

Internet Newsletter for Lawyers - Irish Extra

Edited by Delia Venables

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Considerations for Libraries of Law Firms in Ireland

by Jane Clavin

Part 1 – Irish Legal Resources Online

There have been previous articles in this newsletter that give a detailed breakdown or comparison of selected Irish legal databases - see the end of this article for a list of the most recent ones. Here I am attempting a general round up of some of the main Irish online services, both those provided on a subscription basis and the free resources. In Part 2 of this article, planned for the next issue, I will discuss the impact and use of these services in law firms.

Ireland, like just about everywhere else, has seen something of a boom in online legal publishing over the last six years. Today, case law, legislation and a limited supply of Irish journals are electronically available, many for free. However, it still remains the case that some material is only available in hardcopy.

First Law (www.firstlaw.ie)

This is one of the mainstays of Irish Legal Research. A well priced online subscription service from one of the best known names in Irish publishing, Bart Daly, First Law would be considered a key Irish legal resource. It covers Irish Unreported Judgments, Acts and Statutory Instruments in full text since 1999 (there are a few earlier). It is a largely comprehensive service and material is added very quickly. It is easy to search and there was the welcome addition this year of the Chronological lists of Acts and S.I.'s. Note - there are no Bills on Firstlaw, just the Acts and S.I.'s.

Pink Pages (www.firstlaw.ie)

As an addendum to First Law are the pink pages. In pre computer days these were the only complete list of judgments, both reported and unreported, that were available and were circulated to Solicitors via the Gazette of the Law Society. From 2001-2004 they are now available on the Firstlaw homepage in .pdf format and are displayed alphabetically by keyword. There is also an alphabetical list of judgments at the back of each year.

Irish Reports and Digests: Justis (www.justis.com)

Available online or on CD, this extremely useful subscription service gives the judgments reported in the Irish Reports from 1919 to date. A useful feature is the retention of the old pagination structure from the printed version. The digests, also bundled with this service, provide references to reported cases in the Irish Law Reports Monthly and the Irish Law Times Reports.

BAILII (www.bailii.org)

A well know free service that overlaps with Firstlaw to an extent, BAILII has Supreme Court judgments from 1999 and High Court from 1996. It also has decisions from the Competition Authority, Information Commissioner and the Law Reform Commission. Acts and Statutory Instruments from 1922 are also available.

IRLII (www.irlii.org)

A companion site to BAILII, the Irish Legal Information Initiative's main function is to provide for quicker access to the Irish material that will eventually make its way to BAILII. It has a complete searchable index of Supreme Court, High Court and Court of Criminal Appeal decisions from 1997 to date, including citations for the Irish Reports and Irish Law Reports Monthly where available. Helpfully these are searchable and browseable, either alphabetically or through Keywords. There is also an archive of leading cases being added to the service on an ongoing basis. It also contains a useful index of articles in Irish Periodicals.

Lexis-Nexis Professional (www.lexisnexis.com)

Another well known library essential, Lexis was for many years a "must have" in every Irish legal library. Although still very much in demand, the rise of other cheaper, easier to use services have eclipsed it slightly, but many legal libraries would at least still have it on standby. One of the drawbacks is that Irish Legislation is not available on Lexis-Nexis - just the case law. However, with legislation available in many other areas this is less of a problem. The scope of the case law is reasonable - Irish Reports from 1950, Court of Criminal Appeal from 1950-1983 and Unreported Judgments from 1985.

Irish Court Service (www.courts.ie)

The official website from the Irish Courts Service, this has started publishing judgments but the archive is not as yet very highly developed. They have Supreme Court Judgments from 2001, Court of Criminal Appeal from 2004 and High Court also from 2004 with a smattering of miscellaneous earlier judgments. The great advantage of this service is that the judgments appear very quickly.

Westlaw (www.westlaw.ie)

This subscription service from Thompson Round Hall (a sister company to Thompson Sweet & Maxwell) has a good selection of Irish case law (ILRM, Employment Law Reports and some Unreported Judgments) and the Irish Law Times. There is also a Current Awareness service and access to the Irish Current Law Statutes Annotated.

Irish Statute Book Online (www.irishstatutebook.ie)

This is published by the Office of the Attorney General and is the main source of Irish legislation online. The Statute Book has legislation from 1922-2003 so far, both Acts and Statutory Instruments. The database is searchable either chronologically or through a search template and is relatively straightforward. However one of the most useful features of the service, in my opinion, is the Chronological Tables of the statutes which allows users to check the current status and amendments to a piece of legislation. This not only deals with statutes from 1922 but also pre Union statutes (1801) and English legislation.

Irish Parliament (www.oireachtas.ie)

This is the website of the Irish Parliament and is an obvious resource for the workings of the government. This site has Bills and Acts from 1997-2005. What makes it especially useful is that it tracks the changes that the Bills go through as they progress through the two Houses, and supplies links to the debates and published versions. There are also links to the Debates of both Houses as well as the Order Papers of the Dail and Seanad which allow one to see what will be before the houses for that week. Note that there are no Statutory Instruments on this site.

Irish Government (www.irlgov.ie)

This is the home of the Irish Government, with each department having their own web pages linked from here. Whilst there are huge variations in the material that is available from each department's website (and particularly in how it is organised) this site is a useful resource, particularly for Statutory Instruments which are frequently published here. The Press Releases can also be helpful.

Irish Financial Services (www.3dhandbooks.com)

This is the consolidated, complete, up-to-date text of Irish financial services legislation and associated guidance notes. It contains legislation, rules and orders from the Irish Financial Services Authority and other regulatory bodies, material from the Central Bank and government departments to name just a few. It also has email notification of updates which is useful.

Lexis Nexis Irish Tax Direct (www.lexisnexis.com)

This is an online service supplying legislation, case law and key Irish texts on tax from both Lexis Nexis material and the Irish Revenue Commissioners. There is an e-mail notification service and a noticeboard to keep up to date. As with the Property service mentioned below, the hardcopy material that underpins this service was sold to Tottel. The two publishers seem to have agreed a deal whereby Tottel supply the hardcopy of the material to Lexis Nexis who then update their site.

Lexis Nexis Irish Property Service Online

This service is available on CD or online and is very similar in style and format to the one above. It contains legislation, case law, precedents and key texts from Lexis Nexis in the area of Irish property law.

There are also a considerable number of loose-leaf/CD combinations, particularly from Thompson Round Hall, that are of interest. Titles such as Irish Commercial Precedent Service and the various volumes of the Consolidated Court Rules series would be common features in many Irish legal libraries.

Two other resources are well worth mentioning:

Feargal Quinn's page (www.feargalquinn.ie)

Feargal Quinn is a serving Senator in the Seanad and maintains a site "to make parliament easy to follow". This is a reasonably useful site for the complete novice as it piggy-backs on material in existing sites (e.g. the Oireachtas.ie, and the Attorney Generals site) but presents itself in a colourful and uncluttered way.

Irish Law page from Darius Whelan (www.irishlaw.org)

The other site from Darius Whelan who is based in University College Cork, is a slightly more academic look at law, but also has good links to services such as BAILII and IRLII etc. There is a comprehensive list of the main Irish text books by subject with links to key legislation. There is also an IrishLaw List, which is an email discussion list on Irish and Northern Irish law.

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This article is online at
www.venables.co.uk/n0511irishreviewpart1.htm
and www.venables.co.uk/n0511irishreviewpart1.pdf

See www.venables.co.uk/n0511tra.htm for the rest of the November/December 2005 newsletter online.

References to Recent Irish Reviews

A series of articles about major online legal services in Ireland by Nuala Byrne can be found at the following web locations in either html or pdf versions:

*** Comparison of Irish Legal Research Products**
www.venables.co.uk/n0407irishreview.htm or
www.venables.co.uk/n0407irishextra.pdf

*** Westlaw IE May/June 2003**
www.venables.co.uk/n0305westlawie.htm or
www.venables.co.uk/n0305westlawie.pdf

*** FirstLaw July/August 2003**
www.venables.co.uk/n0307firstlaw.htm or
www.venables.co.uk/n0307irishextra.pdf

*** Review of Electronic Irish Reports and Digests on Justis.com November/December 2003**
www.venables.co.uk/n0311justisirish.htm or
www.venables.co.uk/n0311irishextra.pdf

*** LexisNexis Professional January/February 2004**
www.venables.co.uk/n0401lexisnexisirish.htm or
www.venables.co.uk/n0401irishextra.pdf

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