

Review of Pink Ribbon CaseBase

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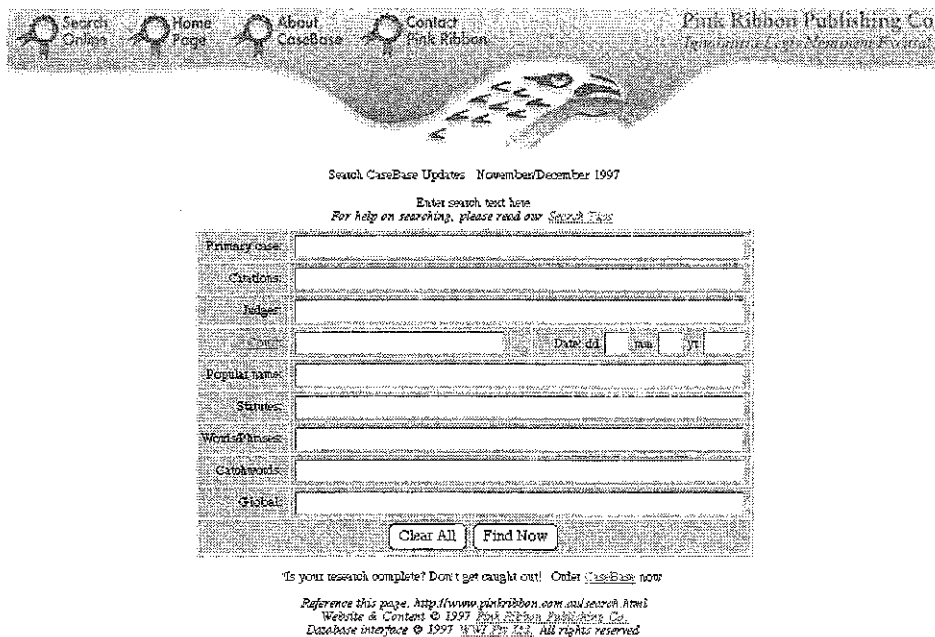
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Everyone, so it seems, has heard of Pink Ribbon's *CaseBase*. But not everyone (myself included until recently) has used it. So, perhaps this review might be of some use. Because as a recent convert myself, I can highly recommend it.

I had not used *CaseBase* until very recently. I had certainly heard good things about it for a long time, however we subscribed to two case citators already at Monash, and finances being what they are, we simply did not think we could justify the expenditure on another (by the way, most people are amazed to learn that it is not long ago - the mid 1980s - that we had no Australian case citator). That has changed, however, with our subscription to Butterworths Online. It would have been perverse as well as confusing to our users to subscribe to the complete range of products on that service, *except for CaseBase*. And so many of our students who undertake summer clerkships have returned praising the product, which is apparently used widely in law firms.

For the uninitiated, *CaseBase* is advertised as 'a citator and an annotator'. It covers a very wide range of publications, including 57 major Australian law reports and the major UK and New Zealand series, 80 legal journals and the unreported judgments from all federal and state superior courts. Inclusion of CCH reports and other lesser known and specialist series is a feature of the database I particularly like. I would suggest that, in order to gain a further edge, Pink Ribbon consider including cases from the various Pacific Island jurisdictions - particularly Papua New Guinea and Fiji, and including references to the cases in the now defunct South Pacific Law Reports. I am sure that the law School at the University of the South Pacific would be keen to cooperate - and to see their new law review included. As well as increasing the usefulness of their citator, Pink Ribbon would be doing a real service to the region and helping to promote the rule of law throughout the Pacific.

CaseBase in either its CD-ROM or online version is extremely easy to search, obviously one of the reasons it is so popular. The search screen looks like this:



The screen is straightforward and plain even to the novice user. There are ten search modes (covering all possibilities): Global (which searches the entire database), Primary Case, Citation, Popular name, Judge(s), Court, Date, Statutes, Words and Phrases and Catchwords. Looking for citations to Wik? Or journal articles? Or anything at all on Wik? Simply type Wik in the appropriate box - 'primary case' or 'global'. Not sure of the correct name of the Tasmanian Dam case? Simply type 'Dam' in the popular name box. This, as I am sure most readers will agree, is one of the really nice features of the database - and another major reason for its popularity. I am not sure though that 'Pastoral Leases Case' (which is what I found in *CaseBase*) will catch on as the popular name for Wik.

Jumping around within *CaseBase* is also easy. There is a range of 'hot' keys. Easy to read help and 'search tips'. And the search software is very user friendly. It is not case or space sensitive (ie. you can type ABC or A B C) and there is no problem about the 'v' in case name - simply type the party names. 'Smith Jones' would find references to Smith v Jones for example. The word 'and' is implied, so typing 'negligence misstatement Shaddock' would find 'negligence' and 'misstatement' and 'Shaddock'. Truncation is available of course - using the # or*.

Each case and journal article is assigned catchwords by the Pink Ribbon editors (something which is unique to *CaseBase*) who also provide details of legislation judicially considered. A full description of the cases that are covered and in what way they are covered is in the program under the Contents/Scope menu. A handy list of abbreviations is also located under the Contents menu. As with other case citators, once a record for a case is displayed it includes subsequent citations to both cases and articles (assuming that there are any of course). These citations are highlighted blue and underlined. Clicking on one of these links will take you to a new record for that entry, again with further citations to it. My only complaint, and it is only a small matter of style, is that the screen display is rather cluttered.

This is an extract from the *Kruger* display:

The screenshot shows the Pink Ribbon Publishing Co. website with navigation links: Search Online, Home Page, About CaseBase, and Contact Pink Ribbon. The main content area displays a case summary for a student's unemployment benefits claim. A disclaimer box is present, stating that the data is an update to the complete CaseBase service and contains only the last 2 months of data. The case details include the primary case name, date, judge, and various legal references.

Case Display	
Primary Case	Craft & Department of Employment, Education, Training & Youth Affairs, Pa (1997) 46 ALJ 704
Judge	Muller
COBI	AAJ
Date	17/06/1997
Annotations	Civil Matters as Secretary, Department of Social Security, Pa (1997) 25 AAR 492
Statutes	Student and Youth Assistance Act 1973 (Cth), s232
Citations	Social welfare and services Benefits Assault Security of employment Whether overpayments received in good faith by student Where Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs acknowledged that overpayment due to administrative error Where student notified department of his change in circumstances in which he was to be paid a lower rate, but did nothing specific to alert department when payments continued to be paid at higher rate Held: student did not receive overpayments in good faith

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CaseBase is available on CD-ROM (updated at Pink Ribbon's Web site - <http://www.pinkribbon.com.au> - currently available as a free trial). The product is also available on *Butterworths Online*, and as part of LBC's *Complete Legal Research System*. The CD-ROM is updated monthly. The Web version is updated weekly. According to Pink Ribbon's literature, 'technical support is free and unlimited'. Oh, and even the price is good. It is terrific to see a small Australian company (established in 1987 by Debra Fallon and Paul Hannah) battling with the mega-giants of the law publishing world - and coming up trumps!

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