

From Damian Marinello, Wink & Mackenzie, one of Harper Macleod's member firms

Wink & Mackenzie (www.wink.co.uk) has been established for over 100 years. We are a traditional small semi-rural practice with a good client base. We do our best to harness new technology and in common with a lot of similar practices operate more of a general chamber practice than concentrating on any one area of specialisation.

The Connect2Law scheme works extremely well. The phrase "almost too good to be true" springs to mind! As a small practice of (at present) three solicitors, matters often arise on which we would welcome a second opinion or some specialised expertise and we find the phone contact with Harper Macleod invaluable. This is probably the service we utilise the most.

In terms of referrals we have no hesitation in referring clients on to Harper Macleod when it relates to matters which we are simply unable to deal with properly due to a lack of expertise on our part in that specific area. We believe Harper Macleod are a top quality firm and it does our business no harm to be associated with it.

We have had very good feedback from the clients referred in this way and are not aware of any client not wishing to "come back" to us afterwards. The fact that Harper Macleod are geographically some distance from our own office initially offered us an element of security in that we felt clients were less likely to stick with them and not return to us but quite frankly we now realise that the scheme complements our own services and we see it as an extension of our own business ... another department to which we can refer our clients in confidence. The fee sharing element is very much secondary from our point of view.

From a selfish point of view I'm not sure I'd like the scheme to be available to other local firms because we see this as an arrangement that gives us an edge over our local competitors.

From Colin Bell, Robert, Wilson & Son, one of Harper Macleod's member firms

We are a small firm (www.robertwilsonandson.co.uk) and we particularly welcome the backup which our "hub" firm, Harper Macleod, provides. If a client needs advice on some more unusual legal topic, we can, with this backup, be confident that we are providing a really good service to the client. If I am on holiday, my trained staff can also go to Harper Macleod for advice. It is a win-win situation really.

We also benefit from the seminars and CPD provided and participation in the purchasing arrangements.

There are other firms in the UK providing a similar referral and support service in particular areas, such as personal injury and employment law, but as far as I know, the scheme set up by Pannone is the only one providing support and assistance across all work areas.

Out now – new CPD courses from Nick and Delia
Legal Web Resources 2011, Legal Web Issues 2011 and Making the Most of the Legal Web 2011.
Full details at www.infolaw.co.uk/cpd

The new JustCite citator

By Alistair King

JustCite (www.justcite.com), the multijurisdictional citator from Justis, has been rebuilt from the ground up, with the new version released in December 2010. More recently it has been enhanced to incorporate details of barristers in England and Wales, cross-linked to their cases. But perhaps the biggest shift is that now the first page of JustCite results is available without sign in, so that non-subscribers can benefit from JustCite's search results.

Background

10 years ago, the Justis full-text online legal library included pictorial representations of the relationships between cases but these were confined to reports in the same series. So the following year the JustCite citator was launched to bridge the gap between series in a separate online service of its own. Indexing a wide variety of case law and legislation, it joined the more established citators on the market in offering a time-saving solution to the problem of establishing the current status of the law.

A year later, JustCite started to provide links to third-party resources. So for each citation, a dropdown menu would offer a choice of hyperlinks to full-text documents taking users directly into services they subscribe to such as Justis, Lawtel, LexisNexis and Westlaw, or to free resources like BAILII and legislation.gov.uk.

Relevance ranking

JustCite's re-engineered algorithms consider the relationship cases have with each other and their relative importance. So when you search for a phrase, case name, citation or any other query, your results are ranked as if selected by legal experts for true relevance, not by a machine arranging them by keyword frequency. Indeed, the legally qualified team of JustCite editors plays a part in selecting the most important material to cross-reference within case and legislation records.

Testing this is the best way to understand it. Until the public switchover on www.justcite.com has been made later this year, visit <http://new.justcite.com>. Once there, you can test the efficacy of JustCite's search with subject terms relevant to your practice area. A good example is of "duty of care", which ranks *Donoghue v Stevenson* at the top, given the number of positive subsequent citations it has enjoyed; lesser citators would return more arbitrary cases that happen to contain more occurrences of those keywords in their meta-data.

Note that the free JustCite service extends only to the first page of results; all views deeper within are restricted to subscribers. More on this can be found at www.justcite.com/freevspaid.

Profile cards

The results pages now comprise "profile cards", which contain snapshots of information, such as a case name, its citation and the number of reported positive,

negative and neutral treatments. Fine-tuned by the editorial team, these help determine the validity and importance of the item in question, and – along with the algorithms – where it is ranked in the results pages.

If you don't find what you want, you can easily refine your search. Then, once you've identified a document that demands further attention, subscribers can click through to it.

As with the old JustCite, the citator's case records include case names, parallel citations, cases judicially considered, subsequent cases and lists of journal articles that discuss them. Crucially, each record shows how each case was cited — with links to change the focus to that case — and whether its precedent is still "good law". Legislation records include amendment trails and lists of cases that interpret the legislation.

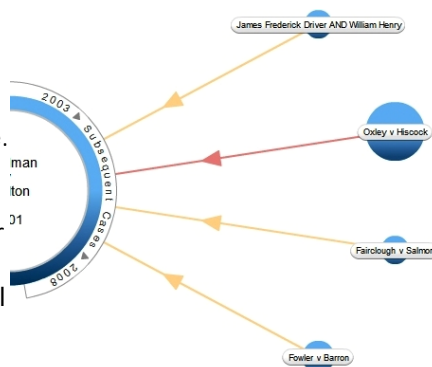
The new layout is designed for maximum clarity, providing a more detailed snapshot and separating the screen into digestible sections and click-throughs.

The JustCite Precedent Map

Following the launch of the new service, with the emphasis on visual clarity, work started on exploiting the hard-coded relationships that were established to drive the search engine. The result is a new visualisation tool, the JustCite Precedent Map.

The Precedent Map seeks to mirror and expedite a user's thought processes when searching for material on a citator. To do so, it produces a diagram comprising the case in question in the middle of the screen, orbited by nodes of varying sizes of cases that it cited or subsequent cases that cited it. The size of node is determined by the number of citations shared with the central case, and a coloured arrow indicates the positive, negative or neutral effect each case had on the other. Within that view, users can hover over other nodes, which auto-generates arrows into that node, enabling a decision on whether clicking through to that case would be fruitful. Hovering over the central case will produce an overlay providing further details about the case, including keywords, legislation cited and related articles.

For a full walk-through of the Precedent Map features, go to www.justcite.com/pmap.



Recent developments

The weekly addition of around 10,000 new case, legislation and article records continues apace, some streamed directly from data partners, much of it editorially vetted. But new arrangements with providers from around the world has seen JustCite index material from new territories in the Caribbean and important new series in longer established territories, such as the UK, Ireland, Australia, Canada and Singapore.

However, perhaps the most innovative content development is the addition of profiles of 11,500 practitioners from the Bar of England and Wales. By linking to their profiles from their representative cases and to their cases from their profiles, solicitors are provided with a short cut not just to other relevant precedent but to the barristers they might want to instruct in similar cases.

The future

The JustCite team is in the process of creating a bank of continually updated meta-data to feed to search engines. This will allow Google and the like access to enough material for its users to — knowingly or otherwise — search JustCite's higher-level content. For citatory purposes, Google's search mechanism is less refined than JustCite's own search engine. But over time, the popular searches on Google should weight significant cases in the way that JustCite's inbuilt systems weigh them. This is an important move for free and easily searchable access to legal data.

Within a quality-controlled environment, more functionality will be incorporated to allow registered barristers to enhance their presence on JustCite over the coming months, a move in its infancy but one that could pave the way for other areas of user-generated content on JustCite.

More about JustCite can be found at www.justcite.com, specifically via the Knowledge Base at www.justcite.com/kb.

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