

Electronic Services in the Bar Library

The Bar library has added to its range of online and electronic services over the past six months and further expansion is planned. We are currently considering subscriptions to Lexis, Info-one and Ausinet (a full text newspaper and journal database) and welcome any comments on potential use of these services.

These electronic services increase the range and accessibility of resources available to all users. Searches can be made in the library, or requested by phone or e-mail.

The following is an overview of the services currently available in the library.

Foundation Law

Foundation Law is a database of legal information available on the Internet. The information provided by the Law Foundation and AustLII and is accessible via the World Wide Web. Primary legal information currently available includes:

Decisions from the:

- High Court
- Federal Court
- Family Court
- Administrative Appeals Tribunal
- Supreme Courts of Tasmania, ACT and Northern Territory
- Land and Environment Court judgments
- Industrial Relations Court
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
- Native Title Tribunal
- Immigration Review Tribunal
- Refugee Review Tribunal.

Legislation from:

- Commonwealth
- New South Wales
- ACT.

Legislation related to particular topics is also available in Practice books.

Legal organisations have Web pages with relevant information. The Bar Association has a Home Page with details of its staff, Bar Council, Bar Rules, Library Rules and catalogue.

There are also indexes to sources of secondary information on the Internet and international sites.

First Class Law

First Class Law is an electronic mail and bulletin board service, which facilitates discussion groups on different subjects and secure transfer of documents between members of the legal profession.

First Class Law also posts the daily Court Lists, which are usually available at 3pm the day before.

Full text of High Court judgments are also available, generally within 48 hours of the decision being handed down. The NSW Court of Appeal Judgments Bulletins, which are published monthly, are also available.

SIS - Sentencing Information System

SIS is a database developed and maintained by the Judicial Commission. It is designed to assist judges and magistrates in the process of sentencing and to facilitate legal research in the area. The database consists of:

- Penalty statistics - provides details, in graph or table format of the nature of sentences imposed in relation to criminal offences.
- Sentencing law - provides a reference system to the law on sentencing including:
 - Case summaries - relevant facts of Court of Criminal Appeal cases concerning sentencing
 - Principles of sentencing
 - Purple passages - selected passages of judgments which embody principles of sentencing
 - Full text of judgments
 - Sentencing options and orders
 - Current NSW and Commonwealth legislation on sentencing
- Sentencing facilities - provides a list of service providers by type and location
- Sentencing calculator - enables easy calculation of sentence terms.

The Bar library has a direct line to the Judicial Commission's database and the system is available to barristers for searching and for printing results from the database.

ESTOPL

The electronic version of ESTOPL CaseFinder which began in 1982 as a loose-leaf case digest service is a quick and easy way to search through more than 16,000 cases from the High Court, Federal Court and NSW Supreme Court (including Court of Appeal, Court of Criminal Appeal and decisions of single judges and masters).

Entries on ESTOPL are composed of catchwords for judgments *which contain some question of principle*. New cases and citations are added as soon as judgments and reports are made available. CaseFinder is updated monthly.

ABN

The Australian Bibliographic Network is a database containing over 11 million cataloguing records for monographs, serials and nonbook material. The collections of most Australian libraries are held on ABN and subjects range across all fields of research and interest.

If you are searching for an item not held in the Bar library, we will search this database, locate the item for you and arrange an inter-library loan.

Uncover Australia

Uncover is a database of the table of contents of more than 17,000 journal titles. These are supplied to Uncover by US, Australian and New Zealand universities.

The database can be used as a source of information regarding the latest research on a subject. Articles can be ordered from Uncover, who electronically transmit the request to the participating university from where it is faxed to the requester.

Access to this database is via the Internet and supply within 36 hours is guaranteed, although it is usually much faster than this.

E-Mail

For remote users of the library, a subscription to First Class Law and/or Foundation Law not only increases your access to legal information, it also provides an alternative method for requesting information from the library. Sending information by e-mail is a faster, cheaper option than fax.

If you have Internet e-mail, you can contact the library by sending a request to lallen@fl.asn.au

The library also has a mailbox on First Class Law. Just address your request to **Bar Library**.

We check these twice a day and will answer your requests as soon as possible. Any information that is available electronically, subject to copyright and licensing provisions, can be return e-mailed.

The staff of the Bar library are happy to assist users who wish to learn how to use Foundation Law, First Class Law, SIS and ESTOPL and to demonstrate ABN and Uncover Australia. □ Lisa Allen and Chris Winslow

Correction

The December '95 issue of *Bar News* records on page 25 that: “

“ On 8 May The Hon. Justice G.F. Fitzgerald, AC Chief Justice of Queensland ...”

Justice Fitzgerald is not the Chief Justice of Queensland, Justice Macrossan is.

Justice Fitzgerald is the President of the Queensland Court of Appeal.

Bar News apologises for the error. □

Are You Using CaseBase? If not, Why not?

While it might not be completely true to say that manual legal research has become passé, it is appropriate to reflect on that one computer program which has, for me, revolutionised the way I do my work. With electronic services flooding the market at a frightening pace, and with much overlapping content in those services, it is difficult and time-consuming sorting out exactly what we must have in chambers or on our computers. CaseBase, produced by Pink Ribbon Publishing, was the first electronic legal research program to live on my computer. I have used it since February 1993. Of course, I have now added several other electronic services to my computer library, but if I had to choose just one obligatory program from those currently on offer, CaseBase would definitely be it. It is the first program I go to when I start my research. In many cases, it is the only program I use. I use it every day as:

- . an annotator;
- . a case citation finder/checker;
- . a law reports index; and
- . a legal research tool.

I have not used a hard copy law report index since I started using CaseBase (not even the indexes inside the covers of individual law reports). The program indexes about 56 law reports and 56 law journals. It also includes unreported judgments from most jurisdictions. There are a variety of search methods to choose from and there is practically no training needed - five minutes should do it.

CaseBase also has the most comprehensive citator/annotator of any other program or published service I've seen. It contains something in the order of 40 law reports fully noted up and backdated to the set's first volumes. I understand the remaining early volumes of the other reports from the company's scope of research will be fully annotated within the next few months.

It is a monthly service and is available in Dos, Mac, Wins 3.1 or Windows 95 (all on the same CD). It costs about \$1,450 per annum for a single user or \$3,000 per annum for networks. There is a special price for barristers in the same chambers who do not use a network of \$750 per person per annum (minimum of 4 persons). Whether we like it or not, we are all going to be dragged, some of us kicking and screaming, into electronic research. The emphasis now seems to be on publishing in computer format first and hard copy second.

CaseBase is not produced on paper. It exists as a computer program and is, in my humble opinion, a compulsory resource for every legal practitioner. If you don't believe me, see for yourself and ask for a free demonstration by contacting Pink Ribbon Publishing on (02) 9918 9288.

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