

For more than 100 years a directory containing ratings for most of the attorneys practising in the United States of America and Canada has been published in the United States of America. According to a recent edition (1991) the directory, the Martindale-Hubbell, develops its ratings for individual lawyers by soliciting confidential opinions from members of the Bar, and from the judiciary. The Martindale-Hubbell now stretches to thirteen or more hefty volumes, and has come on some since 1874 when James B Martindale noted his aim as being to "furnish to lawyers, bankers ... and all others who may have need of business correspondents away from home, the address of one reliable law firm, ... in every city and town in the United States".

The NSW Barristers' Directory may not develop so many volumes but it is reasonable to expect that in time it will incorporate entries for the whole of the Australian Bar and is released annually. It is a compulsive and impressive read. Its editors, John Garnsey and Babette Smith, have assembled a fascinating collection of self images. Warmly endorsed by our Chief Justice and others, the Directory was launched on 7 September. In a note to the editors of *Stop Press* at that time, Garnsey expressed the hope that the Directory was one of which we would be proud. That was not a vain hope, I think. Though not required by the *Legal Profession Reform Act*, that Act was probably a *causa sine qua non* for the production of the Directory. Previous collections of names of NSW barristers were not exactly riveting reading. The annual Law Almanac, of course, had its uses. It was a handy reference work for barristers wanting to pull rank in the lift, or incredulous judges checking to see whether those appearing in front of them were in fact admitted. Occasionally Attorneys General were known to consult them to ensure their preferred judicial appointees were in fact the ones appointed. (Even so, urban myth suggests some parallax errors have occurred, resulting in one or more, alas now dead, judges, being appointed, to the surprise of the relevant judges and Attorneys.)

The Directory fulfils the traditional roles and much more. Solicitors and members of the public will find it extremely useful. Though counsel have nominated their own fields of interest and of practice without necessarily being skilled or experienced in any of them, it is an impressive beginning. It can reasonably be assumed most counsel would not have nominated fields in which they have no relevant skills, and that none will have nominated fields of interest which bore them. The authors note the difficulty of creating categories. In creating and linking categories the authors have my sympathy. The next edition could make greater use of the invitation extended for the first directory to nominate special fields. For some of those special fields could themselves become categories, given the same treatment as those used in the initial survey. Medical negligence, for example, would probably deserve its own category rather than being lumped into professional negligence - for it is increasingly a specialised area and one of substantial growth. There are others, too, such as immigration, at the moment lumped into "administrative and constitutional", worthy of such consideration. Accepting the authors' difficulties in confining the number of categories,

one is struck by some of the unusual results in the survey. I had no idea the bar had so many constitutional lawyers. And what about all those dust disease specialists? (In fact, interestingly enough, many of our constitutional lawyers are also big in dust diseases.)

Apart from some amusing results from the slightly idiosyncratic linking of categories, the Directory must be seen as a triumph.

Of course, there have been some glitches. Hunter J and Lindgren J appear still as of counsel, although they were appointed some time before the release of the Directory. One medical negligence specialist (Bronner) does not appear at all in the list of barristers. One barrister (I Byrne), clearly a prodigy, was apparently born only eight years before his admission to the bar.

I do not know that the areas of practice table is all that easy to follow. Next time the authors might well consider (space permitting) listing each "special field" category much as it has done with the area of practice table and listing under each area lists of counsel and their dates of admission in order of seniority.

The Directory is well laid out. So far as I can see, it does not contain any pictures of gavels. It has excellent biographical notes on some more prominent past NSW barristers, and a good potted history of the bar. Perhaps future editions could say something of the contribution of some early female members of the bar.

Consideration should be given by the authors of future directories to include a full set of the NSW Barristers Rules and relevant extracts from the *Legal Profession Act*. Given that most Australian bars have now adopted the NSW Rules almost in entirety, the expansion of the Directory to include members of the whole Australian bars is by no means out of the question.

The most damning thing I can say about the Directory is that it is only due to come out every second year. It is such a valuable tool to members of the public and to the solicitors and barristers professions, that, given the multiplicity of changes at the bar each year, it is well worth considering being made an annual event. Perhaps, in time, we shall see an annual and multi-volumed "Garnsey-Smith". □ Stephen Walmsley



*Babette Smith and John Garnsey QC,
editors of the Barristers' Directory*