



## **Equality in Special Education Needs**

Earlier this year, the **Supreme Court** made a major decision to decline the one-size-fits-all approach in special education services for a more individualized plan in the tenth district.

How will this impact our sixth district? Read more on page 12.

## Research Saving Tips: Casemaker, Fastcase, and Google Scholar

by Michael Whiteman, Associate Dean for Law Library Services, NKU Chase College of Law



Researching the law can be a costly affair. In law school, students are introduced to the "big two" in the legal research marketplace: Westlaw and Lexis. Unfortunately, upon graduation, lawyers are faced with the true cost of using these services, and sticker-shock often ensues. Fortunately, there are alternatives to

help attorneys conduct research online at a lower cost. This month, we will look at three low-cost or free legal research alternatives: Casemaker, Fastcase, and Google Scholar.

### Casemaker ([www.casemakerlegal.com](http://www.casemakerlegal.com))

Casemaker leads the pack as the "no-brainer" starting point for legal research. Members of the Kentucky Bar Association enjoy free access to Casemaker's content as a benefit of membership. Casemaker provides access to primary legal content for federal and all state jurisdictions. For example, Casemaker provides easy access to the following Kentucky materials:

- **Administrative Code**
- **Attorney General Opinions**
- **Case Law**
- **Court Rules (Federal and State)**
- **Open Records/Meetings Decisions**
- **Workers Compensation Decisions**

Casemaker does provide a citator service (Casecheck+) but caution should be used as this service is not as thorough as the traditional citator services such as Shepard's or KeyCite.

Casemaker is easily accessible via the web or through an App (available for both Android and IOS systems).

### FastCase ([www.fastcase.com](http://www.fastcase.com))

Another useful, low-cost, legal research system is Fastcase. Fastcase provides access to primary materials from all 50 states and the federal government. It has also partnered with HeinOnline to provide its subscribers with access to a comprehensive law journal library. This addition makes Fastcase a useful source for primary and secondary sources. Fastcase provides easy access to the following Kentucky materials:

- **Administrative Code**
- **Attorney General Opinions**
- **Case Law**
- **Court Rules (Federal and State)**

Fastcase does provide a citator service (Authority Check) but caution should be used, as this service also is not as thorough as the traditional citator services. Fastcase's "Bad Law Bot" will give users an indication of negative treatment, but it too is not quite as reliable as a traditional citator. The Bad Law Bot is algorithm-based, and scans the text of citing decisions looking for "negative words" paired with citations to your case; because words can have different meanings in different contexts, the Bad Law Bot is not a perfect tool for determining case treatment.

Fastcase is available on the web and it has an App for the IOS system.

### Google Scholar ([scholar.google.com](http://scholar.google.com))

Google has become the go-to resource for general Internet searches. The savvy researcher knows that it can also be a good source for some legal material as well. Utilizing the same search engine that drives "normal" Google, Google Scholar provides targeted searching of select legal materials.

Google Scholar includes the following legal materials:

- **Published opinions of state appellate and supreme court cases since 1950;**
- **US federal district, appellate, tax, and bankruptcy courts since 1923;**
- **US Supreme Court cases since 1791.**

Google Scholar also has a fairly robust index of legal journal articles. However, many are linked to HeinOnline, and thus, you may need a subscription to that service to view the full article.

Like Casemaker and Fastcase, Google Scholar has a citator-like function, but it remains of limited benefit. The "How Cited" feature will bring up cases that have cited your case, but you are left to your own devices to determine how these cases have treated your case.

If you need to start your research with primary source materials, one of these three services will give you a much more cost-effective starting point than turning to a higher-priced legal database. Access to secondary sources is still shallow with these sources, and access to a truly useful citator may be many years off with these services. But, if you are looking to save some initial money, Casemaker, Fastcase, and Google Scholar are well worth a look.