The Library

Finding academic information:

Law

Database User Guide
Your guide to finding academic information for Law

This guide is designed to introduce you to the electronic academic databases relevant to your subject.

What are academic databases?

You should use academic databases rather than search engines such as Google because the material you will find is guaranteed to be reliable and of acceptable academic standard. The databases contain many peer-reviewed journals, this is the top quality academic information, that you should be using for assignments rather than information from websites found via Google.

Which are the most useful databases for your subject?

There are a number of databases listed on Law subject guide (see page 2). All contain relevant information, but some are more important than others.

Important Databases

LexisLibrary
LexisLibrary is a comprehensive database for the legal profession. It includes information on cases, legislation and legal journals.

Westlaw
Westlaw UK is another legal database providing case law, legislation, journal archives, commentary, news and business information.

Other useful resources

HeinOnline Law Journals Collection
HeinOnline law journal collection contains over 1,600 law and law-related journals. HeinOnline also provides access to English Reports.

ProQuest Central
ProQuest Central is a large multi-disciplinary academic database. You can access information such as journal articles, dissertations, newspaper articles and company information.

Discover@Bolton
Discover@Bolton is the University’s search engine, it enables you to search databases such as HeinOnline and ProQuest Central simultaneously. You can access journals articles (and ebooks etc) direct from Discover@Bolton. However, LexisLibrary and Westlaw are not included, so to do a comprehensive search for journal articles search LexisLibrary, Westlaw and Discover@Bolton. See the help guides for Discover@Bolton for further help.
Getting started

Load the Library web pages: https://www.bolton.ac.uk/library/

You should now navigate to your Law subject resources page.

The Law Subject Guide

Click on Subject Guides as shown above and select Law from the list. The guide gives you access to Reading Lists Online and Discover@Bolton and other useful resources. Use the Databases tab to access Lexis and Westlaw. Take time to explore the other tabs for lots of useful information. Both LexisLibrary and Westlaw include comprehensive legal information. LexisLibrary is chosen here to illustrate the principles of searching a legal database and you can apply those principles to using Westlaw.

LexisLibrary

Click on LexisLibrary. You will see the University of Bolton’s Electronic Resources Login. Enter your usual university username and password and login to access the database.

LexisLibrary is a large and complex database. This workbook provides an introduction to the main features. For further information use the Help facility included in the database.

Top Tip

Suppliers of electronic databases update their interfaces regularly, so the appearance of the screens and the steps in the exercises may be slightly different to those in this guide, but the instructions for searching the database will be essentially the same.
LexisLibrary homepage

Specific information

You can use the **Quick Find** facility to search for specific information such as a piece of legislation, a case, a journal etc. Enter your search term in the appropriate field and click on **Find**. More detailed searches of each type of source material can be carried out by clicking on the tabs at the top of the page, for example, Cases, Legislation.

Research a topic

You can use the **Search** option to search for all types of information on an area of law. You can narrow your search by clicking **Filters** and selecting any of the content types under the search box.

My Bookshelf

The **My Bookshelf** section on the right of the homepage displays a list of the main sources provided by LexisLibrary. Click on the information icon 📚 by each resource for a description of that resource.

To search for information in a particular source, click on **Search**. You will be taken to the search page that is appropriate to the type of source you have selected. For example, **All England Law Reports** contain cases, so selecting **Search** on this source will take you to the Cases search page with **All England Law Reports** selected in the **Sources** box.

Alternatively you can click on **Browse** to view the table of contents for that resource. You can select items by ticking the boxes next to each year and volume. You can then do a search of selected items using the **Quick Search** box.
The Cases page allows you to search for a case in the same way as the Quick Find box on the homepage. You can also search for a specific case by entering a citation in the Citation search box. You can search by topic by entering your search terms in the Search terms box. It is possible to search by other types of information such as Judge’s name, Counsel, specific Court, date etc. You can restrict your search to a specific source by selecting it from the Sources drop down list.
You need to use connectors when using more than one search term in the search box. Connectors are words such as and, or, w/s. Click on Search tips for a full list of terms available.

Case results

Example: Type in Harding v Wealands in the case name search box.

There should be eighteen results which show the history of the case from the Queen’s Bench to the House of Lords. There are results from several sources reporting the same case, for example,

All England Reporter provides a summary and transcript of the case.
All England Law Reports include a summary, notes, cases referred to and transcript of the case.
Case Overview includes case history, cases considered by the case and catchwords and digest which is a summary and keywords of the case.

Click on the blue title to access the full details of a result.

Refining your results

The results display defaults to date order, you can change this by clicking on the Sort tab. This can be useful if your search produces a lot of results. You could change the order to relevance or court type etc.

You can Narrow the results by choosing one of the options listed on the left of the screen.

My Documents.

As you scroll through your results you can add results of interest to the My Documents file at the top of the screen by clicking on My Documents located by each result. There is also an option to add to My Documents when you
have a case open. The results you place in My Documents will be retained for 30 days.

**Case Overview**

Case Overview is useful for establishing how a case has been treated. The Case Overview results are displayed above the main results list. The records provide procedural history, annotations, keywords and summaries. Each result has a code (shown in the Signal column) which indicates the judicial treatment that the case has received – see the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Image]</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>No treatment has been given. Only citation information is available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Image]</td>
<td>Negative treatment</td>
<td>The decision has been subsequently reversed, disapproved or overruled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Image]</td>
<td>Positive treatment</td>
<td>The decision has received positive treatment, i.e., affirmed, applied etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Image]</td>
<td>Neutral treatment</td>
<td>The decision has received neutral treatment, i.e., considered explained, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Image]</td>
<td>Cautionary treatment</td>
<td>The decision has had some doubt cast on it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can opt to search Case Overview directly by clicking on the Case Overview link on the left of the Cases search page.

**Further Help**

You can find further instructions and tutorials on finding information on any of the main pages by clicking on Help.

**Top Tip**

You will see an information icon 📖 next to the title of resources throughout LexisLibrary. Click on it to reveal information about the resource, such as content, year coverage begins, etc.
Legislation

The Legislation page allows you to browse or search for legislation. When you are searching for specific legislation enter as much information as possible into the search boxes. The word wheel that appears as you start typing may help you.

**Example:** type *Family Law Act 1996* in the title search box.

The results are displayed in a similar way to the cases results seen in the last section. You have the same options add to My Documents, Sort, Narrow, Search within results, etc.

The results show that the Family Law Act 1996 at the top and then each section of the Act is listed as a separate entry in the list. To view the Act click on the title of the first result.

Click on the **Halsbury's Annotations** icon for further explanation and information about the Act, such as subordinate legislation. You can access related cases, journal articles via the **Find out more** section on the right.

The **Other formats available** function gives you the option to view the Act as pdf document or request previous versions. Stop press! Indicates if any recent changes have been made to the legislation.

**Top Tip**

Return to the homepage at any time by clicking .
Commentary

The commentary option allows you to do a search for all types of information on a particular topic. Therefore, if you are researching a specific area of the law rather looking for a particular case or piece of legislation, the commentary search is the option to choose.

Search terms can be entered into the **Search terms** box using appropriate connectors. It is also possible to enter search terms into the **Heading** box, in this case the search terms must be in the title of the article to be included in the results. Less results will be generated by searching using Heading compared to the more general search, but the level of relevance is likely to be higher.

Example: in the **Search terms** box type **dangerous AND dogs** and click **Search**.

The results are displayed with the same functionality as in previous sections. However, above the main results, LexisLibrary provides you with a definition and a link to the most relevant legislation, cases etc. Click on **read more** to access the full details.
Journals

The journals search page can be used to search for journal articles on all aspects of legal matters. Similar to the previous pages you can search for journal articles using the general search terms box or using the specific information boxes further down the page. You can search by article title, author, article citation or date.

Example: You have been given a citation for an article in Industrial Law Journal. Search for *Ind Law J (2009) 38 (4): 343* in the Article citation search box. The results screen should show the article *Retirement and Age Discrimination*.

Browse option

The Browse facility on the left of the journals homepage allows you to view the list of full-text journals that are available through LexisLibrary. You can browse within the different volumes, issues and articles of a specific journal. Keep clicking on the icon to access the next menu until you come to the individual articles.

To return to the list of journals click on All.

Current Awareness

Current Awareness provides information about the latest legislation that applies to a specific topic.

Example: search for *dangerous and dogs* using the Search terms box.

The results include the latest legislation with a summary giving details of the legislation that has been updated or amended. There are also citations of journal articles that discuss or comment upon the latest legislative changes.

Sources

Sources displays an alphabetical list of all subscribed sources available in LexisLibrary. You can select as many resources as you like to include in your search. Remember that you can click on the information icon to find out about any resource.

Selecting some resources and click on OK – Continue. You will now see a General Search page and your chosen resources will be in the Sources box ready for you to enter your search terms in the Search terms box.

Under the Browse Sources tab the resources are arranged in groups. This would be useful if you are not sure which sources are relevant to the
information you are trying to find. You can choose how the resources are grouped by selecting one of the four options at the top of the page. Or you can select a specific topic by clicking on the drop-down arrow next to All Topics and select the topic you are interested in.

Further Information

This guide is only an introduction to LexisLibrary, there are many other features that you can use. Explore the other tabs such as Materials, Forms and Precedents etc, by using the guidance provided by LexisLibrary. The online tutorials are particularly helpful. For more information about any section please click on Help to access the tutorials.

LexisNexis provide a LexisLibrary research certificate. This allows students to demonstrate that they are skilled in legal research. You must register and take the test at: www.lexislibrarycertification.co.uk. Students who pass will be emailed a pdf certificate that they can print off themselves. Students who fail will receive an email that lists the questions they were asked, the answer they gave and it tells them whether their answer to that question was right or wrong. It is possible to re-take the test.

Now that you have the basics of searching a database, it is just a matter of spending time applying and developing your skills. The search principles you have learned searching LexisLibrary will be useful when using other electronic resources such as Westlaw and Discover@Bolton.

Further help

Law Librarian: Mary Barden. Tel: 01204 903547 or email: m.e.barden@bolton.ac.uk

For immediate help during Library opening hours, please visit the Library Desk. Tel: 01204 903094 or email subjecthelp@bolton.ac.uk.

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