

Beyond the Basics: Practical Information for Attorneys on the Internet

By now it's no secret that primary law is available all over the Internet. If you forgot some of these resources, please refer to Carol Parker's "Legal Resources on the Internet" in the May and June 2003 issues of the *Michigan Bar Journal*. You can also find these articles on the State Bar of Michigan's website by clicking on "Archive" at www.michbar.org/publications/bar_journal.cfm.

In fact, the growing popularity of Internet sources among legal practitioners caused recent changes to *The Bluebook* (18th ed. 2005) rules covering electronic sources. The editors even added a citation format for blogs!

Given this increasing use of and reliance on Internet sources, it is still important to evaluate and verify the quality of websites. Questions about the accuracy, currentness, and content of a particular website are still relevant to ask, as discussed in the July 1998 *Michigan Bar Journal* article by the State Bar Committee on Libraries, Legal Research, and Legal Publications, "Finding and Assessing the Best Internet Sites for Lawyers."

Attorneys use the Internet for a variety of reasons, including locating practical information. This article focuses on those Internet sites that provide more than just the basics or the primary law. Let's take a look.

Directories

Use Martindale-Hubbell's Lawyer Locator at http://www.martindale.com/xp/Martindale/Lawyer_Locator/Search_Lawyer_Locator/lawyer_search.xml to find attorneys by name, location, firm, practice area, etc. West's legal directory at <http://lawyers.findlaw.com/> offers the same type of information, plus links to expert witnesses, process servers, and court reporters.

Locate people through www.zabasearch.com. Click on the address to link to a MapQuest street map, the zip code, and the weather for that address. Find people and businesses at www.anywho.com/, AT&T's online white and yellow pages.

From the Internet Legal Research Group at www.ilrg.com/experts_ref.html, you can link to sites identifying experts and consultants. Find investigators from across the country at <http://www.investigatorsanywhere.com/Search/>.

Public Records

Subscribe to a web-based public records database at www.publicrecordsources.com/PRRS.asp. BRB Publications, Inc. at www.brbbpub.com/pubrecsites.asp links to free public record sources on the Internet.

Research Aids

If you're asking, "Where do I begin?" try Zimmerman's Research Guide at www.lexisnexis.com/infopro/zimmerman/default.aspx. You can jump from index terms to definitions and explanations of legal issues, and to more links.

You don't have to subscribe to fee-based databases to do online searches any more. LexisNexis offers several fee-based search options on www.lexisone.com, including shepardizing case law. With your credit card, go to Westlaw's <http://creditcard.westlaw.com> to retrieve court opinions, statutes, and appellate briefs by citation, case name, or docket number. Use KeyCite to determine whether the case, statute, or administrative ruling is still good law.

For current articles on any topic, use your driver's license number to freely access the Library of Michigan's electronic library at www.mel.org/index.html. Access numerous

databases on medicine and health, science, business, etc. Be sure to try Gale Group's LegalTrac to find law-related articles.

No luck? Try http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/tallons/content_search.html. On this site, Texas law school students post keyword-searchable contents pages of law reviews they've received over the past three months. Access law review articles from the University Law Review Project at www.lawreview.org. You can perform full text searches of law journals and sign up to receive abstracts of new articles by e-mail.

Use the new Google Scholar at <http://scholar.google.com> to keyword-search a wide variety of material from academic publishers, professional societies, preprint repositories, and universities, as well as scholarly articles available across the web.

Legal Research and Writing

Are you interested in legal research and writing? Try these basic "how-to" websites:

<http://library.kentlaw.edu/Resources/tutorials.htm>—basic to advanced legal research tutorials

www.law.howard.edu/faculty/pages/berry/advice/trialbrf.htm—how to write a brief

www.law.cornell.edu/citation/full_toc.htm—basic legal citation formats

www.duhaime.org/dictionary—simple law dictionary

www.bartleby.com/141/—*The Elements of Style* by Wm. Strunk, Jr. in full text

www.earlygirl.com/sincerely.shtml—common errors in English usage

www.gpoaccess.gov/stylemanual/—complete GPO Style Manual

www.uslegalforms.com—fee-based forms database

www.lectlaw.com/form.html—free legal, business, and general forms website

www.virtualchase.com—how to conduct legal research effectively

Law Books and Libraries

Most law school libraries have online catalogs. Go to their websites to search by title, author, or subject. Take a look at the full bibliographic records in your search results to see if there are links to those resources on the Internet—this is especially true for government documents, administrative decisions, and law reviews. Go to <http://stu.findlaw.com> to link to law schools alphabetically or by state. Public libraries maintaining some law materials are located all over Michigan. You can link to their home pages from the Library of Michigan at www.michigan.gov/hal.

If you're a law book collector, or would like to sell some of your oldies but goodies, Internet buyers and sellers of law books like www.lawbookexchange.com might be of assistance.

Keeping Up To Date

Online news postings and commentaries—blogs—are increasingly popular. Try Sabrina Pacifici's current law and technology news postings on her website www.bespacific.com/. Subscribers receive free weekday e-mail updates and can search her entire database by topic. A list of law-related blogs appears at www.law.com/index.shtml.

Sign up for the State Bar of Michigan's *e-Journal* for free daily e-mails containing case summaries, legal news, and classifieds at www.michbar.org/publications/ejournal_signup.cfm.

Though part of the *Michigan Lawyers Weekly* site at www.milawyersweekly.com/ is for subscribers only, all viewers have access to top legal news stories of the week, as well as current court decisions.

Employment

Post law-related job openings and review résumés at www.lawjobs.com. Search the database if you're looking for employment and sign up for e-mail alerts on position openings. Use <http://www.lawyersweeklyjobs.com/> for the same type of information, plus a recruiter directory, tips on job searches, résumés, and interviewing skills.

Just for Fun

Need to add sparkle to your next presentation? Go to www.dumblaws.com or try www.duhaime.org/Law_fun for the dumbest things ever said in court and humorous anecdotes, plus a list of outrageous lawsuits. For something a little more scholarly, go to an online Dictionary of Quotations at www.quotationreference.com/.

Miscellaneous

Use the American Bar Association's website at www.abanet.org/tech/ltrc/lawlink/home.html for technology advice for your law practice, plus other useful links.

The National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health sponsor an illustrated medical encyclopedia at www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus. Find descriptions of illnesses, injuries, medical treatments, and drug information, plus a dictionary with pronunciations and a directory of health providers.

For more medical information, freely access the *Merck Manuals* at www.merck.com/pubs. Also, take a look at "Researching Medical Literature on the Internet—2005 Update" by Gloria Miccioli at www.llrx.com/features/medical2005.htm.

At www.wunderground.com/ you can check out today's weather, plus a five-day forecast for the entire U.S. and around the world. But did you know that the site includes retrospective weather data going back several years?

For zip codes, use the U.S. Postal Service website at <http://zip4.usps.com/zip4/welcome.jsp>. Click on the "Site Map" feature for postal and shipping directions, an online postal store, etc.

Did you find a website that's in a foreign language? For the general meaning of the text—caution here, it's not an exact translation—use a free online translator. Go to Bable Fish at <http://babelfish.altavista.com>, Google's translator at www.google.com/language_tools?hs=en, or Free Translation at www.freetranslation.com.

If All Else Fails

It's phenomenal what you can find on the Internet by just "googling" a few terms. Use Google's Guide at www.googleguide.com to help fine-tune your queries.

Many academic, law, and public libraries provide reference services on the Internet. Look for a link on their home pages. You can e-mail a question or sometimes connect directly to a librarian via live chat. In Michigan, for example, 17 community colleges collaborated to provide e-mail and live chat help at www.researchhelpnow.org. ◆

Dianne Zyskowski, an advisory member of the State Bar Committee on Libraries, Legal Research, and Legal Publications, is Oakland County Law Library's law librarian. Previously, she worked as a corporate librarian for CUNA Mutual Insurance Group, and before that as a reference librarian for Monroe County Library System. She received her AMLS from the University of Michigan and a paralegal certificate from Oakland University.

Marilyn Preston teaches Legal Research and Writing, Practical Legal Writing, and Advanced Appellate Advocacy at the University of Toledo College of Law. Before that, she was an instructor at Wayne State University Law School and had clerked for the Michigan Supreme Court. She is a member of the Michigan and California Bars and is also an advisory member of the State Bar Committee on Libraries, Legal Research, and Legal Publications.