



Using Law Reviews

BOSTON COLLEGE LAW LIBRARY

What are law reviews?

Law reviews are periodical publications that offer articles that discuss and analyze certain points of law or provide practice tips for attorneys. Published by law schools, bar associations, or commercial publishers, law reviews are not primary legal authority.

Why do attorneys and legal researchers use law review articles?

Law review articles serve a number of purposes for the legal researcher. They provide a starting place for legal research in an unfamiliar topic, and offer both an historical perspective as well as a statement of the current status of the law in a specific area. Authors document their articles thoroughly with footnotes, which a researcher can use to quickly locate cases and statutes (i.e. primary law sources) on point. Finally, law review articles may be persuasive in convincing judges to apply a particular interpretation of existing case law and statutes where no relevant primary legal authority exists within the jurisdiction.

Increasingly, researchers are interested in multidisciplinary issues such as law and medicine; there are specialized journals devoted to these multidisciplinary areas. The following link provides references for conducting law-related multidisciplinary research:

www.bc.edu/schools/law/library/research/articlesdatabases/lawarticlesindexes

How do I find law review articles?

There are two methods of locating law review articles: full-text searching and index-driven searching.

1. **Full-Text Searching** – Refers to searching the entire text of an electronic format article. This type of searching is best used to locate articles dealing with unique words, phrases or so-called terms of art. Full-text searching is least successful to find articles on a general, commonly named topic or legal issue such as civil rights or tort reform.

Full-text searching can be accomplished on HeinOnline, Legal Scholarship Network (LSN), LexisNexis, Westlaw (see descriptions of these sources below) or an Internet search engine or site that posts the law review files, e.g. the sponsoring law school or publisher. The LexisNexis and Westlaw systems are available at the Boston College Law Library to Boston College faculty, law students, and staff only. Please note that other members of the BC community have unlimited access to HeinOnline and LexisNexis Academic Universe, electronic resources that contain full-text law review articles.

An increasing number of law reviews post their recent journal contents on the Internet. To find electronic journals, search Quest, the BC Law Library's online catalog, at

http://library.bc.edu:4545/F?func=file&l_base=BC_CATALOG. In addition, the Law Library of Congress provides links to electronic law review files at www.loc.gov/law/guide/lawreviews.html.

2. **Index-Driven Searching** – Refers to searching a print or electronic index to locate law reviews. Indexes are compiled by editors who read and analyze law review articles and then categorize each article according to the subject matter discussed. Using an index to locate law reviews helps to ensure that you will retrieve relevant articles rather than ones that merely contain particular terminology. Law review authors tend to choose creative titles rather than specific titles for their articles, e.g. Gary Minda, *Denial: Not Just a River in Egypt*, 16 CONN. J. INT'L L. 901 (2001). Index searching guarantees that such an article is categorized under its actual subject matter rather than by its title.

An index leads a researcher to citations of relevant law review articles; these citations are used to locate the full text of the article. Law review indexes are available in print format and are accessible to authorized Boston College users via this link:

www.bc.edu/schools/law/library/research/articlesdatabases/lawarticlesindexes/

In addition, LexisNexis and Westlaw provide access to law review indexes; the citations often may be hyperlinked to the full text.

Why should I use law review indexes?

Use law review indexes for the most comprehensive searches in terms of time coverage and subject matter accuracy. Note that the law review full-text files found on LexisNexis and Westlaw begin at 1980 while the electronic Index to Legal Periodicals Retrospective provides coverage back to 1918 (see chart below).

Indexes vary in years of coverage, frequency of publication, type or number of journals indexed, organization and format (print or electronic). Indexing terminology varies depending on the index publisher.

How can I use indexes effectively?

If you need to do a comprehensive search, use more than one index. While you may be led to the same reference more than once, you minimize the chance of missing an important reference.

1. Tips for Using Print Indexes

Use subject heading lists or thesauri to make sure that you have found the preferred subject headings. Many indexes contain a separate list of their indexing terms. A copy of the Library of Congress subject headings list, the list most commonly employed by index publishers, is kept in the Reference Area. Once you have located a relevant reference in an index, look at the descriptors or subject headings assigned to that article to generate more index searching points. Check cross-references, more specific topics, or more general topics related to your subject in order to find additional articles.

Using the information you already have, such as relevant cases or statutes, check the *Tables of Cases* or *Statutes Commented Upon* sections found in many indexes. Decipher any abbreviations you do not recognize by checking in the abbreviations listing in the index itself.

2. Tips for Using Electronic Indexes

Electronic index searching allows you to employ connectors such as “and,” “or” and “not” as well as proximity connectors such as: within “n” words and grammatical connectors such as same sentence or paragraph. Once you have located a relevant article, you can use the descriptors or subject headings assigned to that article to construct a more specific search. Descriptors can be combined with other search terms for more targeted searching.

When should I use an online full-text search to find law review articles?

Full-text computer searching of law review databases on Hein Online, Legal Scholarship Network (LSN), LexisNexis and Westlaw provides access to a much smaller number of articles than index searching. Using full-text searching may lead you to some good articles on your topic, but not necessarily *all* articles on your topic.

Full-text searching allows a researcher the flexibility to find articles that mention very specific terms, even if the primary subject of the article is something else, or if the article title does not contain those search terms.

Full-text databases support the use of connectors such as “and,” “or” and “not”; proximity connectors such as within “n” words; and grammatical connectors such as same sentence or paragraph. In addition, researchers may use the natural language search option to create searches on LexisNexis and Westlaw; this option employs normal sentence structure and does not require knowledge of terms and connector searching.

New journal titles are added to Hein Online, Legal Scholarship Network, LexisNexis and Westlaw continually; it is best to consult the publications list on each system and the dates of coverage for each journal title to ensure a comprehensive search.

Source Descriptions:

Hein Online – Retrospective coverage of selected law reviews with some current titles available. Articles accessible both as PDF files (allows for cites to exact pagination) and as searchable text files. Access is available to the Boston College community via this link: www.heinonline.org/HOL/Welcome

Legal Scholarship Network - Forthcoming law reviews and working papers from law schools; some backfiles from 1999; emphasis is on very current publications. Access is by subscription but free registration is offered. (www.ssrn.com/lrn.index.html)

LexisNexis — Selected U.S. law reviews from 1982 – present. Law review databases on LexisNexis contain every article in the particular law reviews that LexisNexis contains, unless the author of the article has refused to allow its inclusion on LexisNexis. Law reviews may be searched individually or as a group. A password is required for access. (www.lexisnexis.com)

Westlaw — Selected U.S. law reviews from 1981 – present. The JLR (journals and law reviews) database on Westlaw contains selected articles from a larger number of journals than LexisNexis contains. However, unlike LexisNexis, which includes almost every article that appears in its selected journals, Westlaw’s editors include only those articles in which they feel there is significant interest. Individual journals, topical journal databases, or the texts and periodicals database may be separately searched. A password is required for access. (www.westlaw.com)

See the next two pages for a summary chart of law review indexes and databases.

LAW REVIEW INDEXES AND ONLINE DATABASES*

*Sources marked with an asterisk are available to the BC community at the following website:

<http://www.bc.edu/schools/law/library/research/articlesdatabases/lawarticlesindexes>

| <i>Years Covered</i> | <i>Title and Description</i> | <i>Format and Access</i> |
|------------------------------------|--|--|
| 1786-1922 | Jones-Chipman Index to Legal Periodicals | *Electronic Subfile of the 19 th Century Masterfile database. Select this title from pull-down menu. BC access only. |
| 1791-1937 | Jones-Chipman Index to Legal Periodicals | Print Law Periodical Indexes K33 .I53 |
| 19 th century - present | Hein Online Date coverage varies by journal title. Full-text of selected U.S. law reviews. | *Electronic BC access only. |
| 1918-1981 | Index to Legal Periodicals Retrospective Provides citations to law reviews 1918-present; links to full-text law reviews in Hein Online. | *Electronic Law School only. |
| 1926-present | Index to Legal Periodicals Provides citations to law reviews 1926 to present; indexes law books published from 1993 to present. | Print Law Periodical Indexes K33 .I533 |
| 1980 - present | Index to Legal Periodicals and Books (see description above) ----- Current Law Index Indexes U.S. and commonwealth law countries' law journals. Electronic version is known as LegalTrac | *Electronic BC access only. Available on LexisNexis, file-name ILP; on Westlaw, database name ILP ----- Print Law Periodical Indexes K33 .C87 *Electronic (with selected full-text); BC access only |

Chart continues on the next page . . .

LAW REVIEW INDEXES AND ONLINE DATABASES, cont.

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| <i>Years Covered</i> | <i>Title and Description</i> | <i>Format and Access</i> |
|---|---|---|
| 1977 - present | Legal Resource Index Indexes over 900 U.S. and British commonwealth law journals. | LexisNexis file-name LGLIND Password required |
| 1980-present | LexisNexis Academic Universe Full text of law reviews. LexisNexis ----- Westlaw Full text of law reviews. | *Electronic BC only Electronic Password required ----- Electronic Password required |
| 1985-present | Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals Provides article citations related to international and comparative law. ----- NELLCO Legal Scholarship Repository Full text of current works by law faculty; some older materials included. | *Electronic Law School only ----- Electronic http://lsr.nellco.org |
| 2000-present | Legal Scholarship Network Full text of forthcoming law reviews and working papers. | Electronic Subscription database; free registration available www.ssrn.com/lsn/index.html |
| Current year Latest three months | Current Index to Legal Periodicals (CILP) Tables of contents service for recently published scholarly legal publications. ----- Contents Pages from Law Reviews and Scholarly Journals Reproduces table of contents for selected journals | Print Law Periodical Indexes KF8 .C85 *Electronic ----- Electronic http://tarlton.law.utexas.edu/tallons/content_search.html |

LAW REVIEWS AT BOSTON COLLEGE

Which law reviews can I find at the Boston College Law Library and where are they?

The Boston College Law Library subscribes to most of the law reviews indexed in the major legal periodical indexes.

Law reviews are cataloged in Quest, Boston College's online library information system; online journal access is noted in Quest as well. Bound law reviews with the library location designation of Law Periodicals (Non-Circulating) are kept on Level 1 in alphabetical order. Volumes from 1990 to the present are kept in open shelving while older volumes are shelved in compact shelving.

Current issues of law reviews and legal newspapers are kept at the Information Desk. Older issues of some legal newspapers as well as bar journals since 1987 are available in the Microform Room.

Which law reviews are published at Boston College?

The Boston College Law School publishes four student law reviews.

Boston College Law Review

Originally published in 1959 under the title *Boston College Industrial and Commercial Law Review*, the *Boston College Law Review* publishes five issues a year on a variety of legal topics. Until 1986 the staff of the *Boston College Law Review* also published the *Annual Survey of Massachusetts Law*.

Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review

Since 1971 the *Environmental Affairs Law Review* has presented a forum for the analysis of a broad range of environmental issues from the disciplines of law, politics, social sciences and economics. Four issues are published each year.

Boston College International and Comparative Law Review

With an emphasis on European Union law and international legal issues, this journal provides a view beyond the common law systems. It began publication in 1977. Two issues are published annually.

Boston College Third World Law Journal

Since 1980 this journal has presented articles focusing on general legal issues in developing countries, as well as civil, human and minority rights issues throughout the world. There are two issues published each year.

Revised July 2005. An electronic version of this guide may be found at <http://www.bc.edu/schools/law/library/research/researchguides/>

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