

Basic Legal Research Part 2

Science Direct (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/>) offers a substantial number of the world's scientific, medical and technical information online, including over 2,500 peer-reviewed journals and hundreds of book series, handbooks and reference works. Searching is free, as are most abstracts, but full texts of articles (of which there are about 9 million) will probably cost you some coin.

By Ken Kozlowski

In the last issue, we took a look at basic legal research on the Internet in the areas of state and federal resources. This time, we're going to explore a few legal portals and some places to find periodical literature.

Portals

Legal portals used to have the monopoly on legal information. Not anymore. This category of website is more than likely a dying breed as search algorithms get better and better allowing users to enter one or two terms into a box and find their result among the first three entries (see Google).

First stop on our tour is Findlaw (<http://www.findlaw.com>). I can't really remember the web without Findlaw. The site underwent some changes a few years back, and is now actually two discrete sites: one for the general public, and one for legal professionals (<http://lp.findlaw.com/>). Findlaw still has a lot to offer to both novice and seasoned researchers, if only for quick access to legal news, blog postings, and case research. Next up is Jurist (<http://jurist.law.pitt.edu>). It surprised me, but the notes for Jurist indicate that it has been around since 1997 in its present form. Wow, sometimes you just feel old. I always considered this site to be a relative newcomer in the portal community. It offers legal news and a real-time legal research service that is powered by volunteers led by law professor Bernard Hibbits at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

Moving on, let's take a look at Law.com (<http://law.com>). American Lawyer Media is the purveyor of this site. It is a nicely designed portal that offers a lot of info without seeming to be too cluttered. Information is provided for lawyers and firms of all sizes, and in-house counsel. Blogs and RSS feeds are also part of the equation, and there are links to legal news covering all geographic areas of the country. One of my favorite sites of all time is the Legal Information Institute (<http://www.law.cornell.edu>). Since before the beginning of the World Wide Web, the Legal Information Institute (at Cornell University Law School) has been there. They have been disseminating United States Supreme Court opinions via email since the days when Archie, Jughead, Gopher, and even Veronica (for those of you who have no clue to what I'm speaking of, look for definitions at NetLingo -<http://www.netlingo.com/>) were terms that the Internet cognoscenti were using. Nowadays, they still offer a ton of great information on their vast number of pages, and those Supreme Court decisions are still being emailed within a few hours of being handed down by the Court.

Last stop on our portal parade is WashLaw (<http://www.washlaw.edu/>). Just as with the LII, WashLaw has been providing access to legal information since before there was a WWW. WashLaw, however, has made the leap and updated their design a few times while still remaining one of the few useful legal portals left on the web. You'll still find links to enormous amounts of information and other sites, which is what they do best.

Periodicals are a resource just made for Internet exploration. Who wants to keep hard copies of these things around anymore? Current Law Journal Content (<http://lawlib.wlu.edu/CLJC/>) is a great service from Washington & Lee Law School that can be used to display all the tables of contents for issues added during a user selected date range. You can also search for words in article citations (author/title/abstract/journal-name fields), link to tables of contents for any one of the 1538 (as of May 6, 2010) individual law journals, and subscribe to an RSS feed of contents for all, selected, or an individual law journal. About half of the content on Current Law Journal Content comes from the Tarlton Law Library's Contents Pages from Law Reviews and Other Scholarly Journals (http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/tallons/content_search.html).

Tarlton, located at the University of Texas School of Law, offers a keyword-searchable database of tables of contents from more than 750 law reviews (the database lists journal issues received over the past three months) and other scholarly publications related to the law published in the United States and abroad. The database is updated daily.

The Social Science Research Network (<http://www.ssrn.com/>) eLibrary consists of two parts: an Abstract Database containing abstracts of over 277,000 scholarly working papers and forthcoming papers and an Electronic Paper Collection currently containing over 228,000 downloadable full text documents in PDF format. The eLibrary also includes the research papers of a number of fee-based publications. Users can also sign up for email and RSS notification of recently added documents to whichever library is of interest (financial, legal, marketing, negotiations, etc.).

The areas of medicine and other sciences, while not strictly legal, often come into play when litigating. Our first stop for periodicals in this genre has to be PubMed (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez>). PubMed is the interface now used by the National Library of Medicine to access its Medline database. Medline covers the fields of medicine,

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nursing, dentistry, veterinary medicine, the health care system, and the preclinical sciences and contains bibliographic citations and author abstracts from thousands of biomedical journals published in the United States and 80 other countries. The database contains over 19 million citations dating back to the mid-1950s. Science Direct (www.science-direct.com/) offers a substantial number of the world's scientific, medical and technical information online, including over 2,500 peer-reviewed journals and hundreds of book series, handbooks and reference works. Searching is free, as are most abstracts, but full texts of articles (of which there are about 9 million) will probably cost you some coin.

HighWire

(www.highwire.stanford.edu/lists/freeart.dtl) bills itself as the largest archive of free full-text science on Earth. As of March 17, 2010, they were assisting in the online publication of 1,999,354 free full-text articles and 6,237,561 total articles. They offer pointers to 22 sites with free trial periods, and 45 completely free sites. They also report that 286 sites have free back issues, and 1,209 sites have pay per view.

Last up on our voyage is the Directory of Open Access Journals (www.doaj.org/). This service covers free, full text, quality controlled scientific and scholarly journals. There are now 4,998 journals in the directory. Currently, 2,053 journals are searchable at article level, and 390,737 articles are included in the DOAJ service. Not bad for free.

That concludes part 2 of our trip down memory lane. As you can see, a number of these sites can still help with research on the Internet, and some are still at the top of their game. Thanks for your time. Next issue, look for some more legal (and not so legal) research pointers.



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