

Legal Information Institute – Information Sheet

Background

- **Structure:**
 - ◆ Established with a \$250,000 multi-year startup grant from the National Center for Automated Information Research
 - ◆ A collaboration of Co-Directors and Co-Founders Peter W. Martin and Thomas R. Bruce
 - ◆ An activity of the Cornell Law School rather than an outside consulting or publishing enterprise or a multi-institution entity (like CALI)
- **Aims:**
 - ◆ “To connect the full resources of the school with the legal profession, with other law schools, with the world” – outreach or publication goals quite similar to those underlying a good number of past and present law school activities
 - ◆ To carry out applied research on the use of digital information technology in the distribution of legal information, the delivery of legal education, and the practice of law
 - ◆ To carry out these activities in partnership with but not under the control or direction of such other key actors as law firms, bar associations, public law making and applying bodies, commercial publishers, and other academic institutions
- **Premise:**
 - ◆ That revolutionary changes in information technology have opened new opportunities for law schools of Cornell’s stature and strength – opportunities to undertake directly activities previously possible only through intermediaries (commercial publishers) or impossible altogether due to barriers of distance and cost
 - ◆ That the very developments which present these opportunities also pose a serious threat to the long-term strength and autonomy of law schools failing to respond to them

Accomplishments of the Startup Years (1992-1996)

- **Establishing the foundation:**
 - ◆ Technology – Created the first law site on the Net and the first Windows-based Web browser (Cello)
 - ◆ Content, Information Architecture and Delivery Strategies – Established high standards of format and functionality for basic law document and collection types, now widely emulated and implemented by others on the Net and on disk, built a core collection useful to a wide audience, and created the first e-mail based legal current awareness service (liibulletin)
 - ◆ Audience – Brought an immense and diverse national and international audience into a relationship with and awareness of the Cornell Law School
 - ◆ Working Relationships – Secured sponsorship and joint study funding from all the major law publishers, cooperation from some of the public institutions whose output the LII had begun to distribute, and serious involvement on the part of various constituencies making use of LII products and services (e.g., teachers of high school and college courses dealing with law)

The Present Years – Scaling Up to Keep Pace with Use, Learning from Constituencies (Old and New), Plotting a Distinct Course in a Crowded and Rapidly Changing Environment

- **Holding onto and learning from the Institute's diverse audiences:**
 - ◆ Moving from an experimental to a production standard of reliability and performance, while continuing to innovate (in a much more competitive environment)
 - ◆ Avoiding overreaching or building what cannot be sustained

- ◆ Dropping or cutting back on functions begun by the LII but now ably assumed by others (e.g., the Directory of Legal Academia)
- ◆ Drawing faculty and students into the process
- **Current products and services (impact, source, maintenance, audience):**
 - ◆ Web-based legal information:
 - ◆ Roughly 4.5 million hits a week, over 18 million a month, spread over a collection both broad and deep (running at 12 hits a second during peak daytime hours, spread across our several servers)
 - ◆ By contrast a strong "law school presence site" of a peer institution (Duke) currently draws roughly 700K hits in a good month
 - ◆ During a typical week accesses from over 70 foreign nations
 - ◆ Approximately 50,000 links to LII materials from other Internet sites, according to AltaVista (FedLaw, MSNBC, ...)
 - ◆ Format and functionality elements that set the standard for others (such as GPO Access)
 - ◆ Disk-based products (both downloadable and on CD-ROM) – CD-ROM Collection of Historic Decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court (now in its 3d edition, used in many high schools and colleges), American Legal Ethics Library (a new and important resource resulting from a unique cooperative authorship arrangement bringing together private law firms, state and national bar associations, a major malpractice insurer, and law school faculty), plus a collection of core statutes, codes, and treaties (from the U.C.C. and Federal Rules of Evidence to the GATT, all downloadable in several formats from the LII website)
 - ◆ E-mail delivered case notes – Anchored by the liibulletin which goes out to approximately 17,500 direct subscribers and many more by redistribution, but also including the student-prepared liibulletin-ny (covering the New York Court of Appeals)
 - ◆ Other mail-based services – Teknoids, the leading list for law school and law firm technical support personnel, and Dispute-res, the leading list for individuals interested in alternative dispute resolution
 - ◆ An Internet-based law course offered to students at other institutions – Copyright and Digital Works course, now in its third year, and offered to students at Colorado, Kansas, Chicago-Kent as well as Cornell, unique in the law school world and placing Cornell Law School in nearly all discussions of the pedagogical, policy, and economic issues raised by distance learning
- **Relationships:**
 - ◆ LEXIS (more recently Matthew Bender) and Harvard Law School – (The LII, through Bruce, is coordinating a major multi-media project that draws upon seven members of the Harvard Law School faculty.)
 - ◆ NYSBA – (The LII has created and now maintains resource pages on the Web for many of the New York State Bar Association sections.)
 - ◆ New York Court of Claims – (The LII has begun a major project under contract with the court that contemplates creation of a decision database that will serve its judges and clerks as well as those who appear before them and a system that will automate its ongoing maintenance.)
 - ◆ the U.S. Supreme Court – (As the unofficial Web site of the U.S. Supreme Court, the LII has achieved a close working relationship with the staff of the Court.)
 - ◆ law firms, bar associations, and others involved in the creation and distribution of the American Legal Ethics Library
 - ◆ the U.S. Peace Corps – (The LII is responsible for the technology component of the Lawyers for Africa program and serves as backup resource for the Zambian Legal Information Institute, home of the first comprehensive digital law collection in southern Africa.)
 - ◆ Colorado, Kansas, Chicago-Kent law schools – (the institutions participating in the LII's Internet course) plus many others interested in that path breaking project
 - ◆ Harvard Law Library and the Ames Foundation – (Nuremberg digital library project and Bracton on-line)

Future Plans and Challenges

- Exploring integrated editorial and software strategies for facilitating the use and understanding of law materials by those who are not expert researchers of U.S. legal documents – including students, professionals from other fields heavily touched by law, lawyers and judges from outside the U.S., and ordinary citizens
- Expanding on the number and range of LII international projects
- Achieving the right scale (information, innovation, extent of internal relationships)
- Securing the financial and institutional support that will secure the future of this truly unique activity, ideally at Cornell Law School, beyond the years of active involvement by its two founders

Reviews, Ratings, and User Comments

- From the February 1998 edition of *Internet Lawyer*:
Just about any lawyer who's spent more than three minutes online knows that Cornell Law School's Legal Information Institute site is fantastic.
- The LII was named the "Best Law School Web Site" by legal.online in 1998, and it received honorable mention in the following categories (judged without regard to type of institution):
 - ◆ Best Legal Information Starting Point
 - ◆ Best Legal Research Site - Cases
 - ◆ Best Legal Research Site - Laws
- From a legal-research teacher at the University of Wisconsin:
Next week another 265 law students will bookmark the Cornell LII and law library homepage. You are making a significant contribution to legal education and to our access to information. As a fellow educator, I'm extremely grateful (as my students will be also).
- From a lawyer in Texas:
I just wanted to thank you for your on-line law library. We are a small law firm in north-central Texas and rarely need federal law, but when we do, I know exactly where to come. Your on-line U.S. Code is wonderful; the current format is very user friendly. Thank you!
- From a self-described "working grunt":
*I'm not a student. I'm not a lawyer. I'm not a college graduate. I'm just a lower-middle-income-class working grunt. I've never seen the inside of a law library (except on L.A. Law, of course. :-)) and would never consider entering one because I find it so intimidating.... Because of your site and your work, I've read more of the US Code in the past 6 months than I had ever even contemplated reading before in my 36 years on this planet.
So, thank you. You're doing a great service here. You're following the true philosophy of education.*

LII - Co-Directors

- **Thomas R. Bruce** - Prior to co-founding the LII (with Peter Martin) in 1992, Mr. Bruce served for several years as Director of Educational Technologies at the Cornell Law School. He is the author of Cello, the first Web browser for Microsoft Windows, and of a variety of other software tools used by the LII and others. As part of his LII activities Mr. Bruce has consulted on Internet matters for Lexis-Nexis, West Group, IBM, Folio Corporation, and others. He is currently a member of the board of directors of the national computer-assisted legal-education consortium, CALI, and a Fellow of the University of Massachusetts Center for Information Technology and Dispute Resolution. Currently, he is working with seven members of the Harvard law faculty on the development of a comprehensive first-year curriculum to be delivered by electronic means.
- **Peter W. Martin** - Martin is the Jane M.G. Foster Professor of Law at Cornell Law School where he has been a member of the faculty since 1971 and was dean from 1980 to 1988. He is the author of an electronic treatise, *Martin on Social Security Law*, released on LEXIS in November 1990 and published on CD-ROM by Clark Boardman Callaghan in July, 1994, as "Social Security Plus"; an electronic reference work, *Basic Legal Citation* (hypertext 1993); and numerous electronic articles on the history and future of legal information technology. The first of these was published on the Internet

in January 1994 by GNN Magazine. His 1994 Internet article on Five Compelling Reasons for Lawyers and Law Firms to Be on the Internet has been widely cited and in revised form appeared as a cover article for the Sept. 1995 ABA Journal. Martin is the author of numerous print works, as well. His most recent journal articles have dealt with the implications of computer technology for legal research, law libraries, and legal education. He received the 1992 Law Library Journal Article of the Year Award and his Social Security treatise received the 1994 Infobase Industry Award for "Best from the Field of Education."

Professor Martin is a past president of the Center for Computer Assisted Legal Instruction and past chair of the Association of American Law Schools Section of Law and Computers. His electronic treatise work was supported in part by the National Center for Automated Information Research (NCAIR), which awarded him the center's first Dixon Senior Research Fellowship in 1988. In 1992 with support from NCAIR and others, he (and Thomas R. Bruce) established the Legal Information Institute at Cornell (the LII).

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