

The internet and legal research

Jerome Wilson and Suma Barua
Johannesburg Bar

The internet provides a rich and enterprising resource for legal research, but unfortunately remains an enigma to most legal practitioners. The following is a synopsis of some international legal websites according to country, and is by no means an exhaustive list of legal research tools on the world wide web. The sites are, in the main, tools for accessing court judgments of foreign courts. Under the "General" category one can find links to treaties and constitutions of all countries. Most of the links are multi-purpose, that is, they link up to various other legal information databases.

Australia

| Name of site | Webiste address | Details of site | Remarks |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Australian Legal Information Institute | www.austlii.edu.au | Covers cases and legislation for both the Commonwealth and all states & territories. Multiple search engines and databases. Also covers specialist courts e.g. administrative tribunals. Journal articles e.g. <i>Australian Journal of Human Rights</i> . Covers New Zealand and British sites also. Up to date per December 2000. | Rating 5/5 for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • wide coverage (international and domestic) • searchability • journals/treaties and other various links. |
| FarisLaw | www.farislaw.com | Covers cases and legislation for Commonwealth and states & territories. Multiple search engines. Can also search US, Canada, UK, New Zealand through this site. | Rating 4/5 for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessibility • wide coverage (international and domestic) • searchability • the set-up of the site is rather cumbersome but still relatively user-friendly |

United Kingdom

| Name of site | Webiste address | Details of site | Remarks |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| British and Irish Legal Information Institute | www.bailii.org | Cases and legislation. Covers entire United Kingdom and Ireland judicial system i.e. from lower courts to House of Lords. Up to date per December 2000. Multiple search engines and databases. | Rating 4/5 for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessibility • searchability • wide-coverage (domestic). |

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| | | <p>Under “Other Material” can find law journal articles (e.g. Journal of Information Law and Technology) – note: some journals have synopses of articles while others have full text.</p> <p>Also has links to government departments, Parliament, NGOs, and treaties.</p> | |
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Canada

| Name of site | Webiste address | Details of site | Remarks |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Supreme Court of Canada | www.lexum.umontreal.ca/csc-scc/en/index.html | Online version of Supreme Court Reports (SCR). Search engines. | Rating 3/5: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited to Supreme Court of Canada decisions • no cross-references to Dominion Law Reports (DLR) • search engine is rather archaic |

European Union

| Name of site | Webiste address | Details of site | Remarks |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| European Court of Human Rights | www.echr.coe.int | ECHR decisions. Details on how court works and effect of its judgments. Search engine. Press releases. Up to date per January 2001. | Rating 3/5 for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • searchability • accessibility • interface is not very user-friendly but can download cases if have Microsoft Word for Windows version 5. |

United States

| Name of site | Webiste address | Details of site | Remarks |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Federal Judiciary | www.uscourts.gov/links.html | Access to all US courts from district level to the 11 Courts of Appeal. Note: not all courts have cases online nor are all searchable. | Ratings 3/5 for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being user-friendly • good set-up using map • accessibility. |
| FindLaw | lp.findlaw.com | US courts – cases and legislation. US Code and state laws. Extensive coverage of all courts, information required and various categories. Can search US Supreme Court using multiple search engines. | Rating 5/5 for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessibility • searchability • extensive coverage (domestic) • user-friendly. |

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|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | Up to date per January 2001 – has Bush v Gore decision. | |
| Federal Legal Information Through Electronics (FLITE) | www.fedworld.gov/supcourt/ | US Supreme Court decisions. Search engines by case name or keyword. User-friendly. | Rating 4/5 for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • searchability • accessibility • but limited to US high court. |
| America's Law Links | resource.lawlinks.com/Content/Legal_Research/Court_Decisions/state_court.htm | Court decisions according to state. Search engines. | Rating 3/5 for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • searchability • accessibility • but require PDF format to download some of the cases. |

General

| Name of site | Webiste address | Details of site | Remarks |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Treaties and International Law | www.priweb.com/internetlawlib/89.htm | Comprehensive coverage of international treaties sorted alphabetically. | Rating 4/5 for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extensive coverage • accessibility • no search engine. |
| FindLaw | www.findlaw.com | Constitutions of all countries. Multiple search engines and databases. | Rating 3/5 for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessibility • coverage. |



Appointment of the Ombudsman for the Short-term Insurance Industry

The Short-term Insurance Industry would like to appoint a suitably qualified person as ombudsman, as the position will become vacant shortly. The position calls for an experienced lawyer (attorney or advocate) of no less than 15 years standing, or a former judge, provided further that such person shall have at least seven years involvement within the insurance industry.

The suitable candidate will have excellent communication skills, both written and verbal. Mediation skills will be beneficial. The successful candidate will be the chief executive of the office and will report to a Council independent of the industry.

Please forward a detailed curriculum vitae to jodinel@sainsurance.co.za or fax (011) 403 – 2274.