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## **What a Decade Has Done: The Changing World of Computer Assisted Legal Research**

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At the inaugural program in the series that has become known as the Bernard E. Witkin Memorial Symposium on Legal Research, the topic was "Internet Legal Research." Tim Stanley discussed his brand new brainchild, "FindLaw," and practicing attorneys described how they integrated the Internet and e-mail into their practices. For the tenth annual Bernard E. Witkin Memorial Symposium, the topic is once again Internet Legal Research.

On May 15, 2007, the Witkin Legal Institute and the Bernard E. Witkin Alameda County Law Library will present "Internet Legal Research Revisited – Exciting New Tools." Patricia R. Monk will explore some of the most recent developments in Internet searching and how these new tools can be useful in law practice.

In the intervening years, the world of what used to be known as Computer Assisted Legal Research (CALR) has changed dramatically. Reliable legal information (and too much that's not so reliable) is being added to the web every day. This article highlights unusual uses for a couple of well know sites as well as some relatively new or unknown sources of useful and authoritative legal information or other information which would be useful to legal practitioners.

Since the State of California Office of Legislative Counsel introduced Leginfo (<http://leginfo.ca.gov>) to the world in January of 1994, it has evolved into an invaluable source of information on California legislation. In addition to the current California codes, this site offers several other interesting features. For instance, it lists legislative floor sessions and standing committee meetings for the day. It also has searchable full text of pending legislation in both the State Senate and the State Assembly, and interested parties can register for e-mail notification of action on specific bills.

The granddaddy of all court information web sites in California is, of course, Courtinfo (<http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov>), the official web site of the Administrative Office of the Courts. By now everyone knows that it has links to many other web sites as well as interactive Judicial Council forms that users can fill out and print in one sitting. However, not everyone may be aware that it contains a searchable database of California reported opinion from 1850 to the present. From the Courtinfo home page, click on "opinions" in the upper left hand corner. Then click on "continue," read and agree to the licensing agreement with LexisNexis, and follow the prompts to the California Official Reports page. Here, users can search by key word (subject) searching as well as searching by exact citation. Powered by LexisNexis which proudly informs users that they are the new publishers of California Official Reports, this site lacks some of the features of the commercial legal databases (such as the official pagination), but it does an efficient job searching the official reports. Clicking on the red "Click here for advanced search" will expand your options to include date restrictions, natural language or terms and connectors, and simple field restrictions. Best of all, no registration or paid subscription is required to access these opinions.

Similarly, no password or paid subscription is required to find opinions of the United States Supreme Court on the court's own web site (<http://www.supremecourtus.gov>). The cases go all the way back to 2 U.S. Reports (2 Dallas) in 1791. Although the site is limited to browsing through the official reports by volume or searching by citation, it is a useful way to check references.

The web site for the lower federal courts (<http://www.uscourts.gov>) also has some very useful features. For instance, some 102 standard federal forms are now available for practitioners to download and print. They are not searchable, but are listed by form number, so users may have to do some scrolling. On the site's home page, click on "library" at the top. On the next screen, the button for forms is the third from the top.

Many other courts have valuable information which may not be widely known outside their boundaries. For instance, the Sacramento County Superior Courts web site ([http://www.saccourt.com/geninfo/legal\\_glossaries/legal\\_glossaries.asp](http://www.saccourt.com/geninfo/legal_glossaries/legal_glossaries.asp)) includes an online glossary of legal terms. In addition to English, definitions are available in Arabic, Armenian, Hmong, Mien, Mong, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

The courts are not the only entities making useful or hard to find information freely available on the web. Organizations are also providing information. For instance, the Federation of Tax Administrators (<http://www.taxadmin.org/fta/link>) has a great web site. Not only can users link instantly to taxing authorities in all fifty states, they can retrieve and download state tax forms. The site also has a number of tables that compare taxes between the states. Users can find out which state collected the most state tax revenue per capita in 2006 (Wyoming) and which state collected the least (South Dakota).

Locally, the site of the Organization of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) (<http://www.abag.org>) has information about the organization, such as minutes, agendas, and grant application deadlines. For most people, the real value of the site is the multitude of links to local government at all levels. Click on "Government" on the left hand side to access these links.

Finally, people are increasingly turning to web logs, or blogs, for information, commentary, virtual community, or just to satisfy their curiosity. The term "blawg" has been coined for web logs with legal content. The University of Akron Law Library has posted a pathfinder to these with links to the individual blawgs (<http://www.uakron.edu/law/library/blawg.php>).

These sites just scratch the surface of the dynamic world of legal information in cyberspace. Legal research expert Patricia R. Monk will demonstrate a myriad of additional finding tools and new databases at the Tenth Annual Bernard E. Witkin Memorial Symposium on Legal Research "Internet Legal Research Revisited – Exciting New Tools."

The lunch meeting will be held on May 15, 2007, at the County of Alameda Conference Center on the fourth floor of the Law Library Building at 125 Twelfth Street in Oakland. The registration fee (\$25.00 in advance, \$35.00 at the door) includes lunch and one hour of MCLE credit. For additional information, check the library's website (<http://www.co.alameda.ca.us/law/index.htm>) or call Susanne Pierce Dyer at (510) 272-6486. Please call Renee James at (510) 272-6483 to register.

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