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The Index to Legal Periodicals on CD-ROM, Wilsondisc

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GOLD *continued*

information you are dealing with and can address the software and hardware issues.

- What is the most appropriate software to fill your needs?
- What hardware (storage, speed, type of printer, multi-user access) is required?

Once these decisions have been made you can begin to work with your team to develop a coding sheet and database structure which correspond in format to insure the easiest vehicle for data entry. Also working with this team you will need to settle on a numbering scheme for your documents which assigns each document a unique indentifying number.

Testing

Testing and evaluating your design is an important part of the process and one which is often overlooked. It is easier to make changes in your database structure and design before you have entered huge amounts of data. At this point, be sure to mount a test database of 100-250 documents. Use coding sheets prepared by actual coders and have your data entry operator enter the information. Test your product by running as many sample searches as you can think of as well as reports using the results of these searches. Check these results with your team and see what modifications might improve your product, and make any changes now.

This testing process will also give you the data you need to provide an estimate of training, coding, data entry, and

documentation development costs related specifically to the case. At this point, you can develop a budget specific to the life of this case.

Be sure to build in standards for quality control at both the coding and data entry level. Proofreading and checking for

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consistency among coders is one of the most difficult areas to manage. It is essential that you have a database that the litigator trusts.

At the same time, a great deal of attention must be paid to developing a training program for coders, data entry clerks, paralegals, and attorneys who must learn to manage their own database. Ideally, the paralegals and attorneys should be able to do their own searching and produce their own reports. The success of these databases is directly related to free and easy access to the information by the litigator.

In the next issue, I will provide a selected bibliography of software appropriate for litigation support projects running on PCs. ■

The Index to Legal Periodicals on CD-ROM Wilsondisc

By MARSHA BAUM, University of Connecticut School of Law Library

The *Index to Legal Periodicals* (ILP) from August 1981 to June 30, 1987 is now available on CD-ROM from the H. W. Wilson Company. The subscription cost of \$1495.00 per year appears high when compared with the subscription price of the paper index (\$165.00), but the additional search capabilities such as use of Boolean logic and the ability to search ILP online, paying only communications costs, must be considered in determining the value of the CD-ROM subscription. The CD-ROM subscription includes updated discs each quarter and unlimited online search time in the Wilsonline ILP database with no search charges except communications costs (approximately \$10.00 per hour). Online searching in other Wilsonline databases can also be done using the Wilsondisc work station, but these searches will be charged at the normal search rates.

The paper *Index to Legal Periodicals* has suffered in comparison with the *Legal Resource Index*. One advantage that the *Legal Resource Index* has had over ILP is the

inclusion of several years' indexing in one source. Now the use of Wilsondisc's ILP provides several years of coverage in one source. The number of periodicals indexed are fewer in ILP than in the *Legal Resource Index*, but the abilities to search using Boolean connectors and to access the most current articles online with no online search charge help to overcome the disadvantage in titles indexed.

The Wilsondisc work station includes an IBM Personal System/2 Model 30 computer and color display, a Proprinter II, a Hayes 1200B modem and a Philips CM 100 CD player, as well as the necessary software and compact disc for searching. The work station appears complicated and has intimidated some patrons, but with coaching, patrons (and librarians) have found the system to be effective in providing citations to relevant articles.

The search modes—BROWSE, WILSEARCH, WILSONLINE and EXPERT—provide different levels of searching. The user who wants to use the system as a cumulation of the paper index

can rely on the word or phrase searching in the BROWSE mode while a more sophisticated user may narrowly define a search using subject, author, title word, journal title, etc. in the WILSEARCH mode. The WILSONLINE and EXPERT modes are more appropriate for the searcher who is familiar with the command language used on the online WILSONLINE databases.

The documentation (*Wilsondisc Guide*) provides explanations for searching in the various modes. Patrons who do not use this guide before beginning their searches may become frustrated because they can easily enter WILSONLINE and EXPERT search modes where they will not receive on-screen instructions for searching. The system has sophisticated capabilities which will require training to use effectively.

Instructions at the bottom of the screens and the help function are designed to lead the inexperienced user through the search. Generally the instructions are sufficient to enable the user to enter a search request and to retrieve results. At some points, the instructions are not complete for all possible procedures and the novice user may become frustrated at being unable to proceed without assistance. Training on the system is therefore necessary, just as training is necessary for WESTLAW and LEXIS use.

The toll-free search/help hotline is available to answer questions and provide long-distance hand-holding for equipment and search problems. The number is printed on the front of the *Wilsondisc Guide* but must not be confused with the customer service number printed on the back of the guide which is to be used only for account and subscription questions. The search assistance personnel have been quick to respond to questions in the few months we have had the system on trial. Although the documentation provides

installation and set-up instructions, a novice (like myself) may need a step-by-step talk-through which was courteously provided. A problem with the March 31st disc, which resulted in inconsistency in search results for the same search in

Instructions at the bottom of the screens and the help function are designed to lead the inexperienced user through the search.

BROWSE and WILSEARCH modes, was resolved with a phone call. Search help is only available between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m. Monday through Friday, which may be a problem for libraries that have heavy use on weekends.

The University of Connecticut School of Law Library has had the use of the *Wilsondisc* work station on a trial basis for two months. The ability to search in a variety of modes (BROWSE, WILSEARCH, WILSONLINE and EXPERT) has proven *Wilsondisc* to be superior to searching the paper indexes for the time periods available. The online search capability for obtaining the most recent citations does present a problem of communications costs, which cannot be predetermined for budgeting purposes, but access to the online database can be restricted for patrons, allowing library staff to determine appropriate use of the updating feature.

Marsha Baum is Public Services Librarian at the University of Connecticut School of Law Library. ■

Student Employees in the Academic Law Library

By JOAN HOWLAND, University of California Law School

Although most academic libraries allocate nearly 20 percent of their personnel budgets for student employees,¹ there is a startling lack of discussion of this management issue among law librarians. Student workers are such a universal feature of the library environment that they are taken for granted by most law library administrators. Students are looked upon as an inexhaustible supply of labor and are generally not given much attention or concern. However, the full potential of student workers is rarely realized and it is time that administrators begin to focus more directly on this staffing issue.

Few academic law libraries could function today without student employees. Students have become the backbone of most library work forces by performing essential tasks such

as assisting at the circulation desk, filing catalog cards, shelving materials, and delivering mail. Some libraries have even assigned students to more sophisticated duties such as bibliographic searching, inputting data into online systems, and copy cataloging.

Students are a mixed blessing. On the positive side, they are an inexpensive, plentiful source of labor with flexible hours. They are willing to perform mundane duties and work irregular shifts such as weekends and evenings. On the negative side, students rarely consider their library jobs a first priority—class work as well as extracurricular and social activities often take precedence over library responsibilities. Other common complaints are that students are unreliable,

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