Legal Text Retrieval and Information Services in Digital Era

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Abstract

India being a huge country by population has lots of court judgments available on print format to various law libraries of the country. Keeping in view the user demand into the library, this article touches the need for computerized legal text retrieval and information services for providing effective services to the users. Part of the discussion in this paper is the process of legal text retrieval that includes search file, search strategies and legal metadata, where search strategies include constructing a search request with the use of boolean operators. Problems of synonyms and homonyms are also covered in this article and in the end the legal information services in modern era are discussed which include online and offline databases.

Keywords : Legal text retrieval, Legal metadata, Information services

0.   Introduction

Information play a significant role on all walks of life and lawyers are no exemption. A lawyer's success is more depends on the latest information about his case. He/she has to keep in touch with latest information. Information explosion in the field of law necessitates computerization of library and information centers so that legal professionals can get specific information expeditiously about a case.

1.   Need of Computerized Legal Information System

?   In a typical situation, a lawyer may be ignorant of the detailed applicable rules and these rules have to be dug out in some way according to legal method.

?   Interpretation of statutory provision may yield one or more rules and one rule may be typically based on more than one legal source and lawyers have therefore to identify the relevant legal sources which when interpreted yield the applicable rules.

?   Lawyers cannot cope up with sequentially reading all possible text.

?   To handle multiple cases of various areas.

2.   Process of Legal Text Retrieval

It provides the framework for text retrieval; helps together with retrieval tool, search request, problem identification, secondary search request and antecedent/ consequent.

3.   Problem With Legal text Retrieval

The fundamental problem derives from the combination of free-text and Boolean processing as a means of retrieval. Usually all the words in the full text or abstract are indexed, given the open text nature of law. This means that while relevant documents may be returned on a keywords search, they shall be subsumed in a wealth of irrelevant material too i.e. levels of recall and more importantly relevance are deceptively low and the users must sift through these to get useful materials. Given that the volume of legal method

is rapidly increasing, the number of random and meaningless association made on a keywords search is likely to increase (despite moves towards allowing users to limit their search to a particular legal area), thus exacerbating this problems.
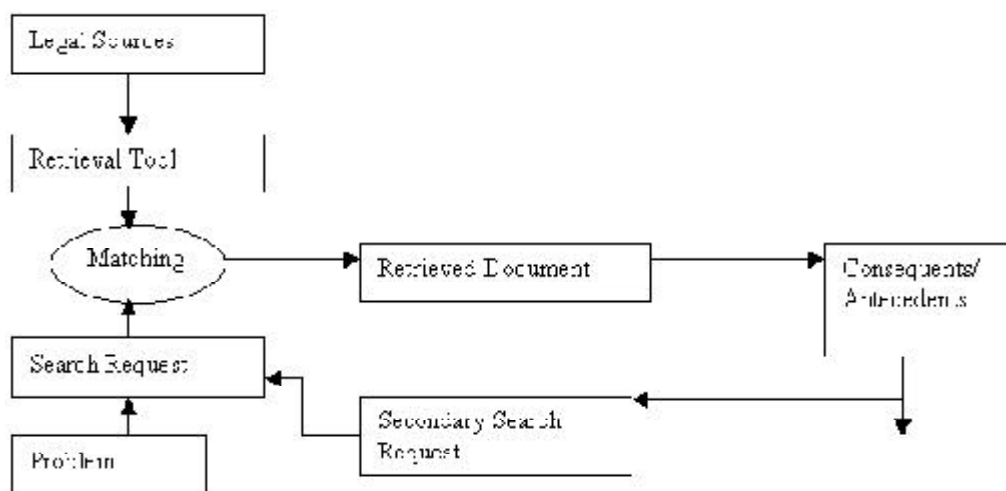

Figure 1. Legal text retrieval process

3.1 Text file

Text file is a copy of the input text; exactly it fed into the program, the program will however process the text for at least two purposes;

a.   It will strip the text of codes which may be residue of a word processing publishing system and which governs layout and similar properties of the text.

b.   Text Retrieval explicit it will identify the beginning of a document, a word, a sentence and a paragraph. And file indexed in such a way that program easily may retrieve a document by its address and display the text on the screen.

3.2 Search File

Search file establish the program that will discard a small number of frequently occurring words, typically conjunction, pronouns, adverbs, words like and well it and so on, a large total number of words in any text is made up of those commonly used words the function will vary with the language but typically, fixed field can retrieve document easily; it defined as records in any conventional database system and these field are as under:

?   Party Name

?   Judge Name

?   Date of Judgment

?   Subject

?   Court

?   Lawyers Name

?   Evidence Persons

?   Place of Parties

?   Citation of Statutes

?   Case CR No / RSA No

?   Journals Bibliographical Detail

3.3   Search strategies

Search strategies we construct for better search results but before its construction we must have some prerequisites, which include:

a.   Problems Partition

b.   Set of concepts with understanding of Synonyms and Homonyms.

c.   Proper Use of Boolean Curse

d.   Spelling

First we should understand the problem and partition of it, and is very important because its partition can close to the solution.

Secondly, set of concepts and synonyms understanding. We sometimes make up few synonyms of a problem for a single idea. An example often cited is danger weapon. An idea encountered in the context of criminal law where provision of several jurisdiction have increased penalties if the criminal act is carried out using a dangerous weapon. In the context of a problem the idea may be expressed by obvious example gun or knife. Synonyms comes in several categories, a common diction is between is context independent and context sensitive synonyms.

4.   Legal Information Services

Presently more and more legal firms are launching their websites to provide legal information services to lawyers so that lawyers can get maximum information about a case. Following are some examples for some famous legal reference tools;

4.1   manupatra.com

It has large number of online databases, the sets provides comprehensive information on wide range of issues:

a.   1000 forms

b.   1000 central acts

c.   Stamp duty act of 9 states

d.   Court Rules

e.   Cause list

f.   Court fees

g.   Tribunals

h.   Court Calendars

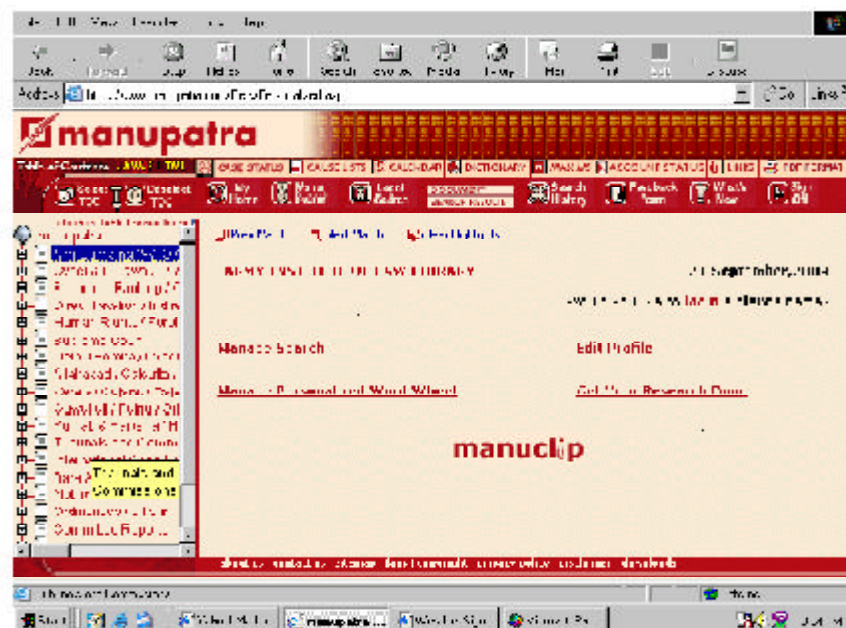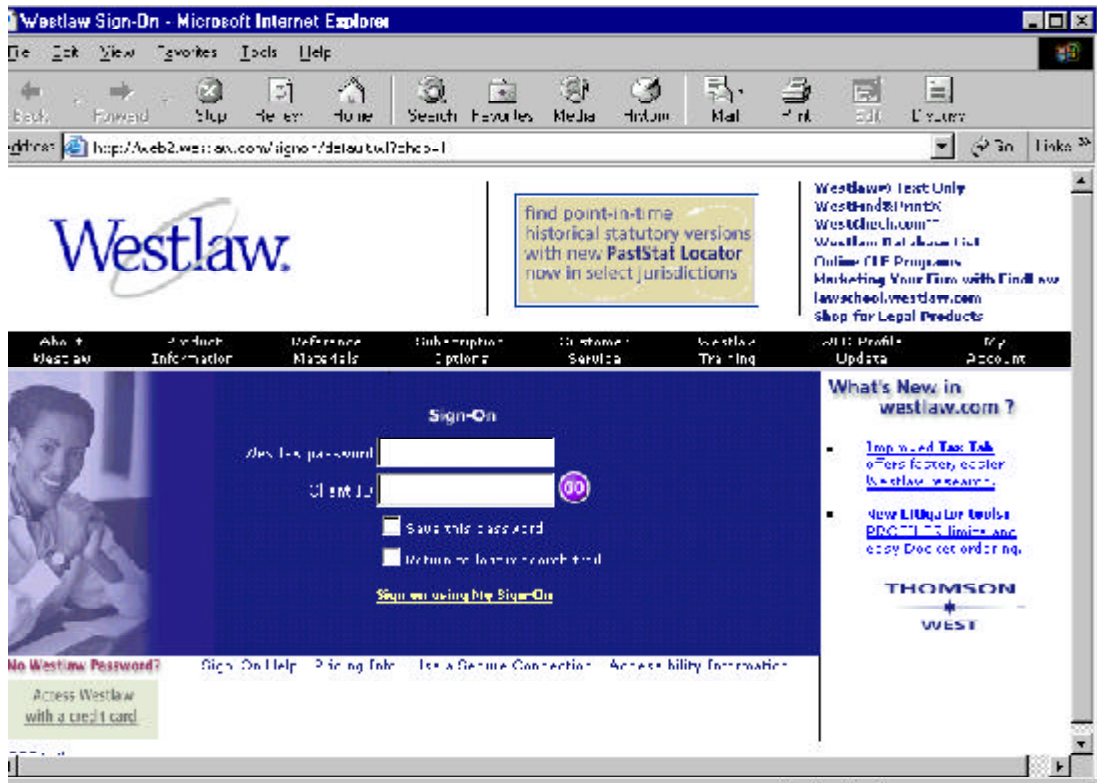i.   Stamp Duty

j.   Notification and circulars

Figure 2. Manupatra a legal reference tool

4.2   SC Case finder (Offline Database)

This database provides comprehensive details of Supreme Court (SC) Cases from 1950 to till date, with search facility - first search, word assist, browsing through search request, going through the each result, parts of case notes, skipping to any case note in the result list at random, rearranging the search result in different order, search with in search, search through topic statutes, case name approach, print the case, adding your own annotation, advance search.

4.3   West law

This site gives comprehensive details of legal research service, instant access to statutes, new business information, public record, form, career at west and other information of federal circuit courts.

5.   In-house Database

In-house database can be developed using WINISIS software, fields for FDT are mentioned above in the legal metadata, this type of database are very useful for users of law library.

5.1   News clipping Service

Newspapers clippings are very much useful for legal professionals, and in library we can develop a Newspaper Clipping Database for legal information service with WINISIS software. One example of this type of database has given below:
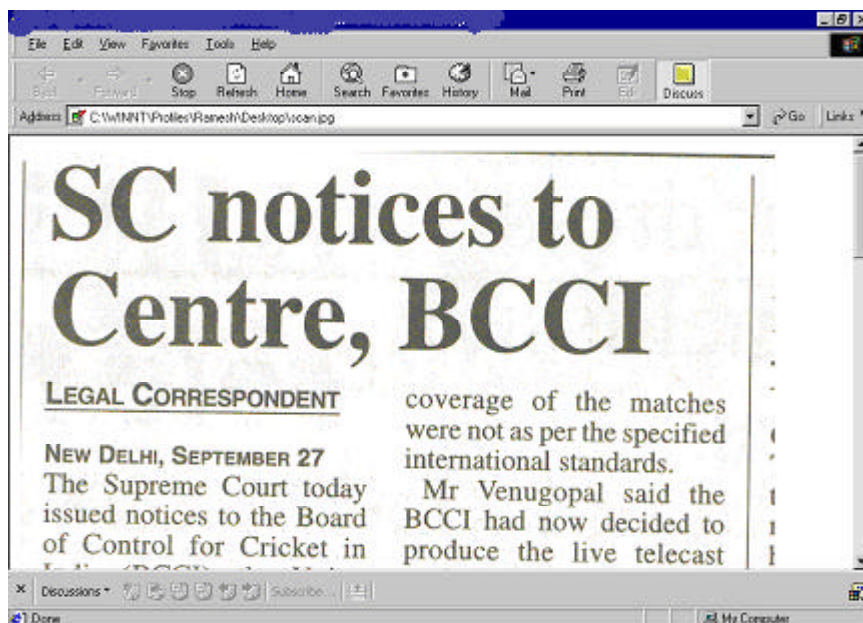
Fig. 3. Full text of news

6. Conclusion

Information is the lifeblood of a knowledge-based economy. By collecting data from many different sources and translating them into meaningful information, databases are indispensable to legal professionals, business people, scientists, scholars and consumers. Most recent legal information is published in electronic databases. New information technologies and electronic communication facilities provide opportunities for libraries to play an even more prominent role in the support of teaching, learning and research than before. The use of information technology in libraries will helps in processing and providing the legal information to the users. It is becoming clear that the future in providing legal information will be in electronic format. Therefore, it is critically important to establish from the outset clear standards for publication over the Internet.

7. References

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