

Internet Newsletter for Lawyers - Irish Extra

Edited by Delia Venables

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The Electronic Irish Reports and Digests on Justis.com

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The Justis suite of databases is supplied by Context, a UK based electronic publisher. Context claim to be the oldest established independent electronic publisher of UK and European legal, parliamentary and official data. Some business information is also covered.

Context includes a range of databases on Justis under the broad headings of case law, European law and statute law. It is possible to subscribe to one or a number of the databases depending on your needs. It is not obligatory to take them as a package. The databases include:

Case Law: Law Reports, Weekly Law Reports, Law Reports Digest, Family Law Reports, Industrial Cases Reports.

European Law: CELEX, EJC Proceedings, Human Rights, Official Journal C, OJ Daily.

Statute Law: UK Statutes and Statutory Instruments

Other databases include BLISS, the construction industry database and RAPID the database of official EU press releases. This list is not comprehensive and for a full listing and description of the databases go to the Justis website, www.justis.com

I am going to concentrate, for this article, on the *Electronic Irish Reports and Digests* on Justis.com. These are a new addition to Justis on the Web. They were available from Context as a Justis CD-ROM since May 2000 and in March 2003 were included on Justis.com. The search interface for the other databases on Justis.com is similar with variations for the different content and context of the data.

Electronic Irish Reports and Digests

This is the electronic version of the *Irish Reports* and *Irish Digests* published by The Incorporated Council of Law Reporting for Ireland. The Incorporated Council of Law Reporting for Ireland supplies the data.

Coverage of the *Irish Reports* is from 1919 onwards thus allowing access to approximately 85 years of important Irish case law from the Superior Courts. It is the largest and most comprehensive full text database of published Irish case law and the cases are quoted authoritatively in Irish courts. The database is updated eight times per year compared to the CD-ROM version which is updated quarterly.

The Irish Digests, as with the printed versions of *The Irish Digest*, cover not only the *Irish Reports* but include other major Irish law report series. Coverage of the *Irish Digests* is shown in the table below (digests in each case).

The Irish Reports	1917 to 1999
Irish Jurist reports	1932 to 1965
Irish Law Journal	1931 to 1934
Irish Law Reports Monthly	1976 to 2000
Irish Law Times Reports	Volumes 53 to 114
Irish Special reports	1990 to 1998
Northern Ireland Reports	1925 to 1999

(Source: Coverage notes. *Electronic Irish Reports and Digests*, www.justis.com/database/irish_reports.html)

Using the Electronic Irish Reports and Digests

Log on to Justis at www.justis.com. This initial page is rather busy as it is used to alert users to new products and developments as well as being the access point to subscribed content. The icon to log on to the service is found in the left hand corner of the screen. After entering ID and Password, the subscribed database or databases are listed on screen. Choose one or more to search.

If you have never used Justis.com before, you will find it to be a well designed product with lots of help available on screen. The Help option itself is very detailed and it is context specific. This means that the help displayed relates directly to the task currently underway. The Help section provides information on using Justis.com and gives user guides to all its databases including the *Irish Reports and Digests*. A "What's New" section is provided to keep you up to date with developments and it also gives information on contacting the Help Desk. This is available from 9.00am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday and there is no extra charge for using it. Context considers the Help Desk to be a very important aspect of their service.

Searching

Justis allows multiple access points for finding information and incorporates many useful features for the user.

There is a long list of search fields available which can be used separately or in combination. To change the standard set of fields, shown on the next page, click on the Fields button at the bottom of the screen and choose the new or additional fields to be displayed.

Please enter your search criteria and press <Return>

Go! Fields Reset

AND Free Text

AND Parties Eviston

AND Catchwords fair procedures

AND Court high

AND Judge

AND Judgment

AND Year

Go! Fields Reset

The search example shown here is looking for a High Court case with Eviston as one of the names involved and fair procedures describing the nature of the case. The Free Text field allows searching for text in all the fields of all documents. This is a good option to use if there is limited information available on the document required. Again the Help option will explain in detail what each field searches.

Justis.com supports a powerful search language, allowing the use of Boolean operators "and" "or" and "not" and proximity operators "within" and "near". The "near" operator is set at 40 characters but it is possible to define the distance of one word from the other using the "within" operator.

It supports the use of parentheses to help define the logical order in which a complex search is carried out. For example:

Eviston **and** (Director of Public Prosecutions **or** DPP)

Documents containing the phrase "Director of Public Prosecutions" or DPP will be found first and the results will then be combined with documents containing the name Eviston to give the final set of results.

Phrase searching and Date searching is also available. It is not necessary to enclose the phrase in parentheses unless the phrase contains words also used as an operator such as "and" "or" or "not". Variations of words can also be found using an asterisk as a wild card. Thus prosecut* will find prosecute, prosecutes, prosecution and other variations. The date searching allows a range of dates as well as specific dates to be found.

Another valuable search feature is the word index. Just to the right of the search fields in the Irish Reports and Digests is a small index that gives access to this index. A word index exists for each field and by choosing words listed in the index you are certain that at least one record exists containing that word. It will also help to find variations of a word or where a word is more commonly used in the database. Using the index can help to make a search more specific.

Value-added Features

In addition to Justis being a well designed product containing comprehensive and reliable information, there are a number of special features that add to its value and usefulness.

The first feature is that the cases displayed on screen mirror exactly the print version of the Irish Reports. Page numbers, citations, paragraphs and everything else are as they appear in print. This is important when referring to the case.

Cross-referencing: A very valuable feature is the ability to cross-reference between cases. Using this feature allows one to see which cases have been considered or approved in a case and which other cases have then subsequently relied on the current case. Clicking on the cross-ref button on the toolbar can access this feature and then a visual, navigable representation of the case relationships will be displayed. If no cross-references exist the cross-ref button will not be displayed.

J-Link: Another powerful feature of Justis is the ability to link to the full text of documents from references cited in the text. Highlighting the reference and clicking on the J-Link button on the toolbar will display the full text of the document on screen.

An even more innovative and flexible feature is the *Floating J-Link*. The small icon for this can be kept on the desktop and, from a reference supported by Justis, which appears in any Windows application such as Word, the full text can be opened if one is subscribed to that database. Thus from any reference in a Word letter or document to the Irish Reports or the reports contained in the Digests, by clicking on J-Link the text from the Justis database will be launched on screen. There is no need to be already logged onto the service.

The emailing and printing of documents is also supported.

Conclusion

The Justis products are well designed with the end user in mind. There are many features incorporated into the technology to help with the search process.

Electronic Irish Reports and Digests take advantage of all the features mentioned above and its content is comprehensive. One advantage of the online version is that the content is updated automatically and it is no longer necessary to update the network with a new CD. This also avoids any confusion as to whether the material is up to date. (If older CDs are not discarded, newer, more relevant material may be missed. This issue becomes even more important and may lead to even more confusion where multiple subscriptions exist to different databases, particularly so if subscriptions are renewed at different times of the year or if updates occur at different times).

Talking to Context representatives, many more interesting developments are planned, to appeal to the Irish market. If resources allow, it is worth checking out these products.

Nuala Byrne has been the Law Librarian of the Director of Public Prosecutions in Dublin since 2001. The Library is on two sites, with 6 staff members. Before that, she was Business Librarian at Dublin City University. Email nbyrne@dppireland.ie.

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