Book Review

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Law And Electronics: The Challenge Of A New Era.
Edited by Edgar A. Jones, Jr. New York, 1962. Matthew
Bender & Company, Inc. Pp. ix, 373, including index.

This volume contains the proceedings of the First
National Law and Electronics Conference sponsored by the
University of California Chancellor's Committee for Inter-
disciplinary Studies of Law and the Administration of
Justice, under the chairmanship of Edgar A. Jones, Jr.,
Professor of Law at UCLA. According to the Foreword
by Professor Jones, the aim of the Conference was to initi-
ate an informative dialogue among judges, lawyers, phi-
losophers, engineers, linguists, businessmen, physical and
social scientists, and computer experts, to explore the
fundamental problems involved in adapting the computers
to the administration of justice. The first subject, "Elec-
tronics and the Administration of Justice," was presented
by Richard F. C. Hayden, of the Los Angeles Superior
Court, whose thesis was that lawyers and judges will be in
a better position to achieve their respective goals, namely,
consistency by judges in deciding cases, and predictability
by lawyers of legal consequences, if some of the new tech-
niques of information retrieval could be applied to legal
research. As legal materials and knowledge become more
quickly and readily available as the result of improved
legal research methodology, general practitioners will be
able to handle a variety of questions which up to now they
had to refer to specialists.

The second subject, "The Language of the Machine and
the Language of the Law," was presented from the
scientist's point of view by H. P. Edmundson of the Plan-
ning Research Corporation of Los Angeles, and from the
lawyer's point of view by John F. Horty, Director of the
Health Law Center of the University of Pittsburgh. Dr.
Edmundson clarified terms and concepts pertinent to the
relationship between the natural languages, as used by the
law, and the artificial languages, as used by the machine.
He also evaluated problems, and the outlook for their
solution, in four potential areas of automation: in auto-
matic indexing and abstracting, where the outlook for

practical applications is promising, and in automatic translation and deducing, where the outlook for the time being at least is not so hopeful. Professor Horty described an operational system of machine searching of statutes. The text of the statutes is transferred to and stored by the machine, which then prepares and stores a total vocabulary, less the common words, each word followed by an identification number of the statutory section in which it appears. To find a statutory section, the researcher will frame an inquiry consisting of a group of words the appearance of which in a text would indicate its relevance to a given question. The machine will then scan the vocabulary and print a list identifying the pertinent statutory sections in which the desired combination of words appears. Admittedly, the scanning and searching of an original text is not the theoretically perfect method. However, while research work is still going on to resolve problems connected with a theoretically ideal system, Professor Horty's method provides an immediate and relatively simple solution to a variety of practical problems.

Layman E. Allen of Yale Law School, presented the third subject, "Modern Logic, a Useful Language for Lawyers." Symbolic logic as an artificial language is useful to lawyers in three areas; first, in drafting and interpreting documents; second, in automatic retrieval of information; and third, in the area of as yet unpredictable effects of generally more efficient and precise communications. Professor Allen then presented various schematic diagrams to demonstrate possible approaches for resolving syntactic ambiguities in drafting and interpreting legal documents, and for defining the judicial decision process, as well as research and retrieval processes, in terms of interacting subprocesses.

The fourth subject, "The Element of Predictability in Judicial Decision Making," was presented by Judge Lee Loevinger, of the Minnesota Supreme Court, who discussed the basic concepts and methods involved in statistical and other types of probability predictions, and their applicability to specific fields of judicial action. Judge Loevinger also identified discernible trends of further developments, such as semantic refinement of legal symbols with more emphasis on heretofore not fully recognized quantitative aspects of certain legal concepts (e.g., quantum of evidence), improvements in collecting and reporting judicial statistics, and use of techniques of modern logic for

analysis and classification of case precedents and other legal data. He concluded that there is a large area for the application of modern scientific and logical techniques to the field of law, and that our ultimate task is no less than to devise a system for describing all aspects of all kinds of human behavior.

Each of the four principal subjects was followed by a panel discussion by the representatives of the various disciplines present. The final session was devoted to a general panel discussion on "Electronics and Legal Research: Future Projects and Problems," confirming the general conclusion that the application of the new technology to law is feasible, but requiring considerably more research in such fields as, for instance, linguistic structure, and further exploration of such needs as, for instance, the need for a new theory of law or for reducing the element of uncertainty in the administration of justice.

The Conference demonstrated that the process of solving the problem involved in adapting the computers to the administration of justice, as well as in adapting certain aspects of the practice of law to the new technology, will be a step-by-step procedure, without the possibility or need for predicting the ultimate outcome; that computers will not displace lawyers or judges any more than they displaced mathematicians or physicists; and that mutual understanding and continuous intercommunications between lawyers and scientists is essential, and will call for lawyers to be better prepared in subjects related to modern technology. It is to be hoped that consideration might be given to teaching of these subjects in continuing legal education programs, in the regular law school curriculum, and in high school or college as prerequisites for admission to law school. Until that stage is reached, the proceedings of this Conference serve as an excellent guide in the field of the new technology, which should be of great interest to all jurists.

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