

Unleashing the full force of the law

This major new agreement will digitise thousands of core historical legal judgments, law reports and the most cited cases in the UK, and will for the first time make these freely and openly available online. JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) has provided funding to enable BAILII (British and Irish Legal Information Institute) to run the 36-month Open Law project, which has the potential to transform the delivery of legal teaching and public access to legal materials in the UK.

A full product description can be found at:

www.jisc.ac.uk/coll_bailii.html

Here's what your colleagues have been saying about the Project

"The project will provide funding for a much needed expansion of a database which is already extensively used by students, researchers and academics at all stages and levels. The more it is possible to digitise the primary resources required for legal education, the more effectively we can introduce innovative teaching strategies as well as carrying out cross-jurisdictional research with much greater ease."

Professor Alan Peterson, President of the Society of Legal Scholars and Professor of Law at the University of Strathclyde

"...This enhancement is of particular importance to the Association of Law Teachers, some of whose members are in schools and Further Education Colleges where access to legal information is at best problematical. Some members also teach on part-time and distance-learning degrees and again the extension of BAILII's database will significantly improve access to material for students on these courses."

Michael Jefferson, past Chair of the Association of Law Teachers, Senior Lecturer and Director of Teaching for the Department of Law at the University of Sheffield

What is the Open Law project?

JISC has provided funding to enable BAILII (British and Irish Legal Information Institute) to run the 36-month Open Law project, the intention of which is to digitise thousands of core historical legal judgments and law reports, and for the first time make these freely and openly available electronically. The digitisation of these judgments and other reports means that the project will digitise a total over 40,000 pages. At present BAILII provides free access to British and Irish primary legal materials.

The project has two main aims:

- To provide access to the most relevant judgments to meet the core needs of those teaching and studying law at all levels. Other non-core areas will be covered to a lesser extent so that staff and students dealing with legal issues on non-law courses e.g. business and planning, will also benefit.
- To improve and enhance the system interface to make it both more user-friendly (making it suitable for people with differing levels of IT literacy) and to add facilities that are particularly useful to UK legislation and materials.

The inclusion of the core and historical legal materials adds substantial value to the system as a whole since the interlinking of materials will allow the user to click from citation in the contemporary case to historic document. As BAILII allows direct linking to materials without having to go through password access, lecturers can produce teaching materials which link directly to the judgment or other material. BAILII are not, of course, interested in competing with commercial providers: they want to publish judgments and other materials (for example, Command Papers which are difficult to access in libraries) rather than the 'added value' which makes the commercial published case reports valuable to a professional audience.

Enriching legal education and research

Access to case reports and legislation are central to the teaching of law and the development of legal skills. The Open Law project will therefore focus on providing access to the most relevant judgments to meet the core needs of those teaching and studying law at all levels. Other non-core areas will be covered so that staff and students dealing with legal issues on non-law courses (such as accounting, business, government, human resources, management, planning and social work) will also benefit.

Take advantage of your opportunity to take part in the Project today!

The Project Team are working closely with the legal profession, law schools, librarians, and special interest groups such as the Society of Legal Scholars and the Association of Law Teachers to identify these judgments and reports as well shaping the future development of this resource. If you would like to participate in this Project, please feel free to joining the Openlaw jiscmail list at:

www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/openlaw.html



www.bailii.org

To see the full range of JISC online resources, please visit our website: www.jisc.ac.uk/collections