



The British And Irish Legal Information Institute

1. BAILII in a Nutshell

The British and Irish Legal Information Institute (<http://www.bailii.org>) is a non-profit making charitable trust which is building and operating an interactive database of full text primary legal materials available without charge on the Internet. BAILII provides, by utilizing low-cost methods, a growing amount of primary and secondary legal material which can be browsed by the user and/or located by using the BAILII search engine. The service is a major tool for legal research. The continued availability and development of the service is of major importance to the practice and teaching of law.

2. Who uses BAILII?

- **47,828** average requests per day
- **1.075 gigabytes** served out per day
- **38%** of our users are **legal professional**
- of those **47% are solicitors** and **53% are barristers**
- **80%** are working in England, **9%** in Scotland, **6%** in Wales and **5%** working are working in Northern Ireland
- Of these legal professionals **71%** use BAILII **once a week**, **16%** **once a month**, **8%** **daily**, **5%** **a few times a year**
- **41%** of this group rate BAILII as **very important**, **32%** **important**, **26%** **useful**, and **1%** **not important**.

This survey was compiled 21 months ago. The figures would be higher now.

There are also many users who do not fit into the survey target population - be they the general public or those outside Great Britain and Ireland who wish to gain ready access to the key texts in our justice system.

3. What can I get on BAILII?

The BAILII web site now contains the key common law databases of recent decisions of the Privy Council, House of Lords and the Court of Appeal, important courts such as the Scottish Court of Session and the Irish Supreme Court, other courts and tribunals, and legislation from three jurisdictions (e.g. Northern Irish legislation goes back to 1495). It also contains recent reports and consultation papers from the Law Commission of England and Wales and the Scottish Law Reform Commission, in addition to the Irish Law Reform Commission materials which have been on the site for some time.

The web site includes most of the recent British and Irish primary legal materials that are freely available to the public. Most of these materials are derived from published and unpublished CD ROMs or provided directly by courts, tribunals and government departments. In addition, it contains materials not available from any other free source. All of the data have been converted into a consistent format and a generalised set of search and hypertext facilities added; this, among other advantages, allows searching across all databases and all jurisdictions.

4. How the BAILII site works now

Prior to the formal establishment of BAILII, the original BAILII website was developed by the Australasian Legal Information Institute (AustLII). The primary server for the BAILII website was located at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia, and most updating and maintenance of the site was done by staff of AustLII. The system is closely based on the AustLII model, and the sophisticated software that drives the BAILII web site is provided by AustLII.

BAILII was incorporated as a charity in December 2000. Since August 2001, BAILII has employed a full-time Executive Director who is based in London at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies in London. The role of the Executive Director is to manage BAILII, and its site, on a day-to-day basis. This person is responsible for overseeing data acquisition, liaising with data providers, facilitating data conversions, helping with the development of standards, and all other matters.

Since July 2002, BAILII has employed a full-time System Administrator/Developer whose chief responsibilities are to maintain and manage the technical infrastructure of BAILII and plan and implement the ongoing development of the BAILII service. BAILII now also employs a part-time Project Officer for three days per week. Editorial work also takes place at University College, Cork.

BAILII is based at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, University of London, at 17 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DR and at the Faculty of Law of University College Cork.

BAILII is associated with initiatives in other countries to establish similar facilities including AustLII (the Australasian Legal Information Institute at www.austlii.org), CanLII (the Canadian Legal Information Institute at www.canlii.org), PacLII (the Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute at www.pacii.org), HKLII (the Hong Kong Legal Information Institute at www.hklii.org), SafLII (South Africa materials at <http://www.saflii.org/>), and indeed a single site which tries to include all the materials offered from those above, WorldLII at www.worldlii.org.

The members of the Board of Trustees are:

Lord Saville of Newdigate

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Further information about BAILII is available on its web site at <http://www.bailii.org>

5. Future Work at BAILII

A visit to our site will show how much we have achieved in our first 30 months of existence. By the end of 2004 we had vastly increased the number of current judgments posted daily to the site. We are now publishing the reports and consultation papers of the Law Commissions. We now aim to increase the numbers of High Court judgments, and to continue adding to the list of leading appeal tribunals whose decisions we publish. And we are actively exploring ways to increase our coverage of material from Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Ireland. If, as we hope, we can secure access to the majority of these legal materials, BAILII will be an even more notable resource for practitioners, litigants, academics, and students and a major utility in providing the public with a resource to help increase their knowledge of our legal system.

6. Historical materials Case

Historical materials Case law has a long 'half life' – cases can lose their importance to research as they age but this loss of relevance is slower than information in most other disciplines. Academic and practising lawyers frequently cite old case law and older cases can be a fertile source of social data for researchers from other disciplines. The legal, sociological or historical significance of old case law is generally proportional to the hierarchical stature of the Court involved. Recently the JISC has sponsored BAILII's OpenLaw project which will survey core legal areas for important case law then acquire and convert this material into acceptable electronic format for inclusion on BAILII's web site.

7. The Future of BAILII

The main objectives over the next three years are:

- to maintain the website and the availability of existing databases of materials
- to update the existing databases with new material on a regular basis
- to establish backup servers in order to achieve a more secure technical infrastructure
- to continue to improve the quality of new data and the functionality of the system
- to obtain additional data in order to extend coverage
- to promote the service and public access to primary legal materials in general