E-Law research: your guide to electronic legal research

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The preface to E-Law research makes it clear that the main aim of the book is to assist the researcher in using the various pieces of legal research software now available. This is both its strength and its weakness. The growth in online publishing by legal publishers has necessitated a book such as this. Access to materials published electronically by the main publishers such as Butterworths and Thompsons is still difficult for those unfamiliar with their products. Like their hardcopy predecessors, navigating your way around the materials is not a straight forward and intuitive process but one that requires some initial guidance. Surendra Dayal's book offers such guidance. It is cram filled with practical information presented in a step–by-step fashion. The volume of information however makes it slightly indigestible at one sitting and new users would be best to tackle the book chapter by chapter in conjunction with time spent in front of their PC's.

Each chapter includes useful practice exercises and a summary of research tasks covered. Appendices include software prompt sheets, and a (limited) listing of useful internet addresses.

E-Law research, however, is almost exclusively focussed on Australian resources. Moreover, the book is heavily weighted towards publishers products at the expense of information available freely via the internet. Although the author does clearly define the narrow scope of the guide the narrowness of her focus is not clearly represented in the title of the book and this I believe will be misleading to some.

In a book professing to be a guide to electronic legal research, the poor coverage of free access internet materials is a major limitation. Perhaps the chapter on Eudora's messenger services software could be omitted in place of better coverage of the free access internet materials? As it stands this guide is primarily useful to those who are subscribers to the various publishers' products covered (Butterworths Online, LBC Online, Lexis-Nexis, Scaleplus, and Eudora). If you are not subscribing to these products however, as would be the case for the vast majority of users in the Pacific Islands, this book is not recommended.