solicitors, to head clerks and the building superintendent, and ushers and messengers. Don’s own personality came to the fore, and his inclusive approach quickly established successful working relationships with all. He even managed to get on well with the litigants-in-person using the library – not the most trusting of our users (some of them seemed to think he was Scottish: Don was actually born in Rotherham, and a true Yorkshireman). Through Don’s auspices the RCJ was an early user of Lexis, but his tenure as Supreme Court Librarian was relatively short, as he moved on to become Departmental Librarian for the Lord Chancellor’s Department (LCD) in 1984 (perhaps in terms of health and safety that was a good move: I can remember both of us standing at the top of ladders in the Chancery Library whilst he threw books to (at?) me – he was very much a hands-on librarian!).

As Departmental Librarian, Don continued to advocate the importance of professional law librarianship, whilst expanding the horizons of Library and Information Services in the LCD. He established regional libraries in Newcastle, Sheffield and Cardiff, and developed that in Liverpool, and also appointed Circuit Librarian posts to manage the supply



Figure 2. Don enjoying cycling.

and distribution of books to judiciary and courts around the country. He also worked hard to initiate a Library and Information Plan for Law (LAWLIP), which signals his commitment to making legal information available to a wider public. Although he no longer edited *The Law Librarian*, Don

continued to strongly support BIALL, ensuring that all his librarians were members of the Association, and that as far as possible they attended Conference. He also encouraged the librarians working for him to be more active in BIALL – one of the results of which was my stint as Treasurer in the early 'nineties. He enjoyed going to the conferences and meeting the growing number of new librarians, and he also attached great importance to welcoming overseas delegates and travelling to their conferences, attending both AALL and CALL conferences. Don had a strong relationship with legal publishers, recognizing their valuable support to a developing profession.

Don continued to develop Knowledge and Information Services in the Department for Constitutional Affairs (as it became in 2003) and to support the profession until he retired in 2004, and although I had moved out of librarianship by then, we kept in touch. He was awarded the OBE in the 2005 New Year's Honours. Although Don was always a car enthusiast, in his retirement he became much more interested in two-wheeled transport (non-motorised), and cycled huge distances to support the charities he sponsored, chiefly Cancer Research. He was a volunteer at the Olympic and Para Olympic cycling events in 2012, from which he derived great pride and fulfilment. His faith was strong, and became more powerful towards the end of his life, and he did much good work for his local Catholic church.

Don was a proud father and grandfather, and leaves his wife, Fleurette, his son Mark, and three grandchildren.

This obituary was written by Stuart Cole, with help from Sally Phillips.