

Technology

Where Do You Go Online for Your Information?

BY DANIEL J. SIEGEL

The Internet is amazing. With literally the click of a mouse button, you can have a virtually unlimited variety of information at your fingertips.

I, for one, have no idea how the Internet works, nor do I care; I'm just glad it does. For lawyers, the Internet is one of the least expensive and most important tools every office must have.

Not only does the Internet provide virtually instant communication and save postage costs by using e-mail, it is your gateway to an almost endless amount of information. This article will start you on a journey to a few of the many free sites that will make you more productive.

RAPID ACCESS

High-speed Internet access—not a dial-up connection—should be a standard part of your office's "equipment." The distinction between high-speed and dial-up connections is very important. Dial-up connections are slow, inefficient and frustrating to the user. On the other hand, high-speed Internet access (such as cable, DSL or a T-1 connection) permits the user to rapidly find, access and transfer information. High-speed

connections cost a little more, but the difference is like choosing between a diamond and cubic zirconium.

Have you ever needed a phone number or an address? Don't dial 411 and pay for a computerized voice to give you the information. Instead, go to www.switchboard.com, www.infousa.com or www.anywho.com. If you have a phone

number, but want to know to whom it is registered, go to www.switchboard.com/bin/cgirlookup.dll, and find out.

Or, have you ever discovered that you don't have the Rules of Procedure for every county in Pennsylvania? You could call and order the books, wait a week for them, and then pay the bill. On the other hand, you could simply click on www.megalaw.com/rules.php, a Web page that links you to many state and federal rules sites. For Pennsylvania rules, go to www.megalaw.com/pa/parules.php to find the Rules of Procedure for most counties, including some you have probably never heard of.

LAWYER SEARCH

These pages are just one part of www.megalaw.com, a massive Web site



containing everything from statutes to rules to forms, and almost anything else in between. West Publications has a similar site, www.findlaw.com, which also houses a vast amount of information, without charge. You can find a lawyer there, or go to www.martindale.com for Martindale-Hubbell's Web site, including each lawyer's rating. There is also West's Law Directory at <http://lawyers.findlaw.com>.

One of the most well-organized search engine for lawyers, which is often overlooked, is Jenkins Law Library's site, found at www.jenkinslaw.org. From there, navigate to "Legal Research Links" at www.jenkinslaw.org/collection/legal/index.shtml or "Nonlegal Research Links" at www.jenkinslaw.org/collection/nonlegal/index.shtml. From these pages, you can locate mega-information—fast and free.

COURT RESOURCES

Yet that is only the beginning. Philadelphia lawyers have more information at the computer screen than most of us realize. For unofficial dockets, you don't have to go to City Hall, just go to <http://fdwebserver.phila.gov> and you will know the status of your motion before your opponent does. The Philadelphia Common Pleas Court Web site, <http://courts.phila.gov>, also links you to a wide range of forms and information, including Philadelphia's local rules. Also, consider a visit to the official Pennsylvania court Web site, www.aopc.org, for links to a variety of useful information. You can also go directly to www.aopc.org/index/opinions/indexopinions.asp and obtain the latest slip opinions from the Pennsylvania Supreme, Superior and Commonwealth Courts, or search the opinion Web site to find a case, all for free. To link to federal courts, you can go to www.uscourts.gov.

FILING HELP

The Internet is also helpful before filing your lawsuit. It used to be difficult to get corporate information, but not anymore. Just go to <http://corps.state.pa.us/corps.htm> and you are able to search the entire database of the Pennsylvania Corporation Bureau. You could also visit www.iprocessservers.com/sos.html and link to the Web sites of the Secretaries of State for each of the fifty states. If you need to know if someone has died, just go to the Social Security Death Index (SSDI) at <http://ssdi.genealogy.rootsweb.com>, and search by name for death records related to almost everyone who was issued

a Social Security number and died. As of February 13, 2003, the SSDI contained a staggering 69,514,324 records. After you file your lawsuit, go to www.serve-em.com, and click on the "Rules" tab to link to rules for service of process in every state.

By visiting Web sites, you can also get more out of your bar association memberships. Most bar association Web sites are far more than computerized advertisements. The Philadelphia Bar Association Web site, www.philadelphiabar.org, for example, contains selections from *The Philadelphia Lawyer*, a searchable database of ethics opinions, the Association calendar and more. Other bar associations also offer varying Internet-based benefits, some to their membership, and others to the general public.

TECH TIPS

Another important use for the Internet is trying to figure out how the software on your computer works, or how to "fix" it when it doesn't. You can, of course, go to the software or hardware manufacturer's Web sites, such as www.microsoft.com or www.dell.com, but they probably cannot help fix your "broken" Windows. For that, try www.annoyances.org, one of the most comprehensive collections of information about Windows on the Internet. Finally, the majority of law offices use Microsoft Word, yet most of those same offices use the program for a fraction of its capabilities. Microsoft has created the superb, and free, "Microsoft Word Legal User's Guide," located at <http://officeupdate.microsoft.com/legal>. This is one guide every law firm using Word should have.

And unlike the computer repairperson, all of the Web sites listed in this article are free. And once you pay for your Internet access, you do not have to pay by the hour, or the minute.

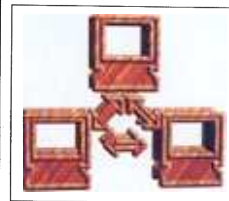
One of the great misapprehensions about the Internet is that it is hard to navigate. It is actually very easy. The difficult part is knowing where to look and what you can find. But one thing is certain: once you begin using the Internet, you will realize just how valuable it is, and how hard it is to imagine practicing law without it. ■

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Tech BRIEFS

IP Tech E-Newsletter

Designed for corporate counsel and intellectual property lawyers, "IP Memes," a new e-mail newsletter, has been launched by TechnoLawyer. The weekly update focuses on technology-related intellectual property

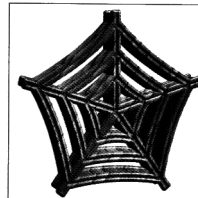


"memes," IP issues that have just begun to surface and have not yet made their way into court opinions or statutes. Written by three intellectual property

lawyers, each edition consists of ten brief synopses of IP memes, each of which is accompanied by a link to a detailed article. Best of all, the IP Memes newsletter is free. Those wishing to subscribe may do so by visiting the TechnoLawyer home page at www.technolawyer.com.

Case Snapshots on the Web

There's a revolution happening in the law library. With new technologies, legal professionals are accessing the information they need easier and in more formats than ever before. One of the latest developments is

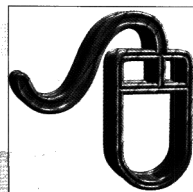


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exactly as it appears in the National Reporter System bound volumes. Rather than taking the books to the copy center, lawyers can now print out cases right from their desks. The PDF images, for cases dating back to 1980, are particularly helpful to trial attorneys in jurisdictions where judges do not accept online printouts of cases.

Tracking Daubert

MDEX Online, Inc. has launched the Daubert Tracker on its Web site. It includes the most comprehensive body of information regarding the landmark 1993 Supreme Court ruling, *Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals*. This new service allows attorneys and forensic professionals easy access to the latest court decisions and developments pertaining to the *Daubert* case and its progeny, *Kumho Tire v. Carmichael* and *GE v.*



Joiner. Legal professionals can use the Daubert Tracker either through an annual subscription or on a session basis. Visit www.mdexonline.com for more information.

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