LORD of the Links: The Legal Online Resources Database

Abstract: At the 2004 BIALL Conference the Legal Online Resources Directory (LORD) was launched. The Legal Information Group (LIG) is currently developing the Directory to meet the needs of today's information professionals. James Mullan, Chair of LIG, gives a history of the LORD project and an outline of its possible future.
Keywords: legal databases; links; online services

Background

LORD is a free online resource, which provides the details of electronic resources that are available to BIALL members and the wider online community. Concentrating on priced publications in the UK and Ireland, LORD provides the details of the item's publisher, coverage and the host (platform or application that the content is available on). [See Figure 1 for the results of a search for *Lloyds Law Reports*]. LORD has been designed to answer questions such as: What is available on employment law? Where can I get access to the Law Reports Online? What are the latest online resources that Lexis-Nexis and Sweet & Maxwell have published? LORD can be searched by title, publisher,
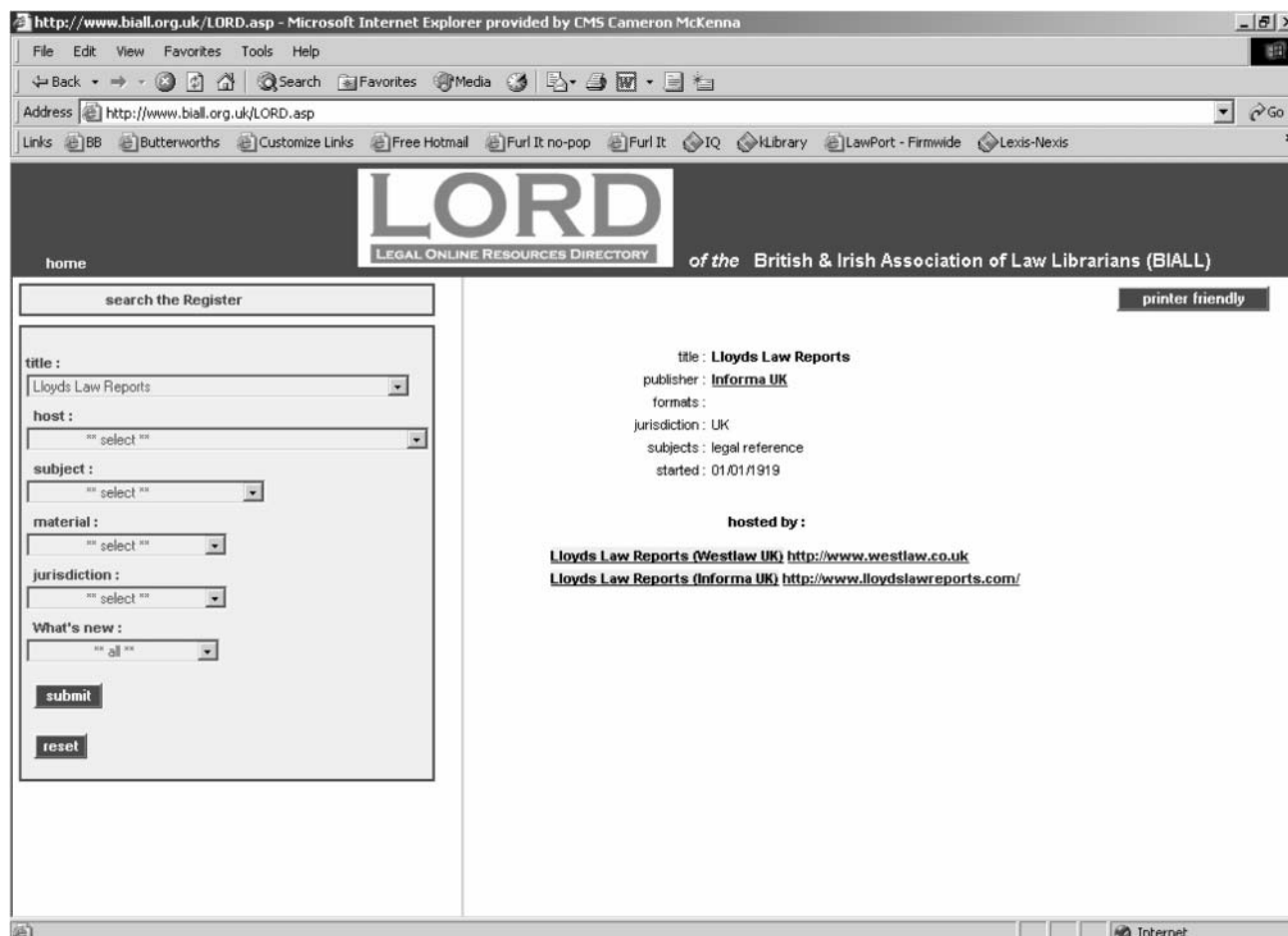

Fig. 1: Results of a search for title Lloyds Law Reports

subject, type of material (legislation, journals, law reports, directories etc), by jurisdiction or by recently added material. (What's new).

LORD also provides further information on the title and the host, including gaps in the content coverage, pricing information (where available), frequency of updates and, if you are a BIALL member, any reviews of the title. These reviews are intended to be informative guides to the functionality, coverage and use of the title (See Figure 2 – *Lloyds Law Reports* further information). By providing this information, LORD aims to assist information professionals to make informed purchasing decisions.

A Brief History of LORD

Right from its conception in April 2002, LORD has been, and remains, a partnership between legal publishers and members of the BIALL community. The original project team, who were given the task of creating LORD, comprised Ann Hemming and Sue Pettit from LIG, Bailey Solutions, as the database developer, and a project board consisting of Martin Casimir (Lexis Nexis Butterworths), Julie Stott (Sweet & Maxwell), Christine Miskin, Marianne Barber and Gail Sanderson. By June 2004 the main database had been built and work could commence on

populating it. A team of law librarians and a group of publishers completed this process. The register was made available on the BIALL website shortly after this process was completed, and was shown to BIALL members at the BIALL conference in Edinburgh.

What's happening now?

The LORD project is now managed by Emily Allbon who, with a small development team, has been commissioning reviews of the material on the LORD website. These reviews are crucial to the success of LORD, as they provide a personal element to the register and are an opportunity for BIALL members to review what their peer groups are using to support the work they undertake. The last few months have seen the team remove material that was on the Butterworths Netbos Services and replace it with content on the new Lexis-Nexis Global Platform. The team are also reviewing and adding updated content from Westlaw, Jordans and Justis. LIG are encouraging other publishers, who may not have content on LORD, to register their content with the development team. These publishers include Tottel, Informa (who have launched two new platforms recently), Cecile Park Publishing, CCH/Croner and Kluwer Law.

Fig. 2: Lloyds Law Reports – Further Information

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To ensure that LORD remains a valuable resource, LIG will be actively marketing the register to both BIALL members and legal publishers and also the wider online community.

What about the future?

LIG's priorities for the development of LORD are:-

RSS feeds for new content

RSS (Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summaries) feeds or web feeds are a quick and easy way to inform people about new content on a website. An RSS feed is a simple XML document that "packages" content for easy distribution and may contain text, images and even media files.

LIG hope to incorporate an RSS feed on the LORD website, which BIALL members can subscribe to and receive regular updates on content. If you are interested in knowing about new resources in employment law, you could subscribe to an RSS feed that will tell you when a new resource has been categorised as "Employment Law".

Data feeds for publishers

One of the major stumbling blocks for publishers has been the inability to upload large amounts of data at once. We aim to tackle this by creating a standard data feed which will streamline the process of uploading new or updated content quickly and accurately. LIG believe that having a data feed is vital if we want to encourage additional publishers to support the project.

Reviews section

LIG would like to see the reviews that are currently on LORD incorporated in their own section. At the moment, searching for a title, choosing to look at more information on the title, and then reading the review, which is displayed at the bottom of the details page, is the only way to display these. Creating a separate section for reviews will ensure that they are more accessible.

The LORD homepage

This will be redesigned so that is consistently branded as LORD. The existing colours will be reviewed and amended if necessary, so that it feels like a sister site to the BIALL website. Elements of the homepage will also be moved or realigned so that the it is clearer and less cluttered.

Improvements to the search and navigation

LIG and Bailey Solutions will be making some minor changes to the search, navigation and display of results to make LORD more intuitive. These include redesigning the search results screen, so that the search results appear in a clearer and more accessible format, displaying the number of titles returned and adding grouping functionality so that results can be grouped by host, subject or material type.

We will additionally be making some changes to the Admin functions to make reviewing and editing existing material easier.

Is LORD really necessary?

LIG certainly think so! As the focus of LORD is on both priced and free resources for legal information professionals, it can react quickly to any changes to online resources published by LNB, Sweet & Maxwell and others. LORD also provides BIALL members with an easy to use and authoritative database of electronic products in what is a very fluid marketplace.

LIG also believe that the project has helped to strengthen ties and dialogue between the end users of these products and suppliers, an initiative that is mutually beneficial and goes hand in hand with the BIALL Code of Good Practice for Legal Publishers, which LIG administers. LIG, on behalf of BIALL members, continues to work to encourage dialogue and develop good working relationships with the legal publishing community.

We believe the future is bright for LORD and, with the developments outlined in this article incorporated, it really could be LORD of the links.

Reference

Hemming, Ann & Pettit, Sue (2005). The LORD Project, *Legal Information Management*, 5(1) pp 62–63.

Biography

James Mullan has been an Information Officer at CMS Cameron McKenna since May 2001 and Chair of the BIALL Legal Information Group since June 2005. James has previously written about the BIALL Code of Good Practice for Legal Publishers.