



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?

- **44,450** average requests per day
- **1.6 gigabytes** served out per day
- **57%** of our users are **legal professional**
- of those the number of **barristers** and **solicitors** are roughly the same
- **16%** of users are **Law students** and **academic lawyers**
- **6%** are **Self-represented litigants** and members of the **general public**
- **78%** are from the UK and Northern Ireland and the remaining 22% from elsewhere throughout the world.

This survey took place in early 2012 and there were 3,274 survey participants.

3. What can I get on BAILII?

The BAILII web site now contains the key common law databases of all of the decisions of the Privy Council, many decisions of the House of Lords and the Court of Appeal, important courts such as the Scottish Court of Session, the Irish Supreme Court, European Court of Human Rights and European Court of Justice 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 Most of these materials are derived from published and unpublished CD ROMs or provided directly by courts, tribunals and government departments.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.

BAILII is primarily based at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, University of London, at 17 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DR with backup servers located at Queen's University of Belfast.

BAILII is associated with initiatives in more than 34 other countries to establish similar facilities, and indeed a single site which tries to include all the materials offered from those initiatives, WorldLII at www.worldlii.org.

The members of the Board of Trustees are:

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5. Future Work at BAILII

BAILII constantly strives to increase the numbers of primary legal materials we publish. In doing this 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 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

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