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France: Libraries of Law and Librarians

By CLAIRE M. GERMAIN*

I. INTRODUCTION

The author, who is a French national, made a curious discovery not long ago. Apparently nothing has been published concerning French law libraries and law librarians. In fact, very little had been written on French libraries at all. The thought of filling this gap slowly developed, prompted by a desire to contribute to the field of international law librarianship (and also perhaps by a touch of nationalistic pride!).

This paper is the result of a survey of French libraries with substantial law collections, undertaken in the winter of 1978-79 in Paris and the province. Long conversations were pursued with French law librarians in their libraries and numerous visits were made to the national *Service des Bibliothèques* (Board of Libraries) at the *Ministère des Universités* (Ministry of Universities).¹

An attempt was made to answer the following questions: how are libraries organized in France and how do law libraries fit into this structure; what are the different types of libraries; how are they staffed, in other words, what is it like to be a law librarian in France, what is the education required, the promotion possibilities, the social status of the librarian vis-à-vis faculty and the general public; what about the legal collection, how different is it from a typical U.S. law collection, how does one do legal research in France; and finally, how does this country tackle the future, in par-

ticular how have the plans for the automation of libraries been implemented, both for internal operations and online services?

II. ORGANIZATION OF LIBRARIES

A. *Administrative Structure*

Centralization has traditionally been an integral part of the French political and administrative system. As applied to the libraries, this principle has resulted in the coexistence of two basic types of libraries: the ones that are *classées* (classified), that is, controlled by the State, and the ones that are *non-classées*, such as some public libraries and centers of documentation that depend on municipal or private funds. Most law libraries belong to the former category.

State-controlled libraries are subject to laws and regulations published in the *Journal Officiel* (French Official Gazette).

The administrative structure of state-controlled libraries was reorganized by a ministerial council of July 2, 1975.² The then existing Direction of Libraries and Public Reading, which was attached to the State Secretary for Universities, was split into various units. The municipal libraries, central lending libraries³ and the Public Information Library of the Pompidou Center, were put under the responsibility of the Direction of the Book at the Ministry for Culture and Environment. The *Bibliothèque Nationale* (National Library) and university and research libraries were attached to the State Secretary for Universities which then became the *Ministère des Universités* (Ministry of Universities). The National Library enjoys a special autonomous status, but the other libraries depend on the *Service des Bibliothèques* (Board of Libraries) at the *Ministère des Universités*.

* Reference/Documents Librarian, Duke University Law Library. Special thanks to Stuart M. Basefsky for his assistance in editing this paper.

¹ Much appreciation is expressed to the following French librarians who helped me in my quest: Madame Rambaud, *Conservateur-en-Chef* of the *Bibliothèque Cujas*, and her competent library staff; Mademoiselle Saillet, *Conservateur-en-Chef*, *Bibliothèque de Reims, Section Droit et Sciences Economiques*; Mademoiselle Pouillas of the Board of Libraries at the Ministry of Universities in Paris; Mademoiselle Poudroux, of the DICA and the Library staff of the *Documentation Française*. Current information on French universities and state controlled libraries can be found in the 1978 *Bottin Administratif*.

² See Pelou, *La Division de la Coopération et de l'Automatisation (DICA) du Service des Bibliothèques*, 14 DOCUMENTALISTE 22 (1977) [hereinafter cited as Pelou].

³ Created in 1945 and located in various French cities and towns with the purpose of providing library services to the inhabitants of rural communities (lending books in particular).

The budget of university libraries comes directly from the Board of Libraries which also provides the staffing of all state-controlled libraries.

The Board of Libraries is organized into four units: the division of studies and information, the division of budgets and equipment, the division of personnel and the division of cooperation and automation (DICA).

B. Types of Law Libraries

What types of libraries are to be found in France? The expression "law libraries" is somewhat misleading because the U.S. concept of a law library is different from what is found in other countries. It may be better to think of "law libraries" as libraries which have substantial law collections.

If one follows the classification adopted in the Council of Europe's *European Law Libraries Guide*, with some additions to update it since it was published in 1971, there are presently in France about seventy law libraries. They include university and research libraries, official libraries, court libraries and one bar association library.

(1) University and Research Libraries

This group approximates fifty-six libraries. There are forty-four university libraries directed by a trained professional librarian. The twelve important research libraries have a different status since they are placed under the direction of a law faculty member. Only the more important specialized libraries within a university are included in this category, such as centers for the study of comparative law, the history of law, etc. and institutes.

With the exception of a few Catholic universities, all French universities are state-controlled. The law libraries are not autonomous as are many in the U.S. They are generally considered a part of the main library system and housed within the same library or in separate quarters. They are often referred to as the "Section Droit et Sciences Economiques" of the main library (Division of Law and Economics), since the curricula of these departments have been traditionally associated and their collections merged. It is thus difficult to ascertain the percentage of purely legal materials contained in the collection. However, this reasoning may be immaterial since most U.S. law library collections also contain an in-

creasing number of materials in law-related areas, such as economics and political science.

Two libraries share a special status in Paris because of the size of their collections. They are called interuniversity libraries since they serve faculty and students from the seven law schools of the Paris region.⁴ The *Bibliothèque Cujas de Droit et Sciences Economiques* (Cujas Library of Law and Economics), located in the Latin Quarter, contains over one million volumes. Statistics show that an average of 1000 to 1500 books are retrieved on a typical school day. Next door, the *Bibliothèque Sainte Geneviève* enjoys the particular status of being both the oldest public library (its bookstock dates back to the 17th century) and an inter-university library with a very large law collection, because it benefits from the legal deposit law for all subjects except for the humanities.

(2) Official Libraries

This group includes the *Bibliothèque Nationale* (National Library) which has a complete law collection because of the legal deposit law. This law, which dates back to 1537 and was regulated for the last time in 1943, stipulates that all materials published in France must be deposited in six copies at the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, which will retain one copy and distribute the others to various libraries.

Also to be noted are the Senate library and a few ministerial libraries.

The Public Information Library of the Pompidou Center deserves special mention. It contains an encyclopedic collection of ready-reference and current materials, including law. Materials are arranged by subject according to the Universal Decimal Classification scheme on open shelves, which is a recent innovation in French libraries. Access to the materials is allowed through a computerized catalog. In each subject area a professional librarian, who is a subject specialist, is there to help and advise patrons. According to the classification scheme the legal collection is included as part of the social sciences, together with statistics, official publications, political science, economics, ethnology and demography. This

⁴ Most law schools have their own university law library. However, their collections are sometimes insufficient. It should be further noted that in Paris law students are assigned to the various law schools according to a geographical plan.

library marks a drastic change from the concept of a library geared toward the conservation of books, to a library open to and for the public.

(3) Court Libraries

Four Court libraries have a substantial law collection: the *Cour de Cassation* (French Supreme Court), with over 123,000 volumes, the *Cour d'Appel* of Paris (Court of Appeals), with over 2,000 volumes, the *Conseil d'Etat* (Council of State), which is both the advisor of the government and the highest administrative court, with over 90,000 volumes and the *Cour des Comptes* (court of Public Finances), which exercises judicial control over the State finances, with over 26,000 volumes.⁵

(4) Bar Association Libraries

The only major library noted here is the *Bibliothèque des Avocats à la Cour d'Appel de Paris* (Lawyers licensed to plead before the Court of Appeals of Paris), with more than 120,000 volumes.⁶

C. Budget

In university libraries, the budget is generally appropriated to the main library which then divides it up among the different sections of the library. At the University of Reims for instance, twenty percent of the budget goes to the Humanities, twenty percent to the Law department, whereas thirty percent goes to the Medicine department and another thirty percent to the Sciences department. The latter figures are higher on the grounds that the scientific and medical books are more expensive. The criteria used in establishing the budget are the basic appropriation, the library surface occupied and the number of registered students. The library receives theoretically at least fifteen Francs per registered student. This sum of money, which only represents one-tenth of the price of a book, does not amount to much, especially since about forty percent of the students are exempted from payment for diverse reasons such as scholarships.

The inflation crunch on library budgets has been felt in France too. The Cujas library reports for instance, that there has been no increase in the budget for the past three years, which means in effect a diminution of the budget, and that the 1977 budget hardly allowed for the purchase of treatises. The 1978 budget amounts to about 1,492,553 Francs exclusive of salaries (\$332,000 at the time of writing). To try to cut corners, the library has been saving money on binding, equipment, cleaning. The Reims library, on the other hand, has been able to get some funds from the *Conseil Général de la Marne*, which is a regional state organization.

III. PERSONNEL

A. Access to the Profession

The librarians of the state-controlled libraries are all civil servants. The staff is organized in a hierarchical structure. The senior positions are staffed by *Conserveurs* (literally translated as custodians), assisted by *Sous-bibliothécaires*, (sublibrarians or assistant librarians), who are in charge of technical services under the supervision of the head librarian. They are supported by the administrative staff and the employees and the *Magasiniers* (desk attendants), in charge of retrieving the books.

Two avenues are open to become a *Conserveur*. The first one is to attend the *Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Bibliothécaires* (National School of Library Science) located now in Lyon. The conditions of admission to this school are very strict. The candidates must be less than thirty years of age and have to pass a difficult competitive examination. The minimum qualification to take the examination is a *Licence*, obtained three or four years after the *Baccalauréat*.⁷ The written and oral tests of the examination include questions on the general cultural background of the candidates and tests on two foreign languages (fluency is not required, a working knowledge suffices). Humanities-oriented students are considered to be slightly advantaged by this type of examination. According to the 1977 school

⁵ These figures were taken from the *European Law Libraries Guide*, published in 1971. They will have increased substantially since then.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ National examination at the end of high school with written and oral tests that would entitle its bearer to enter the junior year level in a United States college.

statistics, out of 1458 candidates, only nineteen were admitted into the school and out of 113 internal candidates (those who can take the test if they have worked for five years in a library), only four. This extremely limited number of openings can only be explained by the limited number of vacancies and not by the lack of need for librarians.

Once admitted into school, they become *fonctionnaires stagiaires* (intern civil servants) and are paid at the rate of 3040 Francs per month (about \$675). In return for this privilege, they have to sign a ten-year contract with the State. The study at the school lasts one year, including two months of internship in a library.

After graduation the students become *Conservateurs* in one of the libraries placed under the direction of the *Service des Bibliothèques*. They will be certified after a one-year probationary period. From then on, their job is secure with a more or less automatic internal promotion and pay increase and, for about one-tenth of them, a promotion to the rank of *Conservateur en Chef* (head librarian) which is the highest grade. Some students can attend the school as associate students. They do not receive a stipend and cannot work in the state-controlled libraries. They can, however, get jobs in the private sector or in their home countries if they are foreigners.

Like all civil servants the *Conservateurs* are paid according to a coded scale which increases with the cost of living. The starting salary is around 3600 Francs per month (\$800 at the time of writing). The *Sous-bibliothécaires d'Etat* are also recruited by competitive examination. The minimum requirement is the *Baccalauréat*.

It is interesting to note that all library employees in "classified" libraries are recruited by competitive examination, from the *Conservateur* to the desk attendant.

The other avenue that is offered to become a *conservateur* is through the *Ecole des Chartes*, founded in 1821, which trains researchers of the history of France. Twenty students are admitted every year after a difficult competitive examination. The studies last four years. The student becomes then an *Archiviste Paléographe* and can work in the National Archives or in libraries.

B. Education of a Law Librarian

No special preparation leads to the profession of law librarian. The new *Conservateurs*

are placed in libraries according to the openings available and not necessarily according to their degrees and backgrounds so that a person with a law degree might, for instance, have to work in a medical library. This, however, does not happen too often because there is a shortage of librarians with a legal background. Thus, many law librarians have a law degree but some have related degrees such as political science, economics or history. To take an example, the *Bibliothèque Cujas* is staffed by fourteen *Conservateurs*, of which six have a legal background, three studied economics, three humanities (languages and history), one is a *Archiviste-Paléographe* and one studies political science. Some of them have several degrees, for instance law and humanities, political science and law.⁸

C. Social Benefits and Status

As civil servants, *Conservateurs* enjoy various social benefits. There are some oddities, such as the fact that some librarians only work thirty hours a week in virtue of an old privilege in force because of the hard working conditions in old buildings and cramped facilities. This custom is still in effect in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, the *Bibliothèque Cujas* and other older institutions. Otherwise, the work schedule varies from thirty-five to forty hours a week. Opportunities for continuing education are offered at the rate of three hours per week worked.

In university libraries, the library profession is still very separate from the faculty, not to mention from the Bar. This is unlike the situation in the United States where law librarians with law degrees usually associate themselves with the Bar even if they have no intention of practicing law. In France, only a relatively small percentage of law graduates ever take the bar, and that only if they intend to practice. Law studies lead to many other judicial professions and positions in the civil service. These studies are often combined with another background, such as accounting, business, economics, insurance, political science. It is a starting point, rather than a professional school like in the U.S.

Cordial relationships usually exist between the university librarians and the Board of the

⁸ From a correspondence with Mme Rambaud, dated October 19, 1978.

U.E.R. (*Unité d'Enseignement et de Recherche* or Unit of Teaching and Research which is the reorganized university structure developed under the Law of 1968.) Occasionally, conflicts do arise because institute libraries receive their funds from the university budget, whereas the university libraries are funded from the Board of Libraries at the Ministry of Universities. These separate budgets may result in two libraries ordering unnecessary duplicates of books. Some librarians do not seem to mind this duplication of books, some try to work toward a unification of library resources. Other factors may enter into the conflict. Typically, institute libraries are more convenient and pleasant to work in than overcrowded law libraries where the books have to be retrieved from the storage room.

D. Professional Associations

Law librarians in France do not constitute a separate organization. They join local or national library organizations. Among the more dynamic ones is the *Association des Anciens Elèves de l'Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Bibliothécaires* (Association of the Former Students of the National School of Library Science). The association, created in 1967, is now located near Lyon. It organizes workshops and meetings on topics of interest to the library community, such as continuing education, the future of university libraries, public libraries, etc. It also publishes a yearbook irregularly, the last one issued in 1977, which lists the former students, their professional positions, together with some information on the activities of the organization.

Head law librarians can also join the *Amicale des Directeurs de Bibliothèques Universitaires* (Association of University Head Librarians) which meets informally. The national library association is the *Association des Bibliothécaires de France* (A.B.F. or Association of Librarians of France) which meets yearly and has local sections. Law librarians may join the Association and meet with public librarians and the librarians of the central lending libraries.

It seems that generally the local sections of the A.B.F. that are the most active are the medical and scientific ones. Nothing much seems to be happening in law. There was a subsection of law but it is not active presently.

IV. COLLECTIONS

A. Differences between French and U.S. Collections

A few observations are in order to point out some characteristics that distinguish the legal collection of a library in France from its equivalent in the United States. The following remarks apply specifically to university libraries.

Traditionally, French law libraries have encompassed the fields of economics and law, catering to the needs of the faculty and students of these two disciplines.

The law curriculum itself is more interdisciplinary than in the United States since it tries to give the student a good general legal culture. It includes classes in political science and economics as prerequisites during the first two years, as well as classes in the history of law.

The method of teaching is also different from the one used in the States. It emphasizes the use of textbooks and treatises, rather than casebooks. Casebooks are rarely used, except in certain specialized areas such as the Law of the European Communities, where case law has played a more important role in the elaboration of the rule of law.

All these factors have a definite influence on the contents of the law collection.

B. Sources of Legal Literature⁹

Legal research is easier to pursue in France than in the United States. In fact, the author had never heard of a course on "how to do legal research" before coming to study law in this country where the necessity of such a course became obvious.

As in other civil law countries the preeminence of written law is acknowledged in a series of concise Codes that touch upon all fields of law.

The role of case law is much more limited than in a common law jurisdiction. There is much less reliance on precedents that are seen more as illustrations of the particular application of a Code article, rather than the basis for defining and analyzing law. The courts are not

⁹ For a comprehensive survey of French legal sources, read: C. Szladits, *GUIDE TO FOREIGN LEGAL MATERIALS: FRENCH, GERMAN, SWISS* (1959).

bound by earlier decisions, since article 5 of the Civil Code prohibits judges from making prescriptive general or regulatory decisions in connection with the dispute submitted to them. Case law exercises, nonetheless, an important influence on the development of the law but in an indirect way.

France is a centralized state which takes away some of the complexities involved in the location and application of federal and state statutes and cases. This single unified court system severely limits the bulk of cases reported. Furthermore, there is no official comprehensive set of case reports. Only cases of the *Cour de Cassation* are reported in an official series. Court of Appeals and lower court cases are reported on a selective basis in the unofficial weekly legal journals that contain cases with long annotations explaining the decision, as well as excerpts of important legislation and doctrinal studies.

A large emphasis is placed on doctrinal writings which are widely read by the students and which have an important influence on the law. Treatises and textbooks are therefore numerous and students are often assigned readings from several textbooks on a given topic such as commercial law or civil law.

Encyclopedias are rated more highly than in the States. They are written by reputable professors and practitioners. The *Juris-Classeur* series, in particular, published by the *Editions Techniques* in looseleaf format, is considered one of the most useful tools on any given field of law. This is because of the numerous references in the text to legislation, cases and bibliographies.

C. Periodical Literature

Periodical literature is a good source of information. The French legal periodicals are different from the ones in the United States. They are usually national with articles written by professors of law, judges or practitioners. Student contributions are not solicited.¹⁰

There is no comprehensive indexing of legal literature similar to the *Index to Legal Periodicals*. An interesting experiment called JURINDEX had been undertaken under the

¹⁰ There is no equivalent to "law reviews" in France. In addition, the legal studies are much less competitive than in the States and there is no school ranking.

auspices of the *Institut de Recherche d'Informatique Juridique* (I.R.I.J. or Research Institute of Legal Computer Science) within the University of Paris-South (Sceaux). It fulfilled the need for a monthly legal bibliography of doctrine and case law and indexed the French Official Gazette, case reports and the legal periodicals. Unfortunately, the experiment failed, apparently because the C.N.R.S. (National Center for Scientific Research) refused to give its financial or technical support to the Index.¹¹

The periodicals themselves, however, often contain exhaustive bibliographies on their specific fields, such as the *Annuaire de Droit International* in international law, or the *Revue Trimestrielle de Droit Civil* for civil law, etc..

The Reims library does its own indexing of significant journal articles from forty selected periodicals. The indexing is done on cards which are filed in the catalog by subject. The cards are pink to distinguish them from the regular cards. The idea is interesting and one can only commend this initiative but what a waste of talent if all libraries have to do their own indexing. An interlibrary cooperation would seem most fruitful in meeting this need.

D. Access to the Collection—Classification, Cataloging, Subject Headings

No uniform standards have been set for law libraries as to classification schemes or cataloging rules. The *Bibliothèque Nationale* does not play the same leading role as the Library of Congress in that regard. Of the law libraries surveyed in the *European Law Libraries Guide*, sixteen had adopted the Universal Decimal Classification scheme and the rest of the libraries had developed their own classification scheme.

The Cujas Library uses subject headings from a legal encyclopedia, the *Dalloz Nouveau Répertoire*, in four volumes with annual supplements, together with an old thesaurus dating back to 1930. A computerized thesaurus was initiated three years ago and is an ongoing project. It will constitute the database for a projected computerized catalog.

¹¹ See P. Buffelan, INTRODUCTION A L'INFORMATIQUE JURIDIQUE 243 (1975).

E. Government Documents

France does not have a government documents depository system similar to the U.S. depository program. Official publications of the government and the state agencies must be purchased. France does have, however, an elaborate system of publishing and distributing official documents.

The *Documentation Française* (Official Documentation) was created after World War II and its goals are threefold: 1) to gather a general documentation on current events concerning France and foreign countries and make this information available to the state agencies and to the public; 2) to edit and distribute documentation of general interest and 3) to coordinate the efforts of the different Ministries in the field of documentation, and also in the publication and distribution of the various documents of the state agencies. It publishes about twenty-four periodicals and 100 to 150 other publications every year, read both in France and abroad.¹²

Located since 1967 in the old Hotel de Mailly-Nesle, built in the 17th and 18th centuries and which belonged among others to the favorite mistress of Louis XV (!), the building contains a library and several centers of documentation. These include French and foreign newspaper and magazine clippings and a *Photothèque* that presents a picture of contemporary France through pictures and slides, all open to the public.

The *Documentation Française* publishes a list of its publications every Tuesday in the French Official Gazette, in the part entitled "Avis et Communications." The publications are indexed monthly and annually. There is also a quinquennial subject catalog.

V. AUTOMATION OF LIBRARIES

A. DICA

The Division of Cooperation and Automation (DICA) was created in 1975 to implement a national plan of automation of libraries, including law libraries.¹³ It consists of two offices: the Office of Cooperation and the Office of Automation. The Division is connected with the Office

of Computer Studies and Management at the National Library and a computer center in Isle d'Abeau (Isère). Documentation is available on the DICA's activities from the CEDICA (Center of Documentation of the DICA), located near the *Bibliothèque Nationale*.

The DICA has these goals in mind: to foster cooperation between the Direction of the Book, the National Library and the Board of Libraries and to facilitate interlibrary cooperation in the public and private sectors.

The DICA is entrusted with the responsibility of progressively installing the plan of automation of French libraries. Three main objectives are planned: (1) the automation of bibliographic databases, (2) an automated management system and (3) a national library network. These developments are not extraordinary when compared to the technological advances in the United States but it seems that France has already attained quite a sophisticated level.

(1) Automation of Bibliographic Databases

The project of automation of bibliographic databases has been undertaken in connection with the national bibliographic center of the *Bibliothèque Nationale*. The automation of the book section of the official *Bibliographie de la France* is presently being developed. Since January 1, 1975, an average of 25,000 titles constitutes the yearly database of French publications subject to legal deposit at the *Bibliothèque Nationale*.¹⁴ Studies have been undertaken that would allow the records to be available not only in print copy but also on microfiche produced by COM catalog. Since March 1975, catalog cards have been produced and distributed to more than 110 libraries. This system called CANAC (*Catalogage National Centralisé*) or National Centralized Cataloging allows the libraries to request and receive the catalog cards they desire upon reading the *Bibliographie*, very much like OCLC. The monthly output varies between 20,000 and 30,000 cards and it takes about six days to receive these cards from the time of order.

To complete this automation policy, computerized union catalogs are being worked on and coordinated:

(a) A project to create a computerized union catalog of law and political sciences was

¹² Much of this information has been gathered from a pamphlet on the *Documentation Française* distributed by its library staff.

¹³ See Pelou *supra* note 2 at 23.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 24.

started three years ago. The project will be implemented in collaboration with all libraries in the Paris region and on the national scale.

(b) The IPPEC (*Inventaire Permanent des Périodiques Etrangers en Cours* or Permanent Inventory of Foreign Periodicals being published) was started by the National Library and is updated periodically.

(c) AGAPE (*Algorithmes de Gestion Automatisée des Périodiques* or Algorithms of Automated Periodicals Management) was done by the Library of the University of Nice. It is a regional union catalog of periodicals.

(d) The CPI (*Catalogue des Périodiques de l'Isère* or Periodicals Catalog of the Isère) was undertaken at the Library of the University of Grenoble.

These last three catalogs are provisional instruments. They will be merged into a national union catalog of periodicals which is being worked on presently at the National Bibliographic Center.

(2) Automated Management

Research has been undertaken toward the automation of the lending, processing and ordering of books, on one hand and management of personnel, budget, stock, expeditions and statistics, on the other hand.

(3) National Library Network

Called the *Réseau Informatique des Bibliothèques*, it focuses both on bibliographic and administrative data. It is the technological instrument that will link the nation's libraries for the most efficient form of transferring information.

B. Development of Online Services¹⁵

(1) Legal Databases

New and interesting initiatives have been ongoing in France for a few years now. Several legal databases have been developed which cater to varied groups of judges, lawyers and practitioners. Let us examine them briefly.

(a) The CEDIJ (*Centre d'Information Juridique* or Center of Legal Information) database

¹⁵ See Merigot, *3e Journée de l'Informatique Juridique Documentaire, SICOB, 27 Septembre 1977*, BULLETIN DE LA DICA (October 1977); *Les Bases de Données en Sciences Humaines et en Sciences Sociales accessibles en France*, 3 BULLETIN DE LA DICA 43 (April 1978).

was created in 1970 by the *Conseil d'Etat* and the *Cour de Cassation*. It stores legislation in full text and case law in abstract form and indexes doctrinal studies. This database has allowed the publication of up to date Codes and an index to the *Bulletin de la Cour de Cassation* (official report). The online capability became operational in 1974, using STAIRS. The base presently contains 65,000 documents. The several terminals, connected to the computer by private phone lines, are located in the *Conseil d'Etat*, the *Cour de Cassation*, the National Assembly, the Senate and the *Direction Générale des Impôts* (Direction of Revenue). The database contains the case law of the *Conseil Constitutionnel* (Constitutional Council), the *Conseil d'Etat*, the *Cour de Cassation* and the administrative courts; the commercial, fiscal and municipal legislation, as well as the Code of Urbanism, and on an experimental basis, the parliamentary works of the National Assembly for 1977. A general thesaurus is being worked on. A lawyer usually responds to requests for this service. Questions can be asked by mail or telephone. The use of this database is restricted to the administrations mentioned above. It is to be hoped that the database will be made available to university law libraries in the future.

(b) The CRIDON (*Centre de Recherches d'Information et de Documentation Notariales*, or Research Center of Information and Documentation for Notaires)¹⁶ was created to help these specialized practitioners of the legal profession and is financed by their local and national associations. The services are restricted to their members. The database consists of legislation, case law and doctrinal studies extracted from 100 periodicals relating to all topics of the law. The documents are analyzed by key words and an abstract.

(c) JURIS-DATA was created by *Editions Techniques*, the publisher of *Juris-Classeurs*, and became operational in 1972. The database contains about 140,000 documents and is available to the public by subscription. Questions can be asked by letter, telephone or telex. A specialist will handle the request and reply within one or two days. Abstracts accompanying the references are given, as well as copies of unpublished decisions upon request. The files are the following: the cases of the *Cour de*

¹⁶ Their functions are sometimes compared to the role of the British solicitor.

Cassation since 1960, the *Cour d'Appel* back to 1971, all the cases reported in the legal journals back to 1973, the doctrinal studies published in the same journals back to 1970, and finally selected ministerial answers to questions asked by representatives back to 1970. The base is geared toward the needs of the members of the judicial professions, law firm lawyers, public administrations and universities.

It should be mentioned finally that other projects have been undertaken in several regions of France to gather a computerized documentation of regional Courts of Appeals and lower court cases.

(2) Databank of the Documentation Française

The *Documentation Française* has engaged, since 1969, in the creation of databases that cover its field. It is developing a multimedia bank of political, economic and social information linked to current awareness. This is called the BIPA, or *Banque d'Information Politique et d'Actualité* (Bank of Political Information and News). The bank consists of four databases and seven files.¹⁷

(a) Selected administrative and governmental publications have been compiled into a base of French official publications. This has taken the form of a computerized bibliography of the publications edited and distributed under the auspices of the *Documentation Française* since 1970. The documents are indexed by key words and abstracts. The computer language used is MISTRAL. There are two thesauri by subject and geographical field. All the documents will be filmed eventually and made available on microfiche. Online services have been available since February 1978. There are about 20,000 documents in the database currently.

(b) The base of political information contains two files. The first one is called Political News. It is a chronology of political events in France and abroad and contains the official communiqués of the ministerial councils. The second one contains the political speeches of the President of the Republic since 1974 in abstract form. The extension of coverage to speeches by other political personalities is planned.

(c) The *Dossiers de Presse* base consists of press clippings, French and foreign, from twen-

ty daily newspapers and thirty weekly magazines. The documents are filmed and available on fiche. This database will be available in 1979.

(d) The base of *Images Fixes* contains a photographic collection on problems of land use in France.

The database on the whole provides the user with all elements necessary to retrieve proper documentation—both bibliographic references and access information for the document on microfiche. This system is similar to ERIC and the *New York Times* databank. It seems that the bank of the *Documentation Française* may be more versatile than the *New York Times* bank. It will soon be available to university law libraries, Cujas in particular.

(3) Social Sciences Databases Accessible in Law Libraries

Some databases in the social sciences have been developed under the direction of the Center of Documentation in Human Sciences of the CNRS (*Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*, or National Center for Scientific Research). The Center was created in 1970 with the goal of improving information on ongoing research in the human and related sciences. Some of the bibliographic databases are of interest to the legal community and a terminal was recently installed at the Cujas Library with concurrent advertising of online services for faculty and students. Among the law-related databases, one notes the following: "Politics of Energy," "Job and Education," "Computer Science and Legal Science," which covers the legal and political problems of computer use and the relationship between the legal sciences and the computer science. About 200 periodicals are indexed. The Center sponsors workshops for Faculty members, researchers and librarians to help them retrieve documents on the online systems.¹⁸

VI. CONCLUSION

This survey provides a basically descriptive analysis of law libraries and librarians in France. Nevertheless, strong inferences emanate from the gathered data.

The profession is, as yet, less dynamic than its counterpart in the States. The weight of a rigid administrative structure, the sense of

¹⁷ The information was taken from a pamphlet distributed by the *Documentation Française*.

¹⁸ See Merigot, *supra* note 15, at 45.

hierarchy, the force of bureaucratic inertia, do not really foster an atmosphere of creativity. Incentives to communicate by publishing or holding conferences are not built into a civil service, forever-secure job. But, in spite of these minor ills, the competitive French system does produce competent, hardworking librarians. In fact, the librarians contacted during the survey demonstrated a desire to enhance their professional skills.

The serious problems of modernizing centuries old structures and collections create a reluctance to expend the time, effort and money necessary to make the transition. It can

be done, i.e., the Pompidou Center.

There is a need for interlibrary cooperation that will be best promoted by the national plan of automation of French libraries.

The amount of research undertaken in France in legal computer science is among the most important in Europe, and this in spite of insufficient means. Perhaps these efforts will result in the oft-dreamed-of day when researchers will be able to sit at their terminals connected to foreign legal databases, where they will be able to retrieve without effort esoteric material otherwise not available. That day has not come yet, but it is nice to dream.