

The New Jersey Courts Publishing Project of the Rutgers–Camden Law Library*

John P. Joergensen**

Mr. Joergensen reviews the history of the New Jersey Courts Publishing Project developed by the Rutgers University School of Law Library–Camden, describes its purpose and implementation, and reports use statistics and the results of a user survey. He concludes that while the project has achieved many of its goals, there are still improvements that need to be made in the future.

¶1 The Rutgers University School of Law Library–Camden initiated the New Jersey Courts Publishing Project to make New Jersey legal information available over the Internet to the public at no cost.¹ The project first went online in June 1997, with a searchable collection of decisions of the New Jersey appellate and tax courts. Since the project began, it has expanded to include New Jersey administrative law decisions, decisions of the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey, and opinions of the New Jersey ethics advisory committees.

¶2 These collections have seen substantial use by both the public and the legal community. For the first time, lawyers and individuals without convenient access to a law library and unable to afford the high cost of online legal information sources have access to these important public documents.

¶3 Now that the project has been in operation for some time, it is time to ask not only whether its goals have been achieved but also whether it was (and is) a worthwhile undertaking for an academic library. This article will attempt to answer these questions by reviewing user survey results and the use data that has been collected over the life of the project. The analysis indicates that the project is reaching the population to which it is directed and has indeed been worth doing.

¶4 Before presenting the use data and survey results, however, I will outline the background and history of the project. I will also describe how we process the documents and the entry points for the various collections.

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** Reference Librarian, Rutgers University School of Law–Camden, Camden, New Jersey.

1. The several document collections currently maintained by the project are accessed from individual pages on Rutgers School of Law–Camden Law Library, at <http://lawlibrary.rutgers.edu> (last visited June 16, 2002). From there, click on link to “New Jersey Legal Resources” from the menu section. The side menu will expand to show New Jersey Resources. The project maintains all the items that are listed in the “From Rutgers” section of that menu.

History and Background

¶5 As part of the state university for New Jersey, the mission of the Rutgers–Camden law library is to serve not only its “natural” clientele, the students and faculty of the law school, but also the public and bar of New Jersey. While the library has always made print versions of New Jersey legal materials available to the public, in practical terms the information was still not accessible to most citizens of the state. Publishing on the Internet offered an opportunity to reach people who could not come to the library.

¶6 From the beginning then the purpose of the project was mainly to serve the public. At the same time, we felt that if the law library were to gain a reputation for being *the* source for New Jersey primary source legal material, the reputation of the law school would be enhanced.

¶7 Rutgers University School of Law Library–Camden began the New Jersey Courts Publishing Project in January 1997. At that time, Rutgers approached the New Jersey Administrative Office of Courts (AOC) about the possibility of publishing opinions of the New Jersey state courts on the Internet. After some consideration, the AOC agreed to supply the law library with the approved opinions of the New Jersey Supreme Court, the New Jersey Superior Court Appellate Division, and the New Jersey Tax Court. By June 1997, all supreme court opinions from 1994 and appellate division and tax court opinions from 1995 were available on the law library’s Web site. All cases were searchable and available in full text. Along with the archive, arrangements were made to supply Rutgers with electronic copies of all new decisions on the day they were made public.

¶8 In early fall 1997, Barclays Law Publishers ceased publication of the *New Jersey Administrative Reports*. Upon learning this the law library contacted the New Jersey Office of Administrative Law (OAL) and offered to publish its reports on the Internet. The law library began publishing the opinions of the OAL in November 1997. The Rutgers collection of administrative law opinions begins at the point where the *New Jersey Administrative Reports* ceased publication. While these opinions are still available on LexisNexis, the Rutgers–Camden Web site is the only source for them that is available to the public.

¶9 Due to the nature of New Jersey administrative procedure, the OAL decisions are not as timely as the AOC decisions. There are two distinct types of OAL decisions. All administrative law cases are initially brought before an administrative law judge who works for the OAL. That judge decides the case and issues an initial decision which is then transmitted to the agency that has responsibility for the subject matter of the case. The director of the agency can then issue a final decision affirming or overturning the initial decision.

¶10 Initial decisions from the OAL are electronically transmitted to Rutgers in batches about twice a month. Final decisions, however, are a different story. The vast majority of New Jersey agencies did not respond to the OAL’s request to send electronic versions of their final decisions to either the OAL or directly to Rutgers.

The agencies continue to send paper copies to the OAL, which then sends them to Rutgers, again in batches about twice per month. As time allows, these documents are scanned and placed on the Rutgers Web site as images.²

¶11 In fall 1998, the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey asked the Rutgers–Camden law library to publish its opinions. We decided that this would be a significant enhancement of the project since their addition would mean that the public had access to the recent opinions of all courts that affect New Jersey, with the sole exception of the New Jersey Superior Court trial divisions.³ In addition, district court cases had been requested by respondents to our user survey.

¶12 Beginning in October 1998, the district court has supplied the law library with opinions selected for publication by its judges. Unlike the state courts, the district court does not have a central committee to determine which opinions should be published. Rather, each judge determines the opinions to be published, where to publish them, and when to send them out. The result is that Rutgers has been receiving roughly the same material that is sent to the large legal publishers, at about the same time.⁴ Robin Kershaw, the district court branch librarian in Camden, acts as the coordinator in this process. The judges e-mail the decisions to her. She collects them and sends them on to Rutgers.

¶13 Finally, in spring 2000, the administrator for the New Jersey Supreme Court's advisory committees on attorney ethics⁵ asked us whether we would publish their opinions. These opinions were already published in the *New Jersey Law Journal* and in a collection issued by the New Jersey Institute for Continuing Legal Education.⁶ The committees, however, felt that the print sources did not have sufficient circulation. They wanted all New Jersey attorneys to have quick and easy access to all of their opinions. We agreed.

¶14 An initial problem was that most of the 805 opinions issued by the committees since 1963 were available only in print. In an extraordinary effort, however, the staff of the advisory committees retyped all the opinions, making it possible to create a document database without having to scan any paper documents. This collection went online on March 17, 2001. We continue to receive new advisory opinions on the date of their publication.

2. See *infra* ¶¶ 32–37 for a discussion of the scanning process.

3. This public access includes all the court decisions accessed through Rutgers–Camden, as well as the decisions of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, available through Villanova University School of Law, at <http://vls.law.vill.edu/Locator/3/index.htm> (last visited July 2, 2002) (Villanova Law Library is the official archive for the opinions of the Third Circuit, containing opinions from May 1994 to the present.).

4. Unfortunately, we have not been able to obtain the cooperation of one of the judges of the court. As a result, our coverage is not exactly the same as LexisNexis and Westlaw.

5. The advisory committees consist of the Advisory Committee on Professional Ethics, the Committee on Attorney Advertising, and the Committee on the Unauthorized Practice of Law. Each committee issues guidance opinions on questions that have been confidentially submitted by attorneys.

6. PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY IN NEW JERSEY: OPINIONS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON PROFESSIONAL ETHICS, COMMITTEE ON ATTORNEY ADVERTISING AND COMMITTEE ON THE UNAUTHORIZED PRACTICE OF LAW (1996).

¶15 It should be noted that there is one significant limitation to the usefulness of the appellate, tax, and district court opinions. Current citation rules for New Jersey courts require all references to opinions be made to the official print version of the opinion.⁷ While it is possible to display the basic citation for each case, pinpoint citations to individual page numbers of the official version cannot be done.

¶16 It is hoped that in the not too distant future, the New Jersey courts may consider the adoption of a vendor neutral system of citation, such as the one recommended by the American Association of Law Libraries.⁸ If this were to occur, the decisions available from the Rutgers site would be as useful as any other version of the same opinions.

Implementation and Maintenance

Production

¶17 For all the decisions that went into how to create and maintain the project's collections, two considerations were paramount: there would be only one person to maintain it and there would be very little money to buy software or equipment. Fortunately, for the initial setup, Tom Ryan, the law school's network administrator, did a great deal of work selecting software and modifying it to suit our needs. He is also entirely in charge of all the server hardware. The law school itself has also been very supportive in allowing the library to use one of the law school's servers.

¶18 As for software, however, the overriding consideration was that it be free, or at least very inexpensive. We accomplished this by starting with the Linux operating system on the server. While Linux itself is free, the law school does purchase the Red Hat version of Linux to get the ease of installation, additional utilities, and support that comes with that product.⁹ Along with Linux comes Apache Web server software as well as all of the Web scripting languages, database programs, and most other utilities we use. For full-text indexing, we use FreeWais and HtDig, both freeware search engines.

7. N.J. R. APP. P. 2:6-2(a)(5) ("New Jersey decisions shall be cited to the official New Jersey reports by volume number but if not officially reported that fact shall be stated and unofficial citation made. All other state court decisions shall be cited to the National Reporter System, if reported therein and, if not, to the official report.").

8. CITATION FORMATS COMM., AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, UNIVERSAL CITATION GUIDE (1999), available at http://www.aallnet.org/products/universal_citation_guide.pdf. See also CITATION FORMATS COMM., AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, UNIVERSAL CITATION GUIDE (version 2.1), at <http://www.aallnet.org/committee/citation/ucg/> (2002) ("Version 2.1 is being published on the AALL Citation Formats Committee's website for public comment. [It] integrates the first edition of the *Universal Citation Guide*, which included rules for citing judicial decisions, constitutions, statutes, and administrative regulations, with rules for citing law reviews and court rules, drafts of which were published for comment in *Law Library Journal* in 2000.").

9. As of July 1, 2002, the Red Hat Linux 7.3 Professional boxed set, with CDs, full documentation, and support is available for \$199.95.

¶19 To get the documents, we rely on the participating courts. For the New Jersey appellate and tax opinions, the courts have an FTP server where they post all new published opinions. The federal district court, OAL, and ethics advisory committees all send documents as e-mail attachments to a specially designated e-mail address.

¶20 Checking all the e-mails and the FTP site for new material can be time-consuming and tedious, as are the tasks of converting the documents to HTML and extracting metadata to use in creating additional access points for the collections. To take care of this, we have developed our own programs to check for new material, verify that it is new, convert the new documents to HTML, convert case and statute citations into hypertext links, extract metadata, and start the program that re-indexes the full-text search engine.

¶21 One problem we have is that it is impossible to get 100% accuracy in automatically extracting metadata from documents prepared and formatted by various people. In the case of the U.S. district court decisions, the formatting and placement of useful information varies so greatly from document to document that we cannot do it at all. Since we do not have the time or personnel to go through these documents individually, we do not extract any metadata from them. As a result, the only search options for this collection are the full-text search engine and by docket number.

¶22 The formatting and layout are reasonably uniform for the decisions and opinions of the New Jersey Supreme Court, appellate division, tax court, OAL (initial decisions), and ethics advisory committees. For these documents, our in-house processing software does extract useful information that can be used as metadata. Even for these documents, however, the process of locating and extracting information is still not totally reliable. To handle this, once the processing programs have collected metadata from all documents to be processed, they display the data to me in a text editor, and pause processing until I have checked all the information and corrected any errors. This method of checking for errors is important because it ensures the accuracy of the data going into the database while still saving a great deal of time. An all-or-nothing approach would be either frustrated by too many errors or would take far too much time to be practical.

¶23 The information collected for the court and administrative law cases is docket number, date of decision, party names, judge, and the first paragraph of text (to act as a rough summary to display with search results). This information is then loaded into an mSQL¹⁰ database, allowing users to retrieve cases by date range, party name, docket number, or judge. It also allows us to have a dynamically updated “recent cases” page that automatically retrieves cases decided during the previous two weeks.

10. A freeware database program that comes with most versions of Linux.

¶24 Another feature added for the appellate court cases is a database table that contains the official New Jersey citation for each document. Unfortunately, this data must be compiled manually when we receive advance sheets. The time spent on this is worthwhile, however, as it allows users to retrieve documents by citation.

¶25 Citation information is also used for hypertext linking between documents. At present, as part of their initial processing, all decisions of the New Jersey Supreme Court and Appellate Division, and all administrative law opinions are searched for citations to cases and to the *United States Code*, *Code of Federal Regulations*, the U.S. Constitution, and the *New Jersey Statutes*. When a citation is found, it is converted into a hypertext link to an online version of the cited source. For case citations, the hypertext link is to a cgi program that displays the Rutgers–Camden version of the document, if available. If the citation is to a case we do not have, it displays a page with links to the LexisNexis and Westlaw versions of the document, or, in the case of a *United States Reports* citation, to the free FindLaw version.¹¹ For the U.S. Constitution, *United States Code*, and *Code of Federal Regulations*, links are made to the Cornell Legal Information Institute Web site.¹² Finally, the New Jersey statutory citations are linked to an online version of the *New Jersey Statutes* available on the Web site of the New Jersey Legislature.¹³

Interface Issues

¶26 The main concerns we had in designing and implementing the interface to the document collections were simplicity, speed, and ease of use. The use of databases with selected metadata was key to addressing these concerns. Using a combination of mSQL and Mod-Perl,¹⁴ we are able to get very fast response times, even where large numbers of documents are being retrieved. Another advantage of this system is that it is easily upgradable. For example, in the near future, we are planning to add new functions that will require an upgrade to MySQL, another freeware database program that has more robust features. To do this, we will simply have to export the mSQL tables to text, import the text to MySQL, and rewrite a small amount of code in the existing Web scripts.

¶27 As for the interface itself, we wished to make it as simple as possible so that modem users would be able to get as much functionality from the system as faster users. To that end, simple, server-side CGI scripting was used throughout and graphics were kept to a minimum. The result is clearly readable text that

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11. FINDLAW, U.S. SUPREME COURT OPINIONS, at <http://www.findlaw.com/casecode/supreme.html> (last visited July 2, 2002) (“FindLaw’s searchable database of the Supreme Court decisions since 1893 (U.S. Supreme Court Decisions: U.S. Reports 150–, 1893–). Browsable by year and US Reports volume number and searchable by citation, case title and full text.”).
 12. LEGAL INFO. INST., CORNELL LAW SCH., CONSTITUTIONS, STATUTES, AND CODES, at <http://www.law.cornell.edu/statutes.html> (last visited July 2, 2002).
 13. New Jersey Legislature, at <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/> (last visited July 2, 2002).
 14. PERL is an interpreted programming language that is often used, as here, in Web programming. Mod-perl is a PERL interpreter that resides in the server’s memory. It significantly speeds the execution of Web programs written in PERL.

downloads quickly even on the slowest of computers and Internet connections, and displays uniformly on all types of browsers.

Choice of Search Engine

¶28 Even now, we are constantly searching for better search engines. At present, we still use FreeWAIS, which allows us to offer an extended set of Boolean operators for searching, easily configurable search results, fast retrieval times, and fast re-indexing times. We have found that re-indexing times (i.e., the time it takes to completely recompile the word index used by the search engine for its searches) can vary greatly with different search engines. Re-indexing is very processor intensive and greatly slows down the server when it is running. It also frequently shuts down the search engine itself while it is running. Many search engines allow for an “incremental” index that just indexes new material. However, the addition of incremental indexing slows down retrieval.

¶29 The main problem we have with FreeWAIS is that, by default, the search results are not very useful, just filename and file size. For the collections for which we have compiled useful metadata, this is not a problem: we display the metadata as search results. For the U.S. district court decisions, however, the format of the documents is too variable to extract metadata by an automated process. Practically, since the project is a one-man, spare-time operation, this means that we cannot compile metadata for this collection and therefore FreeWAIS cannot be used. For this reason, we employ the HtDig search engine for the district court decisions. This product has an inferior set of features, but re-indexes quickly and has a nice KWIC (Key Word In Context) results display. Consequently it displays helpful search results despite the lack of compiled metadata. This is by no means an optimal situation, but it is far better than nothing, which, at least for the present, is the other alternative.

Duplicates, Subsequent and Corrected Decisions, and Filenames

¶30 For most of the collections, when files are initially transferred to us, they are identified by their docket number. In the majority of cases, this gives us a filename that is short, logically related to the file, and unique. But with all of the courts, particularly in the case of the administrative decisions, there are often multiple decisions under the same docket number. In the absence of a universal citation for the decisions of these courts, or another identifier that is available on the date of issue, we have developed a simple system of Cutter numbers that are assigned to any subsequent decision. This solution keeps the filenames short and unique while allowing for an unlimited number of subsequent decisions.

¶31 Corrected decisions present a different problem. In our downloading programs, we had originally included a routine that compared the docket number and issue date (the date on which the document was made public, as opposed to the computer file’s creation date). When a docket number matched a document already existing in the collection, the program then compared issue dates. If the dates did

not match, a Cutter was assigned to the new file. If the dates did match, the new file was discarded as a duplicate. This system worked well until we discovered that some courts were occasionally issuing corrected decisions that matched docket number and date and assuming that we would pick up the fact that the previous version should be replaced by the corrected one. Well, of course we should have, but it would be very difficult to automate. Fortunately, the courts have all been very helpful, and now we are specifically notified any time a corrected decision is issued.

Processing OAL Final Decisions

¶32 A continuing problem with the administrative law decisions is that we cannot obtain final decisions in electronic format.¹⁵ The OAL has cooperated by sending us print copies of all final decisions. We have been scanning these documents and making them available to the public in PDF format.¹⁶ The procedure we use for processing these materials is the result of a number of compromises. The result, however, is that the documents are available and reasonably easy to access.

¶33 The first step, the initial scanning, is straightforward. The documents normally come in packets of about twenty-five to forty, and range between one to five pages per document. Since we are only concerned with black and white text, a medium-priced scanner with a sheet feeder is sufficient for the job. The scanner is connected to a Windows workstation running Kodak Imaging for Windows software. By default, the scans are saved as multipage TIFF format images.

¶34 Now come the compromises. To fully integrate the documents into the collections, they should be converted to text, put into html format, and indexed for full-text searching. However, even with the best OCR¹⁷ software currently available, this would entail a great deal of manual editing before the documents would look presentable. In fact, the OCR conversion itself takes a significant amount of time even before corrections are made. With our time and budget constraints, this simply is not practical.

¶35 Another consideration, however, is that the majority of the final decision documents merely affirm the initial decision of the administrative law judge without discussion or analysis. That is, the documents are very short and tend not to contain any of the subject words that a user would search for in the first place. So

15. According to New Jersey administrative procedure, cases are first heard by the OAL, which issues an initial decision. Within 60 days, however, the commissioner of the department with jurisdiction over the case may issue a final decision. The final decision may adopt, modify, or reject the OAL's initial decision.

16. "PDF" stands for "Portable Document Format." It is also known by the name of the most popular program to view these documents, Adobe Acrobat. PDF documents can contain either text, images, or a combination thereof. The main advantage, however, is that the Adobe Acrobat viewer is free, commonly available, and installs itself as a seamless plug-in for most Web browsers. It is therefore an optimal choice for displaying multipage images, or other highly formatted material. The file sizes are large, and interface a bit clunky, but PDF is a workable compromise between utility and appearance.

17. Optical character recognition (OCR) programs take an electronic image file and look through it for shapes that it recognizes as letters. The image file is then reassembled as a text or word processing document that can be edited.

converting the scanned images to text would be expensive and time-consuming but yield little benefit.

¶36 Our solution to this situation has been to keep the final decisions in a graphical format, and use the related initial decisions as the entry point for locating final decisions. The initial decisions, written by the administrative law judges, do have substantial topical discussions and are prime candidates for searching by topic. We wrote a program that matches initial decisions with related final decisions (by matching up docket numbers which are the root of all the filenames). The program inserts a link to the related final decision at the top of the initial decision. This allows users to search the initial decisions, immediately determine whether a related final decision is in our collection, and, if so, go directly to that final decision.

¶37 Although we decided not to convert the final decision images to text, we nevertheless thought it best to convert them to PDF. Even though they are still retained as pure images, it was thought that most users would be more familiar with Adobe Acrobat for viewing PDF files than they would be with a TIFF viewing program.

¶38 In addition to the above, we have also included a function on the administrative law search page for users to see lists of all decisions (initial and final) issued from each New Jersey agency. Users are then able to browse lists of all the final decisions from an agency as well as search through the initial decisions.

Use of the Collections

¶39 A look at the raw numbers suggests that the project has been a success. As of late February 2002, the collections together had more than 11,800 documents, to which we are adding daily. (See table 1.) By current estimates, we expect to have 1.5 million document downloads by visitors to the site in 2001–2002. (See table 2.) To understand just how useful the site is, however, it is important to see who is using the site. We expected it to be used heavily by the New Jersey bar, but it was important to find out whether it had become a resource used by the public as well.

Table 1

Number of Documents in Each Collection—February 15, 2002

Court	No. of Documents
Supreme Court	876
Superior Court Appellate Division	2963
Tax Court	230
Administrative Law Initial	3287
Administrative Law Final	2465
U.S. District Court	1177
N.J. Ethics Advisory Opinions	805
Total	11,803

¶40 To get some idea of user demographics, we placed an informal survey on the site and encouraged visitors to complete it. In this article, the results of surveys completed between January 1, 1998, and December 31, 2001, are presented.¹⁸ Despite the informality of the survey, the results show that the New Jersey Courts Publishing Project is serving the research needs of a wide variety of users. We conclude that it has been a success in making the law of New Jersey available to the public in a way that has not been done before.

Use Analysis from Weblogs

¶41 The weblogs¹⁹ were used to obtain a count of the number of documents that were accessed for each category of document. Unfortunately, for the first two years of operation, the data saved from the weblogs consisted of the number of hits on the main search pages for each collection rather than the number of documents accessed. Although those figures did give some idea of the volume of traffic at the Web site, they were not as accurate a measure of actual use as a count of the specific documents accessed. For this reason, only download figures for 1998 to the present were considered in the use analysis for this article. Table 2 shows the estimated total number of documents downloaded for each court for the past three years. Each number is a projection based on a sample of at least four month's data from our Web server's activity logs.

Table 2

Usage Statistics

Court	2001-02	2000-01	1999-00
Supreme Court	165,891	35,770	123,452
Superior Court Appellate Division	452,158	90,155	216,306
Tax Court	6607	n/a	n/a
Administrative Law Initial Decisions	397,271	213,525	202,210
Administrative Law Final Decisions	116,758	103,660	76,291
U.S. District Court	329,538	150,015	143,102
N.J. Ethics Advisory Opinions	32,152	n/a	n/a
Total	1,500,375	593,125	761,361

¶42 Initially, it was assumed that we would experience a steady increase in growth before reaching a steady plateau in use. The figures, however, show a different story. (See table 2.) During the 2000-2001 time period, the AOC had begun

18. *See infra* ¶¶ 46-55.

19. The weblogs record every file accessed via the Web. Although the IP address of the requesting computer is recorded, these are never examined unless needed to solve a security or network problem. For this article, only the numbers of downloaded documents were counted.

posting two weeks' worth of opinions from the Supreme Court and Appellate Division on its own Web site in addition to transmitting them to Rutgers–Camden. Since the AOC retained only the decisions of the two most recent weeks and did not have a searchable interface, its action did not eliminate the need or value of the Rutgers–Camden collection. Since the AOC places new decisions on its Web site at the same time they are made available to Rutgers–Camden, however, decisions are available on the AOC Web site from a few minutes to two hours earlier than they are at the Rutgers site.²⁰ We assume that at least initially this development siphoned off users who accessed our site mostly to check for new material. Why the download figures for those two courts have bounced back so dramatically is unclear but certainly welcome.

¶43 One reason for the disparate numbers may be that the 2000–2001 sample may have been taken around the period just after the AOC announced that it was making the most recent two weeks of decisions available. This may have made for somewhat artificially low annual use estimates for the Rutgers Web site. It is also possible that the figures are skewed due to the posting of an unusually popular decision during the 2001–2002 sample period. However, an analysis of the frequency of download for individual opinions showed that there was no single opinion that was downloaded more than 490 times during the last sampling period.

¶44 Another factor in the significantly increased activity at the Web site for 2001–2002 was the more than doubling in the rate of downloads of U.S. district court cases, from 150,015 to 329,538. Again, there was no single recent opinion or group of opinions that accounted for the increase, just a general increase in the overall activity with the collection.

¶45 In contrast to decisions of the New Jersey appellate courts and the U.S. district court is the use of the New Jersey administrative law decisions. These have shown a consistent and steady increase in use over the last three years.

Analysis of User Surveys

¶46 Not long after the project went online, we made a survey page and encouraged users to submit their comments. Between January 1, 1998, and December 31, 2001, 1333 surveys were submitted. Users provided identifying information such as occupation, state of residence, and county (if in New Jersey). The survey also asked participants whether they were using the service from their office, home, library, school, or other location; and why they were using the service, giving them the choices of preparing lawsuit for themselves or others, general legal research, nonlegal research, or other.

¶47 The survey also asked a series of questions about the user's evaluation of the Web site, including the following:

20. The time difference varies depending on how many decisions are issued on a given day, and whether we are able to process the decisions immediately after they are issued.

- What do you like most about this service? (Open text box for answer)
- What would you like to see changed? (Open text box for answer)
- Do you think it is important for us to carry older cases than we currently have? (Very important, Somewhat important, It would be nice, Who cares?)
- Do you use any of the other legal links or references available at this site? (Yes/No)
- What other material would you like to see published here? (Open text box for answer)
- Comments (Open text box for answer)

¶48 The responses to the open-ended questions covered a very wide range of topics, from questions about how to effectively search the collections and general encouragement or condemnation of the site (most were encouraging), to a few political and other statements wholly unrelated to the Web site. Of the positive remarks, the most common was an expression of general appreciation that the site existed and was free. Users were also generally pleased with the simple interfaces and relative ease of navigation within the site.

¶49 Most negative comments were directed at the full-text search engines. Many simply stated that the search engines were too difficult to use and that they could not find what they were looking for. Others were critical of the fact that the search engines for the administrative law and U.S. district court decisions differed from those provided for the other collections. Of the first group of complaints, most expressed a general desire for a search engine that was easier to use. In response, no search engine is perfect, but the FreeWAIS and HtDig engines that we use are among the best of the freeware options available. Anything appreciably better would require a significant monetary investment.

¶50 The vast majority of other comments made by respondents were suggestions for additional services. Table 3 lists the most frequent suggestions.

Table 3

Most Frequent Suggestions for Additional Services

Suggestion	No. of Responses
<i>New Jersey Administrative Code</i>	72
Improved search engine	54
Trial court opinions	53
<i>New Jersey Statutes</i>	43
New Jersey court rules*	38
Federal court opinions†	32
Unpublished opinions	31
Official citations‡	31
Law reviews	27

(cont.)

Pro-se help	25
Topic digest	25
Litigation and other forms [#]	24

* These are now available online from other Web sites.

† These requests pre-date the beginning of our U.S. district court collection.

‡ Although there is some delay with the new opinions, we have been inserting the citation to the New Jersey Reports, New Jersey Superior Court Reports, and New Jersey Tax Court Reports in our opinions. We plan to expand this to include the U.S. district court decisions as well.

There are several sources for New Jersey litigation forms that are available from other Web sites.

¶51 Complaints from other respondents resulted from the fact that they had been searching for specific documents that turned out either to be trial court decisions (which are not available on the site) or decisions that pre-dated the coverage of the collection. We have requested the trial court opinions that are approved by the court for publication, but as yet the AOC has not decided to make them available to us. As for older court opinions, the desire that they be included in the collection was reflected in the responses to a question directly on the subject that was included in the survey. As table 4 indicates, 67% of the respondents thought it was at least somewhat important to include older opinions. Not surprisingly, our long-term wish list for the Web site includes expanding the collections to include all older decisions. That effort, however, will require the digitization of print reporters, a very expensive process that is currently beyond our means.

Table 4

Support for Adding Older Opinions

Opinion	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Very important	620	47.44
Somewhat important	256	19.59
It would be nice	288	22.04
Who cares?	23	1.76
No opinion	120	9.18
Total	1307	

¶52 From the very beginning, we were interested in knowing the occupations of the users accessing legal materials from the site. While we assumed that the majority of users would be lawyers or paralegals, we were hoping that there would be a significant number of nonlawyers who were able to access court opinions for perhaps the first time. As table 5 shows, our initial expectation was justified, with about 47% of the respondents identifying themselves as either lawyers or paralegals. It was gratifying to discover, however, that the majority of respondents reported occupations other than lawyer or paralegal. This is evidence that the exis-

tence of the Web site has made legal documents in electronic form available to populations that have not had an appreciable level of such access before.

Table 5*Occupation of Users*

Occupation	2001	2000	1999	1998	Total
Attorney	44 (40.74%)	66 (40.74%)	127 (42.76%)	169 (35.65%)	406 (39.00%)
Other	31 (28.70%)	43 (26.54%)	69 (23.23%)	102 (21.52%)	245 (23.54%)
Businessperson	9 (8.33%)	17 (10.49%)	40 (13.47%)	59 (12.45%)	125 (12.01%)
Paralegal	9 (8.33%)	14 (8.64%)	24 (8.08%)	36 (7.59%)	83 (7.97%)
Other student	5 (4.63%)	6 (3.70%)	14 (4.71%)	30 (6.33%)	55 (5.28%)
Law enforcement	5 (4.63%)	7 (4.32%)	10 (3.37%)	32 (6.75%)	54 (5.19%)
Law student	2 (1.85%)	6 (3.70%)	6 (2.02%)	25 (5.27%)	39 (3.75%)
Teacher	3 (2.78%)	3 (1.85%)	6 (2.02%)	18 (3.80%)	30 (2.88%)
Prisoner	0	0	1 (0.34%)	2 (0.42%)	3 (0.29%)
Editor, computer books	0	0	0	1 (0.21%)	1 (0.10%)
Total	108	162	297	474	1041

¶53 Along with information about the user's occupation, we were also interested in finding out where people were accessing the service from. There were two reasons for this. The first was an interest in simply knowing the location. The other was to get some idea of why they were using the site. The working assumption is that if users are accessing the Web site from their workplace, then the use of the site would be business-related. If accessed from any other location, however, the use is probably personal. The results were much as expected: about an even split between home and office use, with a few others accessing from other places. (See table 6.)

Table 6*Location for All Users*

Location	No.	%
Home	430	45.12
Office	435	45.65
Library	25	2.62
School	21	2.20
Other	14	1.47
Select	28	2.94
Total	953	

¶54 Another interesting but expected result was the correlation between the location from which the site was accessed and whether the user was a lawyer or nonlawyer. While table 6 shows that for users generally there is an even split between access from home and office, table 7 shows that lawyers were more than twice as likely to access the Web site from their office (and therefore presumably for work purposes), while nonlawyers were almost twice as likely to access the site from home (presumably for nonwork purposes).

Table 7*Comparison of Locations for Lawyers and Nonlawyers*

Location	Lawyers	Nonlawyers
Home	179 (32%)	420 (59%)
Office	368 (66%)	230 (32%)
Library	8 (1%)	17 (2%)
School	1 (0.2%)	23 (3%)
Other	3 (0.7%)	23 (3%)

¶55 As expected, the survey confirmed that the vast majority of users are from New Jersey. (See table 8.) It also showed a wide distribution of respondents throughout the counties of New Jersey. Not surprisingly, the more populous counties tended to have the largest number of users. (See table 9.)

Table 8*Users' State of Residence*

State	No.	%
New Jersey	595	66.33
New York	44	4.91
Pennsylvania	43	4.79
Other	215	23.97
Total	897	100

Table 9*New Jersey Users' County of Residence*

State	No.	%
Atlantic	25	2.53
Bergen	88	8.89
Burlington	60	6.06

(cont.)

Table 9 (cont.)*New Jersey Users' County of Residence*

State	No.	%
Camden	62	6.26
Cape May	18	1.82
Cumberland	9	0.91
Essex	108	10.91
Gloucester	26	2.63
Hudson	29	2.93
Hunterdon	22	2.22
Mercer	64	6.46
Middlesex	91	9.19
Monmouth	78	7.88
Morris	72	7.27
Ocean	52	5.25
Passaic	35	3.54
Salem	6	0.61
Somerset	46	4.65
Sussex	20	2.02
Union	67	6.77
Warren	12	1.21
Total	990	

Where Do We Go from Here?

¶56 There are several major improvements that can still be made to the New Jersey courts collections. First is to compile metadata for the U.S. district court opinions. If we can find the personnel and time to do this, we will be able to offer the same search options that are available for the other collections. The increased utility would be well worth the effort.

¶57 Another goal is to convince the courts to make published New Jersey state trial court opinions available to us. Although the courts approve a limited number of these decisions for publication in the West reporters, Westlaw, and LexisNexis, they have yet to release them to Rutgers. We feel their inclusion is important in order to make the site a complete resource for New Jersey primary source legal materials. Since published New Jersey trial court opinions would adhere to the same style and format guidelines as appellate decisions²¹ and would be coming

21. The New Jersey courts have their own manual of style that all court opinions adhere to. MANUAL OF STYLE FOR LEGAL CITATION IN NEW JERSEY (1997), available at <http://www.judiciary.state.nj.us/style.htm>.

from the same source,²² processing and integrating these documents into the existing collections should require minimal extra effort.

¶58 Finally, if possible, we would like to add all older New Jersey court decisions to the collection. Unfortunately, this is the most difficult task. Since we cannot obtain these documents in any electronic format, they will have to be scanned from the print reporters and converted to text. Since this would require a great deal of time and effort, it cannot happen unless significant outside funding becomes available.

Conclusion

¶59 When this project was started in 1997, we had decided to take the words of Albert Gore seriously and attempt to create an Internet source that would make a difference in people's lives. The way we went about doing this was largely determined by our position as law librarians in a New Jersey public law school. We wanted to increase the availability of New Jersey legal material that was otherwise difficult for the public to find, and to do it for free.

¶60 A shortage of resources and personnel has put significant constraints on how much we can do and how well we can do it. However, given the motivation and some creativity, a functional Web site can be constructed, and online collections of primary source documents can be made available. The basic requirements to do this are those all librarians possess: the desire to disseminate information and the knowledge of how to organize it for easy access. Some programming skills are clearly an advantage, and in our case were necessary to compensate for the lack of personnel. However, a great deal of the things we did by writing our own software can also be accomplished manually, or with more sophisticated (and more expensive) prepackaged software than we use at Rutgers. For example, products such as ColdFusion can make it easy to build Web-enabled databases and searchable collections with little or no programming experience. In other words, extra time and money can be substituted for programming skills.

¶61 As the data discussed in this article show, the Rutgers University School of Law Library–Camden has made a great deal of information available to the public, and that information is being used. It is information that is generally expensive to obtain by other means. From the survey results, it is clear that the project is primarily serving the public and bar of New Jersey, but the site also attracts users from all over the country. As an endeavor that has furthered the library's mission, the New Jersey Courts Publishing Project has been a success. With luck, we will continue to maintain and improve it for many more years.

22. All New Jersey state court opinions released for publication are approved by the AOC publications committee and are released by the AOC.