

# Casemaker4: New and Improved, Yet Reassuringly Familiar

By Norman Woolworth

**Editor's Note:** *At the time this article was written, Casemaker4 was still in beta testing. As a result, features described or shown may have been modified in the final version of the new platform's release.*

**T**his month, State Bar of Michigan members will be introduced to Casemaker4, the next-generation legal research platform from Casemaker.

In creating Casemaker4, which SBM members can access for free, the Casemaker development team was presented with two overarching imperatives:

- (1) Improve search speed, modernize the interface to enable more intuitive site navigation, and upgrade design responsiveness to better accommodate mobile devices.
- (2) Retain features and design elements that loyal Casemaker users value and trust, and minimize changes with the potential to disorient.

Put another way: *Make it new. Make it better. But avoid change for change's sake.*

"The history of platform redesigns across various industries is littered with examples of solutions in search of problems," said Casemaker's Chief Information Officer Dan McCade during a December interview. "We were very conscious throughout the development process of only adding features that would matter to our users, and of not throwing out the baby with the bath water, so to speak."

Guided by several years of user feedback and incorporating refinements suggested

through an extensive beta testing process, the team managed to achieve the desired balance, producing a new and improved platform that remains reassuringly familiar.

Casemaker4 features a clean and uncluttered layout with all of the features SBM members previously enjoyed along with faster search speeds, better search-filter tools, and new functionality such as type-ahead searching. It is both W3C- and ADA-compliant and includes a much more responsive design for enhanced display on smaller devices.

Not every change to the new platform is visible to users. As McCade explained, Casemaker invested in significant back-end enhancements.

"We have upgraded our load balancing and database clustering technologies," McCade said. "And then, along with hardware improvements, we've invested in our server operating system and database and search engine software. The result is faster response time and greater platform stability."

In designing the new platform's user interface, much thought went into making the user experience not only more intuitive, but also more efficient. To that end, notable enhancements include:

- Enabling a search of anything from anywhere by including the jurisdiction selection menu on every page. In concert, the system automatically updates the search jurisdiction while navigating the site, so searching on just the content you are browsing remains the default.
  - Adding time-saving options to the Search Input box, including "Recent Searches," "Search Tips," "Advanced Search," and predictive "Type Ahead" functionality (see top of the following page).
  - Adding Casemaker Digest (daily summaries of leading cases), Casemaker Libra (eBooks), CiteCheck, and CLE Events to the main navigation for easier access, as well as the inclusion of links to Libra citing references where applicable.
  - A new Alerts feature that notifies users of new developments pertinent to a pre-defined topic based on a saved search or list of primary sources.
  - Incorporating intelligent algorithms to suggest related primary and secondary materials not previously displayed.
  - And much more!
- What's not changing? The expert care and handling of legal content by editorial staff that has long distinguished Casemaker

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among low-cost legal research providers who tend to rely more heavily on algorithmic approaches to capture and organize legal content with comparatively little to no human intervention.

In a study circulated at last summer’s annual meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries, three highly respected Connecticut law librarians set out to objectively evaluate seven legal research services by researching six topics.<sup>1</sup> They performed identical searches on each service and assessed each result set against five predetermined criteria.

The study showed that Casemaker consistently returned more relevant results than other low-cost services, that its content was more current, and that its citator, Case-Check+<sup>®</sup>, was more precise and less cumbersome to use than other providers’ citation-checking tools. In fact, Casemaker performed on par with (and in some cases even surpassed) the leading high-cost services across multiple points of comparison.

As Casemaker Chief Operating Officer Sarah Gorman said when the study came out, “These results are truly gratifying. Our editors take great pride in their work and

here we can see that the human touch really does make a difference.”

As an SBM member, you will have the best of both worlds: a much-improved platform with state-of-the-art functionality and content you can continue to rely on with confidence. ■

*Norman Woolworth joined Casemaker as director of marketing in spring 2018. He is a seasoned veteran of the online legal research industry, having served in a variety of marketing leadership and general management roles during a nearly 20-year career at LexisNexis, most recently as the head of the company’s federal government market segment.*

## ENDNOTE

1. Stock et al, *Database Evaluation: Drawing the Silken Thread* <<http://casemakerlegal.com/pdf/public/database-comparison.pdf>> [accessed December 13, 2018].