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ONLINE SERVICES

LEXIS-NEXIS News

Two important new additions to LEXIS-NEXIS are AAP and the *Canadian National Reporter System*. AAP is an independent Australian national news agency which provides comprehensive coverage of all national political, industrial, business, financial and general news. It covers decisions of the High Court and State Supreme courts; as well as industrial disputes and wage cases. A six year archive of AAP reports is currently being added. The AAPNEW file can be found in either the AUST, ASIAPC, NEWS or WORLD libraries.

The *Canadian National Reporter System* consists of reporters for every Canadian province except Quebec plus two reporters for the federal courts. The provincial reporters include comprehensive coverage of the courts of appeal and selected cases from the superior trial courts. The National Reporter includes all the cases from the Supreme Court of Canada and the Federal Court of Appeal plus judgments for the House of Lords and the Privy Council that are relevant to Canadian law. The *Federal Trial Reports* includes selected cases from the Federal Court of Canada, Trial Division. Citations for these reports are LEXSEEable. These files are not available to educational subscribers in Australia.

The new files in the CANADA library are:

ATAR	<i>Alberta Reports</i>
BCAC	<i>British Columbia Appeal Cases</i>
BCTC	<i>British Columbia Trial Cases</i>
FTREP	<i>Federal Trial Reports</i>
MANREP	<i>Manitoba Reports (2d)</i>
NATREP	<i>National Reporter</i>
NBREP	<i>New Brunswick Reports (2d)</i>
N&PEIR	<i>Newfoundland & Prince Edward Island Reports</i>
NSREP	<i>Nova Scotia Reports (2d)</i>
ONTAC	<i>Ontario Appeal Cases</i>
ONTTC	<i>Ontario Trial Cases</i>
SASKR	<i>Saskatchewan Reports</i>

Contact details for further information about LEXIS-NEXIS are as follows:

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ON THE WEB

Search Engines

The June 28 1997 issue of the *New Scientist* has an interesting article by David Brake, Webmaster at the *New Scientist*, on the difficulties search engines have in keeping up with the growth of the Web.

The huge growth in size of the Web means that no search engine can hope to index it all; hardware costs alone would prohibit this. Blake interviewed representatives from the three major search engines to find out their strategies for indexing the Web.

ALTA VISTA and INFOSEEK are concentrating on comprehensively indexing the most frequently visited sites, and a sample of the content from other sites. INFOSEEK argues that this works well because of the duplication of material on the Web. Ninety percent of queries are answered from one million pages of the thirty million pages of text in INFOSEEK's database.

HOTBOT's strategy is somewhat different in that it aims to index a large percentage of the Web by using dozens of PC's instead of a few large servers. HOTBOT is now the largest search index covering approximately fifty five million pages and crawling up to ten million pages a day. By comparison, ALTA VISTA indexes thirty million pages and crawls up to three million pages per day.

Another approach to indexing the Web is to use the meta tags. Instead of searching the full text of a site, search engines search only the meta-tags where publishers provide a description of the contents of their site. The problem with this approach is that it relies on a publishers providing an accurate description of their site. I don't see this as a very useful approach because of the problems of inaccurate and inconsistent tags. Libraries wouldn't catalogue a book solely on the

basis of information provided by the publisher! All the major search engines currently search the full text of pages, but some such as HOTBOT and INFOSEEK use metatags in deciding how a page is ranked. The *New Scientist Plus* Home Page has further updates on search engines.

Search Engine Watch has a chart which gives a detailed comparison of the major search engines. This is a very useful chart for keeping up-to-date with changes in search engines to help you select the best one for your purposes at the time. The chart does not include a useful Australian search engine called *Answers*. *Answers* has a good graphical interface which allows you to limit your search by location, date or media type. *Answers* claims to index 54 million documents as of June 1997.

WebSeeker Legal Research Edition

WEBSEEKER is a meta-searcher which searches up to 33 different legal and general search engines at once. Search engines covered include FINDLAW, LAWCRAWLER, LAW FORUM, SEAMLESS WEBSITE, ALTA VISTA, HOTBOT, INFOSEEK, LYCOS, EXCITE and YAHOO.

WEBSEEKER allows you to search the whole Web, or to restrict your search by search engine categories, such as general law. It removes duplicates and inactive URL's from your results list. WEBSEEKER runs under Windows 95/NT and can be downloaded for a 10 day free trial.

OSIRIS on the Web

OSIRIS (Online Service, Industrial Relations Information Site) is the successor to FAIEXI. It provides access to awards, decisions, variations, agreements and decision summaries. There is an Update Calendar which lists, as hypertext links, the awards, agreements and decisions added each day. Material received from the Australian Industrial Registry in electronic form will usually

be available on the system within two working days of being received, and that received in hard copy within three weeks.

OSIRIS is searchable by keyword, phrase or print number; or by award or agreement number. All databases can be searched at once, or individual databases selected. Awards and decisions can be browsed in numerical order, and decisions summaries can be browsed by week starting with the week ending 8th January 1988.

There is a comprehensive user manual available. Users can subscribe to a listserve run by AGPS, which provides information about enhancements and information sessions. Access to OSIRIS is currently free, but this will be reviewed in March 1998.

AustLII Announces the New SINO Search Interface

The background papers prepared by Graham Greenleaf, Andrew Mowbray and Geoffrey King for the *Law via the Internet 97* Conference, 25-27 June 1997, discuss AustLII's newly released search interface and also the upgrading of the SINO search engine. SINO has been rewritten in many respects, both to enable the new interface to be implemented, and to increase the speed of searching and the return of search results.

There is now a choice of three search forms, Standard, Guided (step-by-step use of the Standard Search form) and Extended (customised selection of databases).

Four distinct methods of searching and displaying results are also now possible. Two of these are new. The two which are largely unchanged are 'Boolean search with Long Results display' the previous standard search method and 'Freeform search with Ranked Results display' the only previous form of ranked results display.

Newly available are 'Boolean search with Short Results display' displays data base names plus number of documents and 'Boolean search with Ranked Results display', the most powerful search method. It uses all AustLII operators to search, then ranks results by likely relevance.

AustLII also provides 'Freeform' searching with relevance ranking display. No search connectors may be used, and if used are ignored. All common words are also disregarded.

... And Some Amazing Usage Figures

Greenleaf, Mowbray and King also commented on usage and recognition of the database.

"Usage of AustLII has risen constantly, as shown by the following figures for the number of successful HTML requests ('hits') per month: 36,000 in July 1995; 146,417 in January 1996; 457,346 in July 1996; 813,361 in October 1996; to 1.5 million in May 1997. At present (June 1997) we usually receive about 4,200 separate users per business day, peaking at about 200 concurrent users, and accessing about 65,000 pages per day.

One of the most revealing statistics concerns the "Superleague" decision of the Federal Court. It was available on AustLII within a few hours of being delivered in Court (the Friday of the long weekend). By Monday afternoon of the holiday the full decision had been downloaded 1,300 times, and there were 2,500 downloads during the first week. This would amount to over \$200,000 worth of copies from the Registry.

AustLII's users now come from the whole community, including educational institutions (about 30%), the legal profession and business (20%), community organisations (15%), government (10%), and 20% from overseas. These percentages have not changed a lot since AustLII's inception, except the percentage for business usage has risen considerably, in comparison with government use."

List of URLs

Answers	www.answers.com.au
New Scientist Plus	www.nsplus.com/keysites/voice/voice.htm
Osiris	http://indrel.agps.gov.au
Osiris listserv	majordomo@agps.gov.au subscribe osiris your.name @your.address goes here
Search Engine Watch	http://searchenginewatch.com/features.htm
Webseeker Legal Research Ed	www.ffg.com/seeker/lre.htm

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