

How to Make the "Invisible Web" More Visible

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Whenever someone mentions the invisible Web, lawyers reasonably wonder what they are missing--what is so invisible.

The good news is that this invisible Web is not that far away, and it consists of many resources that lawyers already recognize (especially lawyers who have read this column). Such web sites as Findlaw <http://www.findlaw.com/> and the National Library of Medicine's PubMed <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi> are included in some compilations of the invisible Web resources.

There are several reasons why the invisible Web is invisible. Some web sites use formats for information that cannot be scanned by search-tool spiders for indexing. Some sources are proprietary. And other sources have data that change continuously so that the data are hard to index.

Directories

Large collections of hypertext links with some commentary about each one to help users make reasonable choices about using them characterize directories. One of the biggest ones that lawyers use is Findlaw <http://www.findlaw.com/>. Another example often cited here as a starting place for medical information is the National Library of Medicine's Medline Plus directory at <http://www.medlineplus.gov>.

The Librarian's Index to the Internet <http://lii.org> is an annotated directory of over 14,000 online resources. The major benefit here is that someone has reviewed the data and concluded they were relevant.

InfoMine <http://infomine.ucr.edu> is an academic index to over 120,000 resources reviewed by librarians relevant to nine major categories.

Do not forget the use of your public library. Most public libraries have access to online resources through their web sites. You can access this material from anywhere in the world, as long as you have access to the Internet. All you need is the uniform resource locator (URL) or Internet

address of your public library, your library card, and sometimes, your personal identification number (for security) to access databases for free that would be expensive to access through other means.

Article resources

There are some web sites that will provide direct access to articles free of charge. When that feature is available for articles you find on the National Library of Medicine's PubMed, there is a hypertext link on the citation. But you have to look for the availability of the free citation, because many journals keep full text access as a revenue generator.

Looksmart's FindArticles archive <http://www.findarticles.com> contains over 5.5 million articles selected from over 900 publications. Many articles are available for free. Some articles are considered premium content for which there is a fee to access. General article classifications include arts and entertainment, automotive, business and finance, computers and technology, health and fitness, home and garden, news and society, reference and education, and sports. There are better search tools available elsewhere, so an appropriate use of this resource would be to find the full text of a citation you have found elsewhere (on PubMed, for example).

Singingfish <http://www.singingfish.com> is an audio-video search tool that searches for a number of different formats and types of data. For example, when searching for a video recording of a beating heart, I retrieved a few country-western songs about the beating heart and was able to limit to medical material that generated a relevant recording.

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