



TEN ESSENTIAL (AND FREE) ONLINE LEGAL RESOURCES

Some of the best legal resources online are also free. Listed below are ten of the most useful free websites. These sites cover a variety of topics from legislative history to municipal codes.

Looking for other useful free legal research websites? The Reference Desk is available to discuss no-cost legal research.

1. GPO ACCESS

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov>

The Government Printing Office (GPO) contains a wealth of executive and legislative resources. It is possible to browse and search the United States Code, Statutes at Large, the Federal Register, and the Code of Federal Regulations, along with many other federal resources.

2. Thomas

<http://thomas.loc.gov/>

THOMAS is an excellent website for tracing federal legislative history. Beginning with the 101st Congress, (1989-1990) a bill's evolution through Congress can be tracked. Full text of House and Senate Bills as well as amendments and progress of a bill are easily summarized at THOMAS.

2. Findlaw

<http://www.findlaw.com>

Findlaw, owned by Thomson West, offers a wide collection of free legal resources and links. The United States Code, recent Supreme Court decisions, forms, and links to state laws are some of the many resources available on Findlaw.

4. Google Books and Google Scholar

<http://books.google.com/> and <http://scholar.google.com/>

In addition to revolutionizing Internet searching, Google is also changing libraries. Depending on the copyright status of a book, Google allows you to read either full text or snippets of text from a book. Similarly, Google Scholar allows you to search scholarly publications. While not all of these publications are available in full text, it is still a great way to find citations to useful articles or books.

5. Martindale

<http://www.martindale.com>

Martindale Hubbell is the premier source of attorney profiles. This wealth of information is reproduced, in limited form, for free on Martindale.com. The amount of information in each listing will vary by attorney, but may contain areas



of specialty, date of birth, undergraduate school, law school attended, and year admitted to the bar. Finally Martindale also includes a peer review rating of the attorney in select profiles.

6. Congressional Research Service (CRS) Reports

<http://www.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/crsreports/>

CRS reports are non-partisan research reports written for members of Congress by a division of the Library of Congress. The reports cover a wide variety of issues that are faced by Congress. Unfortunately, the Library of Congress does not publish these valuable reports directly, but the University of Maryland Thurgood Marshall Law Library has posted many of them online.

7. Municode

<http://www.municode.com>

Municode.com collects ordinances from throughout the United States. Searching through multiple codes is only available via paid subscription, but you can search individual municipal codes for free.

8. A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation, U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates. (1774 – 1875)

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amlaw/lawhome.html>

The Century of Lawmaking by the Library of Congress is a valuable first stop in historical legal research. Among the many unique free resources available are:

Statutes at Large (1789 – 1875)

Journals of the House and Senate (1789- 1875)

Journals of the Continental Congress (1774-1789)

Letters to Delegates of Congress (1774-1789)

9. A Taxonomy of Legal Blogs

http://3lepiphany.typepad.com/3lepiphany/2006/03/a_taxonomy_of_l.html

Legal blogs are a great way to stay up to date with both developments in the law and legal scholarship. Ian Best's Taxonomy of Legal Blogs has categorized hundreds of legal blogs from attorneys, judges, professors, and law students.

10. SSRN Legal Scholarship Network

<http://www.ssrn.com/lsn/index.html>

Looking for free scholarly articles or articles available before they are published in a journal? SSRN's online publication allows authors to disseminate their work faster than the traditional law journal system.