

# Internet Newsletter for Lawyers - Irish Extra

***Edited by Delia Venables***

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## **LexisNexis Professional**

*by Nuala Byrne*

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### **The LexisNexis Group**

The LexisNexis Group provides a myriad of products tailored to meet different legal, business, academic and other needs.

Often considered to be the industry leader in information provision, the company originated in Dayton, Ohio in the mid 1960s where it operated as a contractor to the US Air Force. Until 1979 the company was known as a supplier of legal information. It has been said that the system they introduced in 1973 revolutionised the way in which legal research and analysis was carried out. In 1979 Nexis the companion news and business information service was introduced. In 1994 Reed Elsevier acquired LexisNexis. The company has continued to develop and grow and is recognised as an international player with established and expanding operations around the world.

LexisNexis Professional, one of the LexisNexis products, is often considered to be the largest business database in the world. It is a powerful online research tool offering a wealth of news, company, legal, market research and directory sources. It contains information from 36,000 sources, holds approximately 3.7 billion documents and has an archive going back in some cases, 33 years.

It is an expensive product and its pricing structure is tiered according to the level of access. An organisation chooses what sources they will subscribe to within pre-defined groupings. As well as offering a flat rate fee payment option LexisNexis also offer a pay-as-you-go system whereby one only pays for the amount of time used on the system. A combination of both a flat-rate fee and a pay-as-you-go service is also offered. What this means is that one can opt to pay a flat rate fee for accessing a particular group of sources as well as having a pay as you go option for accessing other, less frequently used sources. For frequently used sources, a flat rate fee is recommended.

### **LexisNexis Professional**

To see a comprehensive listing of the products and services offered by LexisNexis check out their web sites at [www.lexisnexis.com](http://www.lexisnexis.com) or [www.lexis-nexis.co.uk](http://www.lexis-nexis.co.uk).

A typical subscription to LexisNexis Professional for an Irish legal organisation might the following:

#### **Irish Case Law**

- \* This source contains Irish case law including cases reported in Irish Reports from 1950
- \* Judgments of the Court of Criminal Appeal (Frewen) 1950-1983
- \* Unreported Irish cases from July 1985.

#### **Northern Ireland Case Law**

- \* General case law reported in Northern Ireland Law Reports from 1945 and unreported cases from 1984.

#### **English Case Law**

- \* Case reports from over 40 series of law reports including All England Law Reports, the weekly law reports, family law and industrial relations law reports
- \* Transcripts of cases from 1980 onwards including all cases from the House of Lords, Privy Council and court of appeal civil division.

#### **English Legislation**

- \* Full and amended text of statutes currently in force
- \* Full and amended text of statutory instruments currently in force
- \* Statutes and statutory instruments enacted but not yet in force are also available.

#### **Commonwealth Law**

- \* This includes case law from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. Legislation from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Singapore is also available.

#### **Legal Journals**

- \* This includes the full amended text of more than 80 journals including *The New Law Journal* and *The International Journal of Evidence and Proof*.

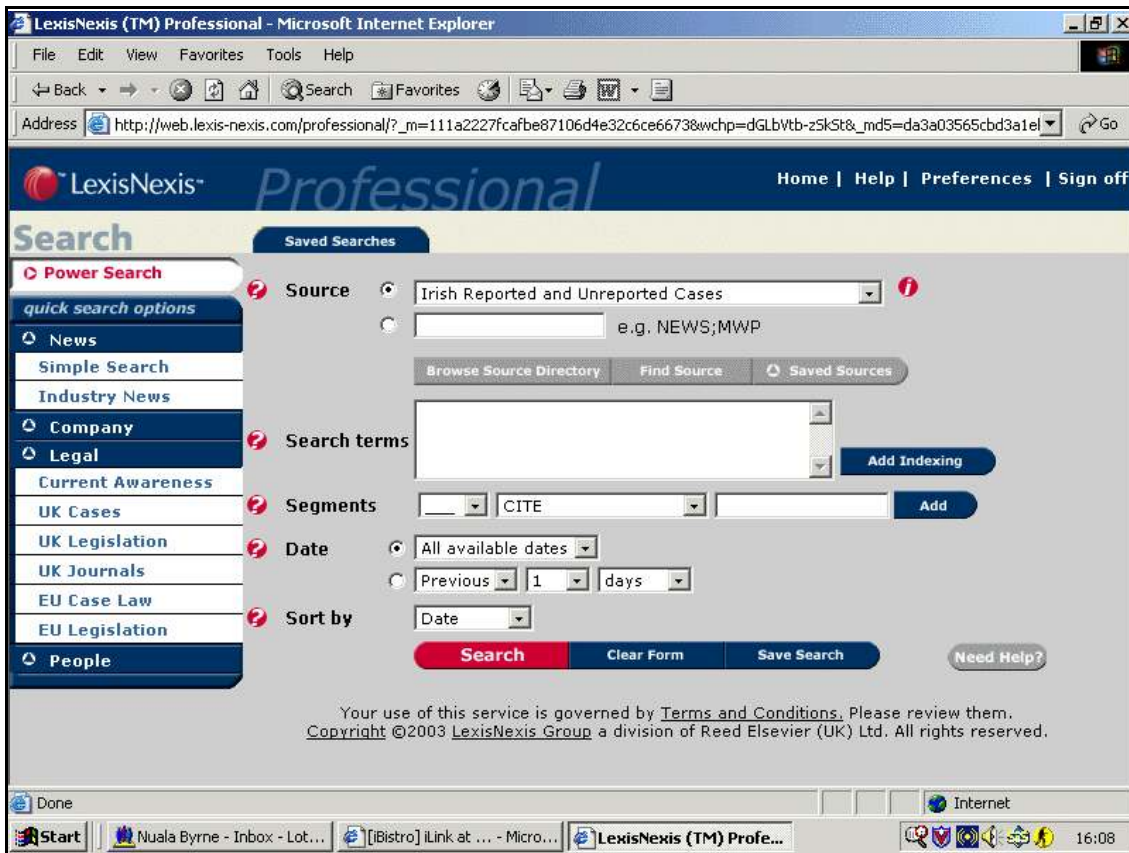
For Irish practitioners it is worth noting that unreported judgments are included from 1985 onwards. Although not a complete collection, many of the judgments have been chosen because of their relevance or importance to the development of Irish case law.

### **Using LexisNexis Professional**

Log on to Lexis Nexis Professional at: [www.lexis-nexis.com/professional](http://www.lexis-nexis.com/professional) and enter your ID and Password. A screen similar to the one shown on the next page will be displayed.

It is possible to change the layout of this screen by choosing the Preferences link in the top right hand corner of the blue navigation bar. Due to the large size of the database it is not suitable for browsing. It is important, therefore, to have some understanding of the database


itself and the basics of how to carry out a search. LexisNexis are providing free training sessions to subscribers and this is a very worthwhile service to avail of, particularly if your subscription is a pay-as-you-go subscription.




## The Search Screen

The search screen may appear a little daunting to the first time user and because it is not possible to browse the content, a search must be carried out before one can look at any of the documents contained in the database.

The help option explains how to use Lexis Nexis and will certainly provide a user with enough information to enable them to carry out a search and to navigate around the database. The Need Help button also gives specific help on carrying out a search.



In addition, it is possible to click on any of the help icons  to access help related to a specific function. These are helpful and are context specific to that feature although personally I prefer a help function that is completely context specific. In other words it is possible to click on help at any time and the help provided relates directly to the task being undertaken.

The information icon  provides information about the source that is currently selected but at this level it is not possible to access information about the other sources that make up a subscription. It is necessary to drill down through the source hierarchy in order to do so. Again I would prefer to be able to view what sources are included in the subscription with an overview of their content and structure at this top level.


## Carrying Out a Search

The important thing to remember is to select a source to search. This is done from the Power Search screen that is shown above. The main methods to select a source are:

- \* Use the drop down list beside **Sources** to select a previously used source. The ten most recently used sources appear in this list.
- \* Browse the source directory to choose a new source.
- \* Search the source directory by clicking **Find Source**.
- \* Select a saved source.

Use the Browse Search Directory button to drill down the hierarchy of sources until the lowest level is reached and it is possible to select the source for searching. The  icon appears beside a source name when it reaches this level. Clicking on  provides information about the source chosen. When this level is reached it is possible to select the source for immediate searching by clicking on the OK button. Alternatively the source can be saved for future use by clicking on the Save button. It will then appear in the list of saved sources. It is a good idea to save frequently used sources in this list.

When a source has been successfully selected, enter the search terms in the Search Terms box.

LexisNexis supports Boolean searching. Click on the  icon beside this box to get a list of the Boolean connectors supported. The main ones include AND, OR, AND NOT, W/x. The W/x connector specifies within how many words of the first search term the second search term must appear, for example: "conflict W/2 law".

Truncation and wildcards are also supported to allow for more powerful searching. The exclamation mark ! is used to truncate words. It finds variations of words from a root (e.g., negligenc! will find negligent, negligence or negligently). The asterisk \* is used to replace a letter in a word (e.g., wom\*n). It also supports the use of parentheses to help define the logical order in which a complex search is carried out.

For example:

(delay and lenienc!) and (dpp or Director Public Prosecution)

Notice "of" is omitted from the phrase "Director of Public Prosecutions". LexisNexis doesn't recognise words such as of, to where, by. It also finds regular plurals such as s, es, ies.

There are good options for narrowing a search. When a list of results is obtained there is an option to search within the set of results in order to produce a more precise list of results. LexisNexis allows what is called Segment searching. What this means is that a particular section or field of the document is searched. This varies according to the source being used. For example a search within the Irish Reported and Unreported cases would allow searching by Counsel, Court, citation and other terms specific to searching case law. Using this option also helps with the formatting of your search by automatically inserting brackets into the search string. It is also possible to restrict the search by date and a useful feature is that searches can be saved and re-run whenever required.

All of the above has described searching from the Power Search screen. There are also options to carry out a Quick

Search. The categories of sources are displayed on the left of the screen (see the picture). The sources available reflect the subscription level. The Quick Search option displays screens that are laid out to reflect the type of resource being searched. Thus a case law search will display fields requiring the case name information entered or the name of the court to be entered. A Quick Search of Journals on the other hand would require the title or author to be entered. Overall the Power Search allows for more defined and precise searching whereas the Quick Search is precisely for carrying out a shorter more defined piece of searching.

## Conclusion

LexisNexis Professional is an excellent product. Its content is superb, providing access to a vast array of information sources. For the organisation requiring a high level of access to a reliable and comprehensive set of resources it is no doubt an essential research tool. For the person or organisation not requiring such access it may be too expensive to warrant a subscription although the pay-as-you-go option may be considered. This option is useful either for the infrequent user or for the frequent user to access less frequently required information sources. One proviso is that a thorough understanding of the search process and the structure and content of the database is essential. If time is wasted doing this type of search the total cost might turn out to be significantly higher than anticipated.

Searching is not as user-friendly or as intuitive as some other databases. A certain level of training is required not only to understand the search process but also to understand the structure and content of the database. However, once a certain level of confidence and expertise is obtained, an enormous body of material lies waiting to be discovered and all at the user's fingertips.

*Nuala Byrne has been the Law Librarian of the Director of Public Prosecutions in Dublin since 2001. She has recently been appointed Librarian in the Law Library, Dublin.*

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## The Complete Series of Irish Reviews

The complete series of articles about major online legal services in Ireland by Nuala Byrne can be found at the following web locations:

### \* Westlaw IE May/June 2003

[www.venables.co.uk/n0305weistlawie.htm](http://www.venables.co.uk/n0305weistlawie.htm) or  
[www.venables.co.uk/n0305westlawie.pdf](http://www.venables.co.uk/n0305westlawie.pdf)

### \* FirstLaw July/August 2003

[www.venables.co.uk/n0307firstlaw.htm](http://www.venables.co.uk/n0307firstlaw.htm) or  
[www.venables.co.uk/n0307irishextra.pdf](http://www.venables.co.uk/n0307irishextra.pdf)

### \* Review of Electronic Irish Reports and Digests on Justis November/December 2003

[www.venables.co.uk/n0311justisirish.htm](http://www.venables.co.uk/n0311justisirish.htm) or  
[www.venables.co.uk/n0311irishextra.pdf](http://www.venables.co.uk/n0311irishextra.pdf)

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### \* LexisNexis Professional January/February 2004

[www.venables.co.uk/n0401lexisnexisirish.htm](http://www.venables.co.uk/n0401lexisnexisirish.htm) or  
[www.venables.co.uk/n0401irishextra.pdf](http://www.venables.co.uk/n0401irishextra.pdf)

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Please see [www.venables.co.uk/n0401jen.htm](http://www.venables.co.uk/n0401jen.htm) for the main January/February newsletter online.