



Foreword

ROBERT J. AMBROGI

“Imagine instant access to virtually unlimited sources of legal information. Imagine receiving court decisions within hours of their release. Imagine consulting experts in any legal field, anywhere in the world, and having their answer within minutes. Imagine having statutes, bills and government documents at your fingertips. Imagine huge files of legal forms and pleadings at your disposal.

“Now imagine that this is all free and available to you right in your office, no matter how small or remote. No travel to distant libraries. No expensive search fees.”

It seems laughable now, but when I wrote those words in 1995, in an article introducing lawyers to the Internet, the legal research landscape I described was a pipe dream. Then, much of the Internet still consisted solely of text. Navigating it required knowledge of archaic and confusing commands and interfaces with names such as Gopher and Telnet.

Hyperlinked navigation of the Internet—what came to be called the World Wide Web—was invented in 1991 and only began to find broader use in 1993 with the development of the first two viable web browsers. Notably, one of those browsers, Cello, was developed specifically with lawyers in mind by the Legal Information Institute at Cornell Law School.

Back then, neither Westlaw nor LexisNexis were accessible through the Internet. Researchers could access them only through a dial-up terminal. Only a handful of courts had begun to publish their opinions on the Internet, and only newly released ones—there were no extensive archives to search. The vast majority of legal research

was still done as it long had been, by trudging to the law library and poring over hard-copy books.

Fast forward almost three decades and that pipe dream is a reality, and then some. Every federal and state appellate opinion can be found online at no cost. Federal and state statutes are online, as are growing bodies of other primary legal materials, from federal regulations to municipal ordinances. Traditional law reviews now publish online while legal blogs are creating new forms of legal commentary and analysis. Search technology has become so sophisticated that we forget how difficult a search used to be. All of this is available to us wherever we are, in the office or on a mobile device sitting outside a courtroom.

This glut of legal research materials on the Internet is a good thing, of course. But it is also a mixed bag. Paid research services compete with free ones. Established publishers go against start-ups. So many resources are available that some of the most useful ones can be lost in the crowd. Even professional legal researchers have a hard time keeping score.

I will confess that I am a cheapskate. Way back when, when I started using the Internet, I was hoping to save a buck. I had just started my own practice. I did not want to pay the high cost of a Westlaw or LexisNexis subscription or invest in a library of hard-bound reporters. I went on the Internet to see what free resources I could find there.

All these years later, I am as budget-conscious as ever. *Internet Legal Research on a Budget* is written for any lawyer or legal researcher who is similarly budget-conscious—and I am willing to bet that most of us are. Carole Levitt and Judy Davis have scoped out the terrain. They have tested and evaluated a host of free and low-cost legal research sites and identified the best. Not only do they show you the sites, they provide detailed instructions on how to use them.

Much as I imagined twenty-five years ago, the Internet today offers legal professionals seemingly unlimited sources of legal information—much of it free. But that abundance can be daunting. Think of *Internet Legal Research on a Budget* as a road-map to the best of what is out there. It will guide you to what you need, and save you a buck along the way.

ROBERT J. AMBROGI, PUBLISHER AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF LEXBLOG
.COM, ATTORNEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE MASSACHUSETTS
NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION, AND AUTHOR OF "THE ESSEN-
TIAL GUIDE TO THE BEST (AND WORST) LEGAL SITES ON THE WEB."
WWW.LAWSITESBLOG.COM
@BOBAMBROGI