

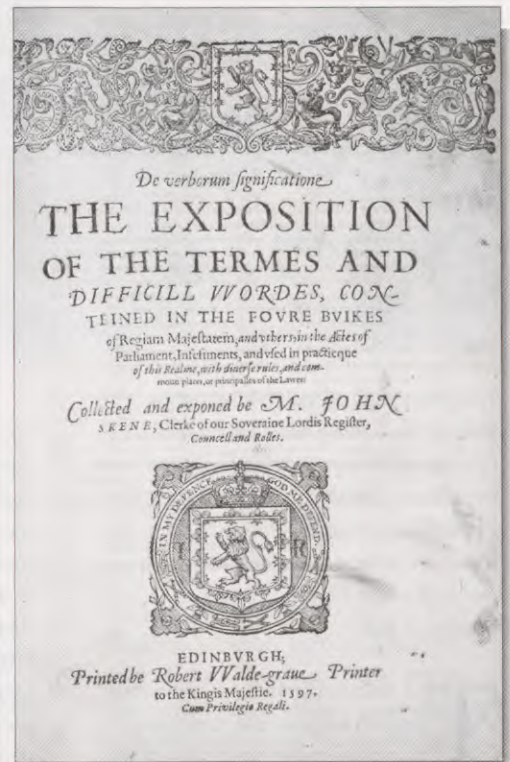
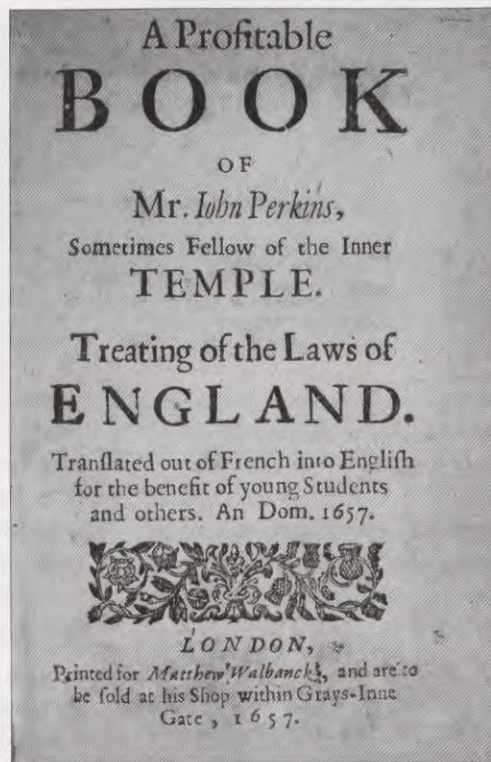
Lectures on Rare Law Books

BY CAITLIN STONE

As part of its plans to highlight some of the previously hidden treasures from its rare book collection, the University of Melbourne's Legal Resource Centre library recently held the first in its new Rare Books Lecture Series. The aim of the series is to use the rare book collection as a starting point for more general discussions of the history of Melbourne (and of the University), of law and of publishing in Australia.

The first lecture was given by Professor Robin Sharwood A.O. It attracted an audience of more than 80 people from the University's Law School, other libraries, publishers and the legal profession. In his talk, Professor Sharwood highlighted some of the features of the collection, including:

- the oldest book, a 1569 edition of Henry de Bracton's *De Legibus et Consuetudinibus Angliae Libri Quinque*, which is the first systematic textbook of English law;
- early Australian law books; and
- books relating to the early history of the Melbourne Law School.



Left: John Perkins, *A Profitable Book of Mr. John Perkins, Treating of the Laws of England*, London, Matthew Walbanck, 1657. **Right:** John Skene, *De Verborum Significatione: The Exposition of the Termes and Difficill Wordes, contained in the foure buiks of Regiam Majestatem ...* Edinburgh, Robert Walde-graue, 1597. (Legal Resource Centre library collection.)

Professor Sharwood also donated two items from his own collection. The first of these was *An Analysis of Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England in a Series of Questions, to which the Student is to Frame his own Answers, by Reading that Work by Barron Field*, who was one of the earliest judges in Australia, being the second

judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales (1816–1824).

Professor Sharwood's second donation was a book from the library of Owen Dixon which also bears his signature.

Finally, Professor Sharwood recommended that the Legal Resource Centre library implement a

clear collection development policy for its rare book collection, a suggestion which was readily taken up by the Legal Resource Centre Head, Nicki McLaurin Smith. ♦

Caitlin Stone is the Special Projects Officer at the University of Melbourne's Legal Resource Centre library.