

Find it Free and Fast on the Net: Strategies for Legal Research on the Web



All rights reserved. These materials may not be reproduced without written permission from NBI, Inc. To order additional copies or for general information please contact our Customer Service Department at (800) 930-6182 or online at www.NBI-sems.com.

For information on how to become a faculty member for one of our seminars, contact the Planning Department at the address below, by calling **(800) 777-8707**, or emailing us at speakerinfo@nbi-sems.com.

This publication is designed to provide general information prepared by professionals in regard to subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional service. Although prepared by professionals, this publication should not be utilized as a substitute for professional service in specific situations. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a professional should be sought.

Copyright 2015
NBI, Inc.
PO Box 3067
Eau Claire, WI 54702

69747

Find it Free and Fast on the Net: Strategies for Legal Research on the Web

Authors

Aaron M. Cook
Aaron M. Cook Attorney
5757 Decatur Blvd Ste 270
Indianapolis, IN

Sara Anne Hook
Indiana University School of Informatics and Computing, IUPUI
535 W. Michigan Street, IT 589
Indianapolis, IN

Gregory W. Pottorff
Ice Miller LLP
One American Square, Suite 2900
Indianapolis, IN

Jonathan A. Watson
Anderson Agostino & Keller
131 South Taylor Street
South Bend, IN

Table Of Contents

How to Search Like a Pro	1
Finding Free Legal Research Sites and Free Case Law	25
The Invisible Web: Discovering Hidden Value	47
Government Internet Resources – Federal, State, and Local	53
Investigative Research: Public Records and “Publicly Available” Information	59
Locating Persons and Finding Background Information	73
Legal Ethics Online and in Social Media	81

I. HOW TO SEARCH LIKE A PRO

A. What is the Difference between a Search Engine and a Directory?

According to Yahoo! Help,

A **search engine**, such as Yahoo or Google, is an online tool that helps users of the Internet find the sites and information they're looking for. Most search engines use automated programs (sometimes called spiders) to look for relevant information based on keywords entered by the user.

A **search directory**, such as Yahoo Directory, is a catalog of websites organized by category to allow users to easily browse for the information they need. Unlike search engines, which locate and display relevant information based on a formula or algorithm using an automated software program, search directories are organized by real people who discover new sites and relevant information by exploring the Internet themselves and by reviewing submitted sites.

Both search engines and directories can help drive customers to your website. Neither guarantees that your site will be included in their listings.

(<https://help.yahoo.com/kb/yahoo-small-business/SLN18266.html?impressions=true>, accessed 10/02/15)

Additional clarification is provided by DirectoryOne.com,

Search engines and the directories are two different services available to the Web community. However, many people do not know the difference between them. Search engines have databases built up by "robots", which visit a websites and add information to their database. On the other hand, directories are human edited and build their indexes with editors who visit websites, and add to the directory the sites that they consider to be a valuable resource.

Some search engines and directories include both types of indexes, and are known as "hybrids". Some examples of search engines are Google, Gigablast, and Alltheweb. These search engines use programs (known as robots), with the following functions:

1. To find web pages.
2. To scan the contents of a web page.
3. Return its findings to the search engine's databases.

II. FINDING FREE LEGAL RESEARCH SITES AND FREE CASE LAW

A. Finding the Shortcuts to Legal Research: Free Legal Portals and Meta-Sites

According to Roper, “searching the Internet and finding the exact information you are looking for is many times not easy due to the breadth and depth of information on the web. By some accounts, there are more than 9,000,000 different web sites and more than 1,000,000,000 web pages on the Internet.” (Roper, B.D. *Using Computers in the Law Office*, 5th ed. Clifton Park, NJ: Delmar Learning, 2008, p. 704). Since this quote was from the 2008 edition of this book, we can only imagine the challenges for finding quality, relevant information have increased significantly, especially with the proliferation of social media and other forms of digital content, such as Twitter, YouTube videos, podcasts, blogs and blawgs, Pinterest, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn, to name but a few.

At that time, Roper noted that “some search engines are better at finding particular kinds of information than others. Which search engine you use should depend on the particular information you are looking for.” (Roper, p. 704, *see also* Matthew S. Cornick, *Using Computers in the Law Office*, 7th ed. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2015, pp. 616-637 for an excellent discussion of how to do research on the Internet.) He classifies search engines as:

- Individual search engines, such as Google
- Specialty search engines, such as FindLaw
- Metasearch engines, such as Metacrawler or Dogpile
- Subject directories, such as Yahoo
- Library gateways, such as the Lilly Law Library at the McKinney School of Law, <http://mckinneylaw.iu.edu/library/research/frequently-used.html>, accessed