

Towards Free Access to Law Research Experience and Prospects

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Internet Era and Legal Information

The Legal Research World

- developed and disseminated databases from all different law sources
- built up supporting tools facilitating access to information

Free Access to Legal Information

The stakeholder:



- can retrieve the database information without paying any subscription
- can reach the information he/she is looking for in an easily way
- can clearly comprehend the information substantial contents

ITTIG's Case

Research activities concentrated in two major directions:

- Free access to legal information: many different databases (bibliographical, legislative, historical, lexical) have been built
- Supporting tools facilitating access to legal information



Databases and guides

This involves the management, the updating and the distribution of law and law related databases on-line and via CD-ROM. The on-line version of electronic archives, held on the ITTIG server, is distributed via Internet. The Institute manages the production and distribution of various archives, mostly bibliographies, of present-day and historical material. Whilst some archives are no longer updated they are nevertheless maintained on-line due to current interest in them.

The ITTIG has also prepared a series of guides to facilitate the retrieving of websites of legal interest.

On-line updated archives

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|------------------------------------|--|
| • DoGi | Abstracts of law journal articles |
| • DoGiS | Index of foreign legal periodicals |
| • BIG | Bibliography on pregnancy termination |
| • Law and Disability - VIPD | European, national and regional legislation, jurisprudence on Independent Life of People with disabilities |
| • Gride | General Laws of the State of Milan (1560 - 1796) |
| • Bandi medicei | La legislazione medicea nelle raccolte dell'Archivio di Stato di Firenze (1532 - 1737) |
| • LLI | Italian Legislative Language |
| • Library | Catalogue of ITTIG library |
| • Circulars CNR | Circulars and other directives of the Italian National Research Council |

ON-LINE UPDATED ARCHIVES (in Italian)

- **DoGi**
- **DoGiS**
- **BIG**
- **Law and Disability - VIPD**
- **Gride**
- **Bandi medicei**
- **LLI**
- **Library**
- **Circulars CNR**

CD-ROM ARCHIVES (in Italian)

- **ITLaw**
- **DTI**
- **BEGA**
- **Gride Sanità**

ON-LINE NOT UPDATED ARCHIVES (in Italian)

- **APAM**
- **STOP**
- **BIGA**
- **DAUE**
- **EURO**

GUIDE TO LAW ON THE INTERNET (in Italian)

- **Diritto Italia**
- **GIGO**

DoGi - Dottrina Giuridica Features

Bibliographical database started from 1970

Content: references of articles (scientific contributions, summaries of cases, commentaries to statutes, conference papers, book reviews) in Italian legal periodicals (about 250); 330,000 records containing value-added utilities (abstract, classification, acts and case law citation and full-text link, and others)

Updated: bimonthly

Distributed: demo version by ITTIG (free)
complete version by publishers (on pay)

DoGi - Dottrina Giuridica Dissemination Policy

- From 1970 to 2003 free access thanks to public funds (Cnr, Ministry of Justice, Chamber of Deputies and others)
- From 2004 onwards as public funds were partly reduced, it became mandatory to accept the idea to disseminate the database through commercial publishers (subscriptions to www.infoleges.it,)



not to close the service and to keep its high quality features

DoGi - Dottrina Giuridica

Present Situation: Sustainability?

- Nowadays it is a service very highly appreciated by the scientific, academic and professional community, but no longer sustainable publicly
- ITTIG's policy would be still a free access dissemination, but it cannot be afforded in the present general and national financial situation

The question is:

how can a public institution afford the costs of a highly important service for the community free of charge?

We have no answer yet!

Caselex - Case Law Exchange Features

- Caselex is an Internet based unique point of access to important national case law (UE member States and EFTA) linked to the implementation of EU law (i.e. decision of supreme and high courts), within selected areas of law.
- It is enriched with added value tools (metadata and multilingual thesauri) facilitating access to the documents according to the knowledge needs and expectations of European professional and non professional users.

Caselex - Case Law Exchange

Present Situation: Sustainability?

- It is presently funded by the European Commission (e-TEN program) for experimenting if such type of service is sustainable without the support of public funds.
- The publishers involved in Caselex dissemination through subscriptions find many difficulties to realize a business venture with revenues.

Therefore, it is apparent that:

Free access to this kind of systems is not sustainable although appreciated by stakeholders

Maybe some answers will come from the 3rd plenary session

Tools supporting access to legal information

ITTIG developed different tools subdivided into:

- Semantic
- Structural
- Knowledge-oriented

Function: linguistic and content meaning

Tool typologies:

- **Classification Schemas**

- almost all ITTIG's DBs are equipped with systematic domain-oriented classifications

- **Thesauri**

- Thes/BID: a multilingual Thesaurus on Computers and Law
- Eurovoc: feasibility study on interoperability among 5 thesauri of interest for EU activities (thesaurus mapping)

- **Ontologies**

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- JurWordNet, extension to the legal area of the Italian part of the EuroWordNet initiative (2000-2003)
- LOIS - Lexical Ontologies for legal Information Sharing (2002-2004) a multilanguage legal ontology based on the WordNet model
- DALOS, DrAfting Legislation with Ontology-based Support (2006-2008) offers to law makers knowledge management tools to improve the terminological consistency within the multilingual complexity of European legislation
Two levels of semantic information:
 - Terminological sources, extracted from legislative texts
 - Ontological layer providing semantic description of linguistic concepts

Structural Tools

Function: organizing information from a formal and substantial point of view

Tools:

- NiR - Norme in Rete (Italian legislation on the net): some standards for legislative acts have been developed which are now implemented by some Italian public administrations (xml-based NIR-DTDs, an unambiguous identifier based on URN technique allowing references to be expressed in a stable way, independently of document physical location (URL))
- xmLeges: an open source application suite for legal drafting
- Law Making Environment: a system of integrated tools, to support the production and management of legislative sources and direct search of relevant provisions

Knowledge-oriented Tools

Function: Converting available information into achievable knowledge

Tools:

- ELIOS Environmental Legal Information Observatory System (1998 -)
 - provides the description of relevant websites dealing with Environmental Law all over the world
 - supports users in their navigation towards Environmental information connected with the Law
- ABC for the Law

Knowledge Oriented Tool: ABC for the Law

www.nir.it/abc/html/indice.htm

- supports citizens (also non experts) when accessing the NiR Portal
- aims at explaining some basic legal concepts the knowledge of which is essential for aiding non experts in their legislation search
- focuses the attention specifically on:
 1. choice of relevant concepts
 2. the way they are introduced

Result

Enlargement of access to legislation for a general public

Prospects

Imperative

Make it possible to realize an effective free and easy access to legal knowledge = **real right to access legal information**

Methodology

- *Practical Element*: Producing DBs and make them freely accessible
- *Formal Element*: Producing tools facilitating the comprehension and searchability of legal contents

Result (FEI)

Free Access = No money

Easy Access = No barriers

Indipendent Access = no legal background needed

Conclusions

**Is access to raw data to be conceived
as real access to information?**

**Is it possible to guarantee
free access to legal information
without taking care of its quality?**

**Is sustainability possible
without any external fund?**