# AGIS Plus Text – Product Evaluation

RMIT Publishing recently announced the release of their full text online product *AGIS Plus Text: full text legal information for Australasian Law Practitioners*. The publishers promote the product as providing 'instantaneous online access to thousands of full text articles from journals focused on issues of particular relevance to the Australasian legal sector. (It) links the Attorney-General's Information Service (AGIS) database to PDF images of the articles indexed in that database.' Various package deals were available at the time of the reviews (November 2001), i.e. combinations of RMIT Publishing products and SilverPlatter databases. More information is available at www.informit.com.au.

A trial of AGIS Plus Text was arranged with RMIT by the *Australian Law Librarian* Advertising Manager. Law Librarians representing different types of law libraries (court, university, government and corporate sector) were invited to review the product. Their reviews are presented below.

## *COURT LIBRARY*

**Alice Anderson & Tricia Heggie**

Supreme Court Law Library, Perth

Unfortunately time did not allow for a more comprehensive testing but we hope the following observations will be of some assistance.

The product was evaluated using the following criteria:

1. User needs
2. Cost
3. Key features
4. Bonus features
5. Help/instruction

## User needs

The two prime needs of our users are:

- speed in finding and accessing the full text article, and

- the clarity and quality of the printed document.

In both these aspects AGIS Plus Text is less than ideal. Users have become accustomed to web-based searching for online products. WebSPIRS still has the CD look-and-feel. Suggested improvements are:

- possibly some more 'back' button options would speed up searching, especially when one follows a link to 'author' or 'source',

- position the 'full text' icon next to 'source' rather than at the end of citation, and

- a direct link from 'full record display' to 'full text display'.

## Cost

Unable to make a cost evaluation as no indication of price is given.

## Key features

Availability of full text is the obvious feature

However the PDF documents are slow to download and are of very poor quality.

## Bonus features

The email option for document delivery is a good feature. A suggested improvement is to include a table of contents when viewing all the articles in a particular volume of a journal.

## Help Information

Online help prompts are good and the drop-down on database information is informative. The examples given on Boolean searching are helpful for the novice. As many users are already familiar with AGIS on AUSTROM, they will learn their way around this product in a short time. Training should not be a major issue.

## Summary

The content and coverage of the full text feature seems good and no doubt will improve as more copyright agreements are obtained. We think user expectations are not quite being met in regard to using this technology for online searching – there is much room for improvement, however it could be cost-related.

This is a worthwhile product but, as far as the usage in this library is concerned, the main stumbling block is the quality of the PDF document once printed. Our users require a clean copy admissible in court

At this stage we could not consider replacing hardcopy subscriptions with this electronic alternative.

## *LAW FIRM LIBRARY*

**Lorna Mathie**

Freehills, Perth

AGIS Plus Text is a fantastic step forward for Australian law libraries. As more of us face space reductions in our libraries we are looking for services that can easily provide quick and straightforward document delivery. The expectations of our customers are also developing at a rapid rate, and we need to be able to access more of these one-stop shop services.

Although not all journal articles are yet available in full-text, about 120 titles are indexed for full text delivery. Titles include some core legal journals as well as titles that few libraries are in a position to subscribe to but that our users would like to be able to access. AGIS Plus Text also includes a handy list of the journal titles that are available in full text including the volumes and dates covered.

Navigation is fairly intuitive and there are simple help options available throughout the site. There are useful printing and downloading options to aid delivery to our users.

The use of Adobe Acrobat to view the PDF images of the article is widely available and becoming a standard tool in most organisations. One limitation of the scanned files is that keyword searching of the text of the articles is not available as the PDF files are not full text indexed. That is, the 'find' option on the Adobe Acrobat toolbar will not find words appearing in the article you are

displaying in full text. This, however, is a minor issue in light of the other benefits of the service.

Congratulations to the Lionel Murphy Library and to RMIT for negotiating the minefield of issues associated with providing such a service.

(However) the price we heard a few months ago seems to price many of us out of the market – maybe some negotiation needs to take place about a 'pay as you use' option if the flat fee is not going to come down!

## UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

**William Hamilton**

University of Western Australia

### Coverage

Full text coverage: 5,151 records (1999 – present)

Index coverage: 95,300+ records (1975 – present)

Full text journals indexed: 120 (65 are comprehensively indexed)

### Key features

The fact that the full text coverage begins in 1999 limits its usefulness. The publisher, the Attorney-General's Information Service has no plans for retrospective scanning of titles. RMIT commented that AGIS was just coping with the existing scanning of material. There is some duplication between APAIS Full Text and AGIS Plus Text. Half (60) of the titles in AGIS are included in APAIS Full Text and coverage of these commences in 1994–6 for APAIS.

AGIS has approximately 410 titles indexed, 140 of them comprehensively. Currently they have copyright clearance for 155 titles, 79 of them comprehensively indexed. 120 of the 155 titles are currently linked with the remainder in process. The publisher aims to increase this to a best effort of about 100 of the comprehensively indexed titles available in full text.

Given the need to maintain print subscriptions the small amount of full text material has limited appeal.

The WebSPIRS search interface and help facility is good, though currently it does not handle SDI requests.

*Cost*

Combined APAIS and AGIS Full Text = $24,000

## GOVERNMENT LIBRARY

**Linda McNamara**

Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, Perth Office

AGIS Plus Text is based on the Attorney-General's Information Service (AGIS), a journal indexing and abstracting service containing over 96,000 records from over 400 journals. The stated aims of AGIS Plus Text are to provide the full text of the journal articles indexed in the database, and to that end 125 journals[1] have been copyright cleared via the Copyright Agency Limited (as at 26 November 2001).

AGIS Plus Text is provided by RMIT Publishing on the Informit Online website (www.informit.com.au), and uses the WebSPIRS software from Silverplatter.

The following is a brief review based on a short trial of the database. In the absence of the costs of the service, no judgement of the value of the service versus hard copy subscriptions has been made.

The initial search screen provides a simple search box, buttons for the most used functions, and a short search tips section to get the new searcher started (see figure 1). In addition, the Informit website provides links to supporting documentation. The *AGIS Plus Text Step by Step Guide* was simple and easy to use. Help text is available via the 'Help' button on the right hand side toolbar (see figure 1).

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[1] According to the Introduction to AGIS Plus Text, 120 journals are indexed in full text (65 are comprehensively indexed)
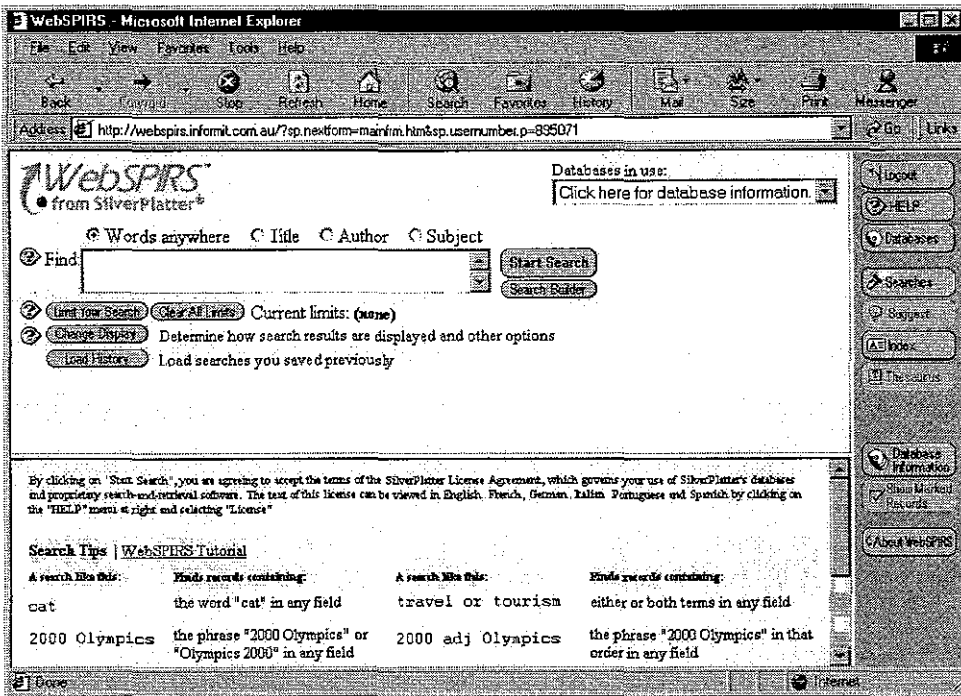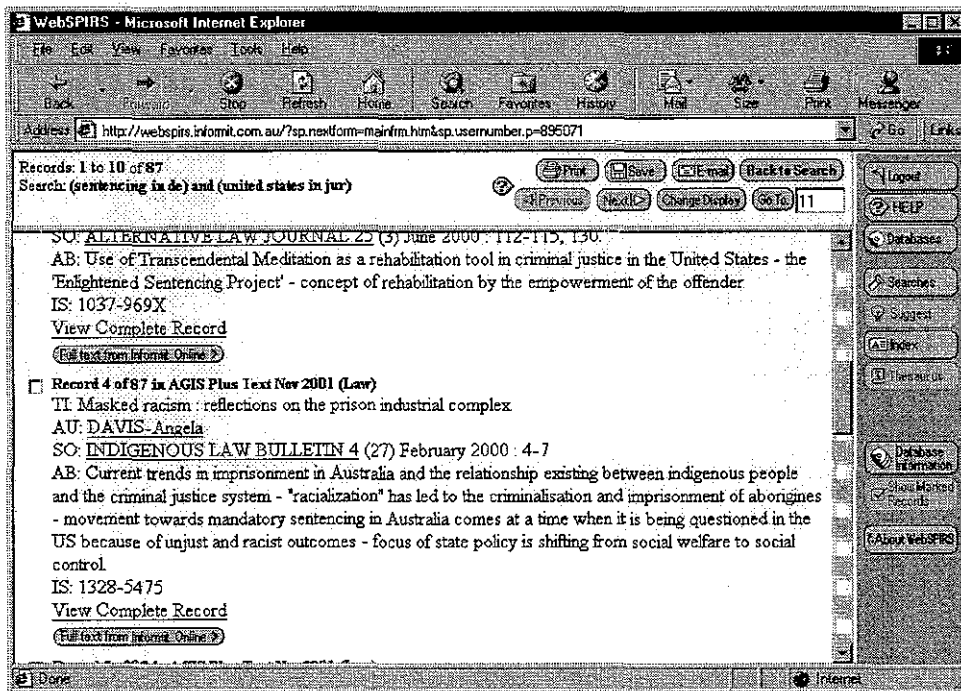
Figure 1

Figure 2

Following a search, the search results are clearly displayed ($10^2$ at a time on each screen). Records can be displayed in full, can be tagged for printing, emailing or saving, and if a full text version of the article is available, the 'Full Text from Informit Online' button is displayed at the end of the record (see figure 2).

The 'searches' button not only provides access to the search screen (as per figure 1), but also displays the searches conducted during the session, allowing quick and simple access to earlier searches (see figure 3). The 'index' button provides access to the AGIS thesaurus for more accurate searches – particularly descriptors and authors.
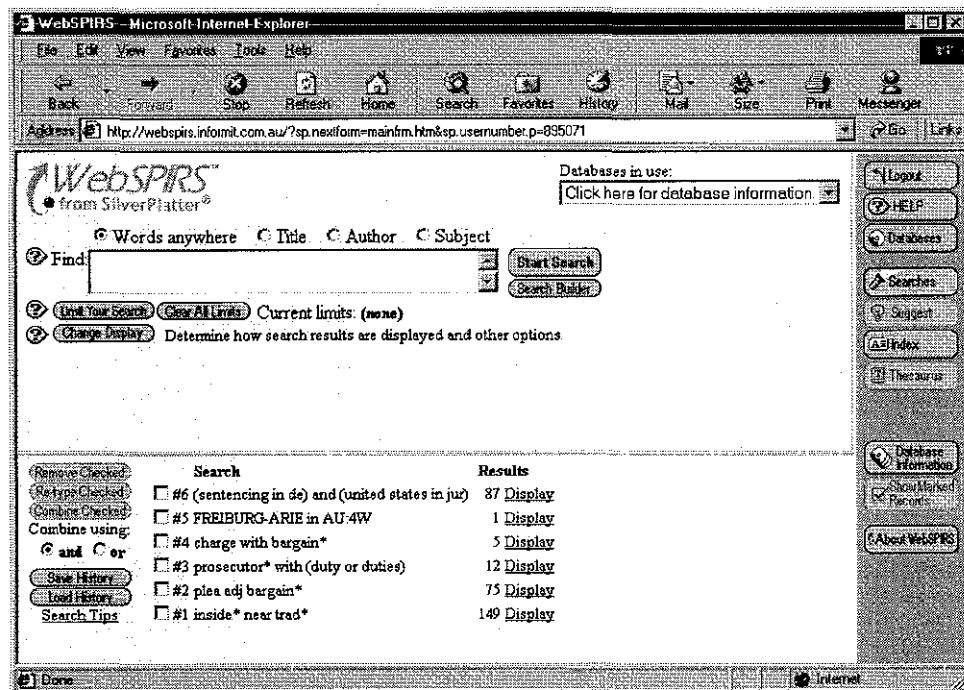


Figure 3

Although I was aware of the proportion of full text journals available (as noted above), I was slightly disappointed with the small number of full text articles retrieved within my search results. Some notable omissions were the *Criminal Law Journal*, *Law Institute Journal*, *Australian Law Journal*, *Journal of Criminal Law*, *Company & Securities Law Journal*, and some of the university law reviews

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[2] Although this number can be changed.

In addition, full text articles are generally only available for issues from 1999 onwards. A list of the full text journals indexed (with the start dates for each) is available via the 'database information' button on the right hand side toolbar (see figure 3) and also via the database information links on the main website[3]. As more journals receive copyright clearance, the usefulness of the service will obviously increase.

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[3] http://www.informit.com.au/ftjournals.asp?id=AGISPT

*AGIS Plus Text*