

LegalTrac : A CD-ROM Version of Legal Resource Index

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Introduction

CD-ROM's (Compact Disc Read Only Memory), which were introduced in 1985 have emerged as one of the important information storage and access media in recent years. According to Julie Schwerin, President of Info-Tech, 'by the end of 1987, 32,500 CD-ROM drives were installed and 260 titles were available—up from 9000 drives and 94 titles in 1986'. Her 1987 report also predicted that titles would almost double to 475 in 1988 and installed drives would grow to 78,750.¹

CD-ROM belongs to optical or laser disk technology which encompasses video, compact and digital optical discs also. The common denominator for these systems is the use of lasers—highly focused light beams—to record and read information densely encoded onto the disks. Used as a storage medium for computer-readable data this technology makes it possible to put up to 600 megabytes of digital information on one four and three-quarter inch disk—the equivalent storage capacity of 60 10-megabyte hard disks, well over 1,500 of the old-fashioned 360 kilobyte floppies, or 275,000

pages of text. In addition to data density, laserdisks have other advantages, including the near elimination of wear and tear on disks and players when using light beams to read data.²

LegalTrac

LegalTrac, which was first introduced in 1985, is one of the databases of Information Systems, produced by Information Access Company (IAC), Foster city, California. This is the C. D. version of microfilm based Legal Resources Index which was sponsored by the American Association of Law Libraries. In addition, The InfoTrac system has the following databases: Academic Index; General periodical Index, (Academic public Editions); Government Publications Index; Magazine Index/Plus; Health Index; National Newspaper Index and The Tom Database, exclusively for secondary schools.

LegalTrac has several strong attributes, especially when compared to the Legal Resource Index ROM version. All contribute

to user satisfaction. First, the ability of the system to print out either a single reference or a full screen on command frees the researcher from the onerous task of copying each reference, as must be done when using the ROM reader. Second, patrons enjoy participating in the new technology. The equipment as a unit is attractive and inviting. The Hewlett-Packard Thinkjet printer is quiet and the amber screen of the monitor is easy on the eyes, in contrast to the ROM reader which is noisy and difficult to read. The net result is that patrons enjoy "searching" on LegalTrac, as opposed to having to crank through the microfilm in the ROM reader.³

Database Contents

LegalTrac is a comprehensive index to legal periodicals with coverage over 800 publications. Sources include all major law reviews and seven legal newspapers (Legal Times, National Law Journal, American Lawyer, etc.); specialty publications (Administrative Law News, Agricultural Law Journal, Business Law Reports, etc.) and bar association journals. Coverage begins with January, 1980. It is updated monthly.⁴

Average addition to the database is 1,200 records per month. As of March 1988 the size of the file is approximately 290,000 records. Special article types covered include case notes, book reviews, columns, letters, obituaries and editorials. Also included are relevant law materials from general and business publications indexed from Trade and Industry Index, National Newspaper Index and Magazine Index. References cover the law and legal professions

of the U.S., Canada, U.K., Australia, and New Zealand.⁵

Organization of Information

The information is arranged under subject headings following the Library of Congress Subject Headings as the main authority. Information Access Company augments those with additional headings for new and topical subjects which are not yet in the Library of Congress system. Any heading IAC creates is always linked to the nearest Library of Congress heading by means of a cross reference.

The subject headings in LegalTrac are organized alphabetically. Therefore, when you search for a topic, headings just before and just after your chosen topic will also appear on the screen, so that you can more easily see where you are in the database.

LegalTrac covers all of the information contained in the Legal Resources Index. The four areas of the Legal Resource Index—subjects, titles and authors, cases, and statutes—are interfiled into one alphabetical listing in LegalTrac.⁶ One can search for information using any one of these as a search topic.

There is no boolean search capabilities and searching is restricted to subjects (i.e., L.C. subject headings, persons, corporations, books, films) and to authors, cases and statutes.⁷

Only alphabetical or numerical characters are recognized; all others are simply ignored. Authors are entered with last name and case names may be entered using the name of either party. It is important to recognize what won't

work here. INFOTRAC will not do free-text searching, so if you type a title, it searches for an LC subject containing those words. Even if a title is in the records, INFOTRAC won't find it (unless it's the subject of a book review). A Boolean connector will be treated as just another word, so it cannot be accurately said that using INFOTRAC is like doing an online search.⁸

How to Search: The first screen (fig. 1) you see is a welcome screen to InfoTrac which is a common screen for all IAC databases. It will ask you to press any key to start.

When you press any key to start, the next screen (fig. 2) will tell what database you are

on. Since each CD is a dedicated one to a particular database, there is no confusion for the user what database he/she is searching on. In any case it will remind you that you are searching the LegalTrac Database. And also it asks you to enter query and then press 'SEARCH/ENTER' key.

In the marked place (see the arrow and window) type your query as in fig. 3. In this example 'law libraries' is the query. Once you type 'law libraries' and press the red colored 'SEARCH/ENTER' key, the computer prompts a message saying, 'searching'. Once it finds any entries it will list all the sub headings under the main subject heading, "law libraries." At this stage you have a choice either by

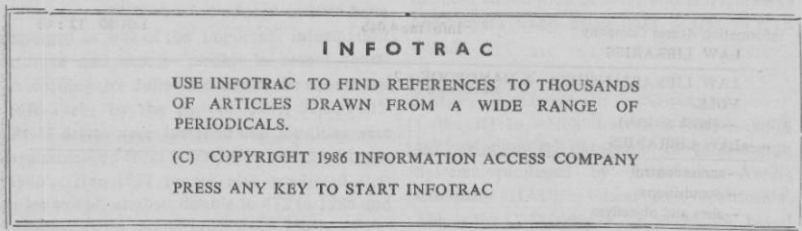


Fig. 1

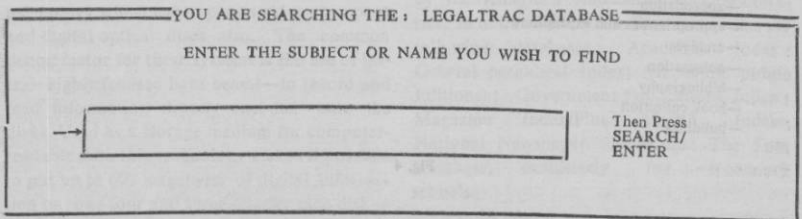


Fig. 2

asking for all the entries under the broad subject heading, 'law libraries' or pointing the cursor to a specific topic you are looking for. Type, "Law Libraries" as your query :

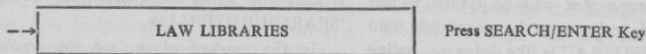


Fig. 3

Once you press the 'SEARCH/ENTER' key the LegalTrac looks for the subject heading 'law libraries' and displays the following screen (fig. 4)

In this example (fig. 5) the arrow is placed against the topic 'acquisitions'. Once you bring the cursor to the topic 'acquisitions' press 'SEARCH/ENTER' key. The computer will respond to you how many entries it has on that topic. In this example it found a total of six citations and displays the first citation. It will appear in a small window on the same

Information Access Company	InfoTrac 4.04b	1/01/80 12 : 46
<hr/>		
LAW LIBRARIES		
<hr/>		
LAW LIBRARIANSHIP : A HANDBOOK ; 2		
VOLS.		
— (book reviews)		
—>LAW LIBRARIES		
<hr/>		
—access control		
—Acquisitions		
—aims and objectives		
—analysis		
—anecdotes, facetias, satire, etc.		
—appreciation		
—appropriations and expenditure		
—archives		
—automation		
—bibliography		
—book collection		
—buildings		

Fig. 4

screen 'subject guide'. One can browse all the citations by using down arrow or next line key. —Press "print ref" key to have a printed copy of the displayed cite as in fig. 6.

If you have more than one citation and would like to see the following, press down arrow. To print the next citation just press F3.

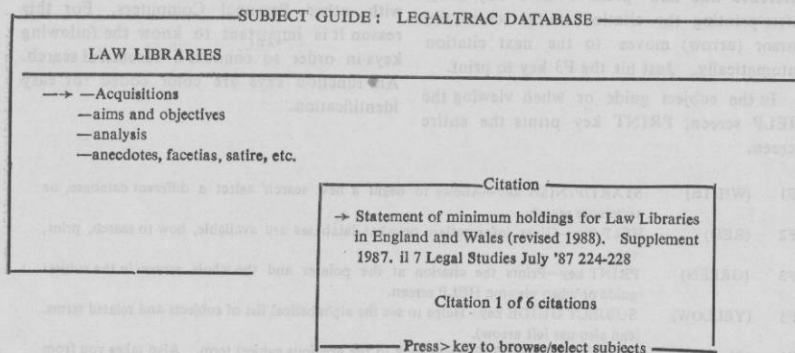


Fig. 5

LAW LIBRARIES

—Acquisitions

Statement of minimum holdings for law libraries in England and Wales (revised 1986)—supplement 1987. il 7 Legal Studies July '87 224-226

Fig. 6

NOTE: You can search by personal name, or by company/product, or by subjects.

Eg. Personal name	Adams, John Quincy Adams Adams, John Adams, J	Subjects	Toyota Toyota Celica Tax Credits Brown V. Allan (used as a subject) Clean Air Act New York City
Company/product	General Motors Corp General Motors		

Printing

Print the article references in the citation window, by positioning the cursor opposite a reference line and press PRINT key (F3). After printing the citation on the screen, the cursor (arrow) moves to the next citation automatically. Just hit the F3 key to print.

In the subject guide or when viewing the HELP screen, PRINT key prints the entire screen.

F1 (WHITE)	START/FINISH key—Allows to begin a new search' select a different database, or terminate search.
F2 (RED)	HELP key—Gives information on what databases are available, how to search, print, etc.
F3 (GREEN)	PRINT key—Prints the citation at the pointer and the whole screen in the subject guide or when viewing HELP screen.
F5 (YELLOW)	SUBJECT GUIDE key - Helps to see the alphabetical list of subjects and related terms. (can also use left arrow).
F6 (BLACK)	BACK TRAC key—Takes you back to the previous subject term. Also takes you from HELP screen to previous place in the program. (can also use right arrow).
F7 (BLUE)	PRIOR LINE—Scrolls the screen back one reference in the database.
F8 (GREY)	PRIOR SCREEN—To view the previous screen of information.
F9 (BLUE)	NEXT LINE—Scrolls the screen forward one reference in the database.
F10 (GREY)	NEXT SCREEN—To view the following screen of information
SEARCH/ENTER (RETURN)	Searches the database for the subject entered ; to see the citation for any heading in the subject guide and to go automatically to SEE or SEE ALSO reference.
PgDn-FAST FWD	—Acts as a tab key. Moves you forward ten percent of the total number of references in the current citation group.
PgUp-FAST REV	—Acts as a tab key. Moves you backward ten percent of the total number of references in the current citation group.
HOME key	Takes you to the first reference of the topic you are searching.
END key	Takes you to the last reference of the topic you are searching.
LEFT ARUOW	Moves you from citation to SUBJECT GUIDE.
RIGHT ARROW	Moves you from SUBJECT GUIDE to citation.

REFERENCES

1. Johnston, Stuart J. and Mark Brownstein. CD ROM Conference Will Show Latest Multimedia Technologies. "Infoworld". March 27, 1989, p. 9

Function/Movement Keys

The role of the function/movement keys on the InfoTrac key board are not compatible with other Personal Computers. For this reason it is important to know the following keys in order to conduct a successful search. All function keys are color coded for easy identification.

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4. Introduction to Infotrac. Instruction manual supplied by Information Access Company along with the equipment.
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 8. Rawnsley, Scott L. Making Tracs: Road-Testing the INFOTRAC and LEGALTRAC Video-Disk Databases. "Legal Reference Services Quarterly". v. 6, n, 3/4 (1986), p. 175