Online Legal Information Systems of India

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Abstract:

Users in our digital age need instant access to information. The legal community wants effective online legal information systems to support the research process. Regarding a case study on the usage of several legal information databases in India, I am offers a perspective from India and reports on the study. With particular reference to the numerous crucial legal databases that cover Indian law, he also evaluates and discusses the various features of legal information retrieval systems in his work.

Keywords: legal databases; information retrieval; India

Introduction

Naturally, the primary goal of legal information retrieval systems is to locate pertinent documents in connection with the user-defined search query. Pre-trial, trial, and appeal are the three stages of a major lawsuit, although the information the litigant seeks at each step is generally of a similar kind. While the trial stage is primarily concerned with facilitating quick retrieval and tracking of numerous documents that have been entered as evidence, the pre-trial stage entails rigorous document discovery. Trial and case law are the main topics of discussion at the appeals stage. Different search approaches, which differ from more traditional search methods, are utilized in the digital age to investigate legal databases.

A review of the literature and some theories on searching legal databases

Yuan (1997)[1] observed a group of law students' LexisNexis quick law searches over the course of a year. Yuan looked at a variety of characteristics of the way they searched, such as how their command and feature repertoires grew, how their language usage changed, how quickly they searched, and how they approached learning. Yuan found that experience did not lead to searchers making fewer mistakes or being more adept at recovering from mistakes. Yuan also discovered that while participants with more fast law expertise utilized a wider array of commands and features than those with less experience, some commands were still used infrequently or never at all.

In a study on academic librarians' opinions of LexisNexis done by Oulanov and Pajarillo in 2003[2], standardized questionnaires were given to eight academic librarians at Queens Borough Community College in New York City.

The questionnaire, which was primarily based on a five-point Likert grading scale, was used to find out how the librarians felt about three aspects of the resource: its "retrieval features,"

"effectiveness," and other usability-related aspects that the authors rather ambiguously group under the heading "user effort perception criterion," despite the fact that they did not include a copy of the questionnaire used.

The authors of Komlodi and Soergel (2002)3 likewise concentrated on the usage and reuse of information, in particular how legal information seekers used their memories and externally recorded search histories to guide subsequent searches.

Like Kuhlthau and Tama (2001) and Blomberg et al. (1996), Komlodi and Soergel discovered that when conducting legal research, students had to refer to both personal research files and computerized legal resources. In order to facilitate the recording, categorization, and annotation of search results, Komlodi and Soergel created a collection of user interface tools based on search histories. These were accomplished by the system monitoring user activities and outcomes and utilizing this enlarged history to promote simpler information reuse and future search employment.

In their study, Marshall et al. (2001)6 found that books continue to be significant and authoritative sources for students conducting legal research. The study revealed the usage of electronic resources for case evaluation and discovered that many users' information-seeking tactics relied on links rather than performing explicit searches. In their study, Marshall et al. noted that students used case law as a "launching pad" or "looking for a thread to pull" when they started their moot court research. The students then continued to utilize citations as a starting point, either as clear references to a precedent if they saw the citation again or as a tool to assess if the cases were still "good law."

Essential Search Methods

A natural language query in legal text searching is one that is written using typical conversational syntax. Natural language inquiries have the advantage of taking less time than conventional Boolean queries.

To learn more about the nature of databases, fuzzy terms can be utilized in the feedback search process.

The fuzzy operator searches the database for words with a query term-like spelling. It can identify misspelled words and instances in which scanned documents were improperly merged during the Optical Character Recognition (OCR) procedure. Fuzzy matching searches the database for terms that have similar spellings.

LEGAL SEARCH STRATEGIES AND RETRIEVAL SYSTEMS

The components of legal text retrieval systems can be categorised in the following way:

a. Text-file Search;

 b. Discarded stop words;

c. Index to search file;

d. Interest retrieval;

e. Fact Retrieval;

f. Coverage of collection;

g. Speed of retrieval;

h. Recall of system;

i. Precision of system;

j. User friendliness.

The six qualities of information retrieval systems, as listed by Cyril Cleverdon in his evaluation of information retrieval,7 are:

Collection Coverage

Legal databases typically include lectures by renowned figures from the legal community together with publications published in journals and case law from various High Courts and Supreme Courts.

Recall

 Recall is the proportion of relevant records that were successfully retrieved to all relevant records in the database.

Precision

Precision is the ratio of records that were successfully retrieved that were relevant to all records that were unsuccessfully retrieved that were relevant.

Fall-out

The phrase "fall-out" describes all the irrelevant "junk" that was uncovered throughout the search. Fallout is 80% if 100 documents are collected and 20 of them are pertinent. As the database gets larger, Fallout becomes more of a problem.

Presentation of results

 In most cases the results that are displayed are formatted as a vertical list of retrieved documents. An item in the displayed list consists of the title of the document and a set of important metadata such as the party name, the advocate, the name of the judge and the date of decision, along with a head note of the case.

Time and effort involved to obtain answers

 The time and effort involved in the process to retrieve the relevant records should be minimal and it should be user-friendly so that users can access the system without any constraints (Kumar et al. 2005).

Authenticity of Text Retrieval

Between interest and fact retrieval, there is a big difference. Fact gathering is primarily used by lawyers for three reasons:

i) To locate dates, either inside the papers themselves or as a component of a document's identification.

ii) Lawyers look up names, cases, document identifications, and legislation citations.

iii) To search for party names, advocate names, judge names, etc.

In fact, the way that documents are retrieved is made to give the same weight to the case's date and its text. If there are no inaccuracies in the content, failures to obtain documents are viewed as valuable information, indicating that the case in issue is not cited.

Computerized Legal Databases

Naturally, electronic databases play a significant role in libraries both in India and worldwide. Law libraries pay for a wide range of electronic services in order to meet the unique and varied demands of their customers. HeinOnline, Westlaw, Manupatra, Grand Jurix, SCC online, A.I.R Online, and Lexis are databases that Indian law libraries subscribe to and frequently utilize. In Indian law libraries, Westlaw, which offers access to more than 4,500 foreign online journals, and Hein Online, which offers access to more than 1,500 journals, are two services that are particularly valuable.

Each of the aforementioned databases offers a variety of tools that many users might utilize to find pertinent case law.

Commercial legal information systems:

A SYNOPSIS SCC Online Case Finder The SCC (Supreme Court Cases) Online Case Finder is a proprietary product of EBC Publishing Pvt. Ltd based in Lucknow, INDIA. It has an installation of two CD-ROMs

(a) Typical Mode

(b) Minimal Mode

The 'Search Results' dialog box contains separate lists of the case-notes found for each database (modes 1 and 2) that is searched. They are alphabetically arranged by the topic/statute headings under which they occurred. For judgments, the sorting order is by the date of the decision of the case and the first few case-note headings are displayed on the screen. Typically, the total number of case-notes found can often exceed the number of case-notes that can be displayed in the visible portion of the list.

All India Reporter (AIR) on CD-ROM

This database offers full text judgments of the Supreme Courts of India and all High Courts. It gives the headnotes, citation search, free text search, search by party name, the name of the

judge and statutes name, and so on. The advanced query also gives complete access to the Folio Views Query Syntax. This syntax helps to focus and refine searches through the use of Boolean operators, wildcards, proximity operators and scope limitations. The Query option gives more information about performing simple searches (Figure 3).

LexisNexis India

LexisNexis is the product division of Reed Elsevier India Pvt. Ltd. It covers all Supreme Court Cases (since inception), updated legal acts and articles from selected legal journals. There are also new editions of commentaries by eminent legal authors. It has a helpful my book shelf facility and, in terms of search opportunities, users can search all the resources from the home page. The way that the results are clustered empowers the user with multifaceted hits for each result. Controlled vocabulary is used in the indexing of the database. The taxonomy refers to the topic level of classification of chapters .

Legal Pundits

In order to provide people and businesses with a variety of legal information services, Legal Pundit International Service Pvt. Ltd. built this legal database. With both a general search and a case law search function, it gives users authority. The Supreme Court, various High Courts, APTEL, AAR, CAT, Company Law Board, DRAT, DRT, CERC, IPAB, ITAT, NCDRC, Privy Council, SCDRC, SEBI (SAT), STT, TDSAT, and Trademark cases are all included in the database, which may be searched by a number of different subject areas9. The general search option, on the other hand, enables the search to be widened to include commentaries and analyses, notifications, forms and procedures, circulars, rules, guidelines, schemes, drafts, bareacts, trade notices, press notes, regulations, and so on.

Chawla Law Finder Chawla Law Finder is an efficient, time saving and an economical case search engine designed and developed by Chawla Publication Pvt. Ltd. The case finder contains five databases;

(a) Recent Criminal Reports

(b) Recent Civil Reports

(c) Service Cases Today

(d) Recent Control Reporter

(e) Dishonour of Cheques Total Cases

Judgments can be searched with the court name, judge name, decision date, petitioner, respondents, advocate name, head-note, and case reference order and result. This case finder gives the user advanced search features such as feedback search, concept searching and fuzzy words.

Grandjurix

Grandjurix is available in CD-ROM format as well as an online product. The electronic version is called e-Jurix, a product of Spectrum Business Support Ltd which was established in

1988. It covers 250,000 full text judgments and covers all Supreme Court, High Court and Tribunal Decisions reported to date. E Jurix provides search facilities by full text, subject, section-act, title, keywords phrases, statutes referred, quorum of judges, name of the court, date of decisions, and equivalent citations. It also includes the full text of judgments of appropriate quasi-judicial bodies, High Courts and the Supreme Court of India, from 1950, as well as basic Information – acts rules and regulations, and notifications & circulars issued by the Law Enforcement agencies. E Jurix has a personalization facility which allows the user to store expertise and save the search terms in the database.

The preferences option in the side bar assists the user to set the search settings; it helps users to search the title, the contents and the annotations. Proximity options extend the facility to search anywhere – i.e. a phrase search, search within a sentence and search within a paragraph and to search with up to 40 words. Acts, rules and notifications can be searched as well as be browsed alphabetically. The advanced search feature makes it more robust. Users can select court name, judge name and year of judgment. The volume number and page can also be searched.

Manupatra

Online Manupatra.com was launched in the year 2001 with a wide variety of content – i.e. commentaries, digest, editorial enhancements, treaties, case laws and more. It empowers its user with legislative and procedural information. It covers Supreme Court Cases from 1950 to date, cases from the high courts, tribunals and commissions. It also contains acts, notifications and circulars, forms, draft agreements, WTO, materials relating to arbitration, cyber laws, intellectual property law, labour and employment law, human rights, environmental law, and media and communication laws. In addition, Manupatra gives access to e-books, electronic articles and has an international aspect to the database too. It has a facility for equalling citations of multiple print journals. Efficient hyperlinks, to referred judgments, assist the legal researcher. Overruled and reversed judgments can also be identified in Manuptra. Each section within the judgments is hyperlinked so that researchers can access the bare acts instantly. Searches can also be achieved with the citation, i.e. volume no, year, page no., etc. More than 1,100 bare acts are regularly added which includes various amendments and repealed acts.

The Operators Used In Legal Text Retrieval:

A REAPPRAISAL Single Character wildcard operator In search retrieval, the single character wildcard, i.e. the question mark, is used to represent a single variable character in a given query; eg. the syntax would be Str??ing for string; Exclu???? will find excluding, exclusive In single character wildcard searching, another option is matching one, or more, characters; employing the optional wildcard which represents one, or more, variable characters.

ege. ColoSr, V$TOL, Electron$$$. The first query will find the terms like color and colour. The second query will search for terms like VTOL, VSTOL. The third query would search for terms like electron, electrons, electronic and electronics.

The asterisk in a query stands for a variable string of one or more characters that must match a character string. An infinite number of adjacent optional character wildcards are equivalent to the string wildcard. examples: m*n, medic. The first search query will look for men, men, mean, moon, and moron, while the second will look for media, medical, medicine, medicate,

medically, and medication! the operator for fuzzy searches The fuzzy search operator is used to find records that have terms in them that have similar spellings to a given query term. The positioning of the operator within the word determines how precisely that portion of a query term will be matched.

The character string Rajn h, Corr o that comes before the operator will be anchored. The first query will return records containing Rajnish or other possible spellings of Rajneesh, and the second query will return records containing corrode or other words with similar spellings, such as corrosive and corrosion. Operator of Concept The concept search operator finds results based on concepts, therefore numerous results will be returned even though the original search term was not used.

Operator nearby This operator looks for word pairings where the second term appears one or more words before or after the first in the given word count. It is a cross-boundary bidirectional proximity operator, thus you cannot use it to search for a word pair where the words are located at different locations within a record.

It is clear that the Chawla Law Finder database uses this search operator. Operator Boolean To specify the link between a party name, judge name, case number, court name, keywords or group, the widely used And, Or, and Not operators are frequently utilized. These operations enable the searching of combinations of components.

Proximity operator This operator is used to search for word pairs in which the second term of the pair occurs within a specified number of words after the first. This operators does not work across field boundaries and it cannot be used to search for word pairs in which the word occupys separate fields within the record. Proximity operators can be further classified as the (a) Order Proximity search and (b) Unordered Proximity search. Order Proximity is used to specify which term must appear within a given range to count as a hit. This is used with a forward slash. Terms in an ordered proximity search must be enclosed in quotes. As a side note, a phrase search is, basically, an ordered proximity search with a proximity equal to the number of terms in the phrase. e.g. "Court constitution"/5. This means find records which contains 'court' and 'constitution' in that order, within a 5 words range. While unordered proximity is to specify a set of terms which must appear within a given range in any order. The unordered proximity operator is the @ symbol.

Terms in an unordered proximity search word must be enclosed in quotes. Adjacency Operator This operator is equivalent to the proximity operator with a defined range of one word. Certain punctuation – hyphens, apostrophes, commas and periods- function as adjacency operators when they appear in the middle of character string. This operator does not work across field boundaries and this is unidirectional from left to right. Same/n operator This operator is a search query term that is within n paragraphs of another query term. A law finder will automatically search for documents in which query terms on either side of the same operator appear in the same paragraph.

The same operator is bidirectional, eg. poison same/3 Chandigarh. Not same operator The Not same operator searches for query terms that do not appear in the same paragraph as the second query term. In addition this operator is unidirectional, eg. poison not same dowry. The query will retrieve documents in which poison does not fall in the same paragraphs as dowry. At least

/in operator This operator is used to search records that contain occurrences of the query expression that immediately follows the at least operator. Eg. at least /10 soldiers will search at least 10 occurrences of the word, soldiers. Exact Match The exact match search for an individual query uses a sign to force a search for the exact word only. Eg. "India". This query will search only India and not Indian or Indiana. Exact phrase operator The exact phrase operator − the single quotation mark − combines characteristics of the adjacency and exact match operators; with this operator we can search exact matches of a phrase such as; "code of criminal procedure,.

Equivalence operator This operator is used to search records containing the specified alphanumeric value in the specified field (or series of fields specified by commas), eg.; Judge = Gaur and Gaur = Judge; both options search for judgments containing Gaur in the Judge field. Range Operator With this operator, we can search for records in which a specified field contains the specified value. The syntax of this operator is an angle bracket greater (>) than and less than equal (=, <=). Example: Decision date <= 1990, Mahesh < Petitioner < Ramesh. In the previous instance, the first query will return records where the decision date field contains a value of 1990 or below. The second will return the record whose name field contains characters arranged in alphabetical order from Mahesh to Ramesh. Operator for query-level field restrictions This operator looks for records where the search phrases that come before it are present in the field, or set of fields, that come after it. Databases for the Law and Their Search Options The table below compares the operators and search capabilities of many significant legal databases utilized by researchers and academics to study Indian law, as mentioned in the text above.

Conclusion

Legal research today depends heavily on the availability of legal documents in electronic form. Legal research that is objectively conducted is made easier by electronic retrieval of legal information. To satisfy their stakeholders in terms of legal research with online legal information systems is a challenging issue for law libraries.

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