

CAMPUS RESEARCH
CCL-EAR Look/See
September, 2006

Campus Research markets itself as an easy-to-use, comprehensive online source for news, business, and law-related information. Powered by Westlaw, Campus Research aims to meet the research needs of college or university students and faculty in social sciences, pre-law, marketing, political science, and other disciplines. Westlaw has been around for years providing online legal resources but Campus Research, a spin-off marketed to colleges and universities, is relatively new. Like Lexis/Nexis (euphemistically referred to as “the nearest competitor” in Westlaw literature), the strength of Campus Research is its coverage of the primary and secondary legal literature, as well as news and business information.

Content

In terms of news content, Campus Research contains over 4,400 individual publications from sources ranging from national newspapers such as The New York Times and USA Today, to local newspapers (LA Daily Times and the San Francisco Chronicle are among these; the Los Angeles Times is not) to specialty publications such as American Banker and Investment News. News sources also include trade journals, newswires, broadcast transcripts from national and local programs, and international publications and government/political information. Dates of coverage for individual sources vary, as does full-text availability.

Business sources provide content from Hoover’s, SEC Filings, and Standard and Poor’s.

Legal information includes federal cases from U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. Courts of Appeal and District Courts; federal statutes and the United States Code Annotated; federal administrative information and regulations; state case law, statutes, and administrative rules and regulations; EU cases, legislation, and treaties. Secondary legal materials include over 800 law reviews and journals, American Law Reports, and the legal encyclopedia American Jurisprudence 2d (AmJur 2d). There is also a link for accessing a list from the West Key Number System, the taxonomic backbone of their print and online resources. The KeyCite citator service is similar to the Shepard’s product available from Lexis/Nexis. Many of these legal information sources are far outside the scope of the needs of community college students.

One drawback of Campus Research is that a considerable amount of information is “hidden”. No comprehensive list of titles and coverage dates was found from within the database. The vendor did provide spreadsheets of titles but they did not include dates of coverage. Coverage information is available for each individual title but takes several clicks to access.

Search Interface



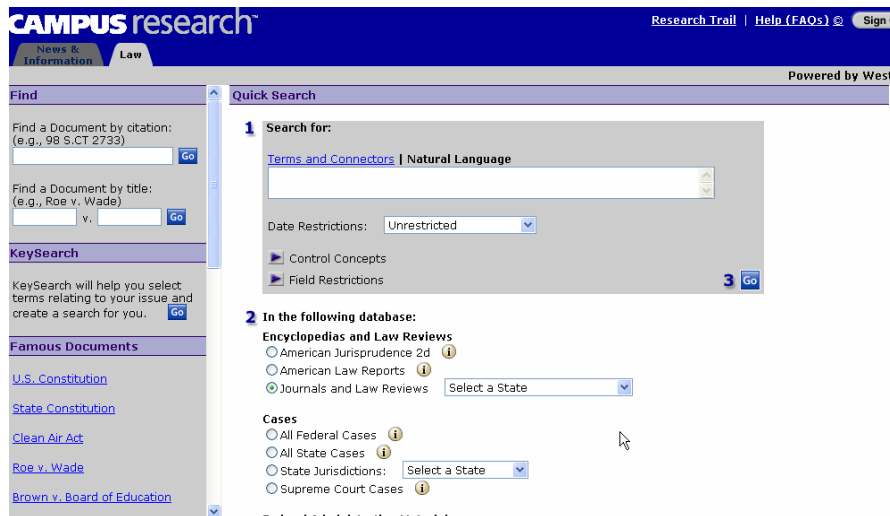
In the default main search page, the user will find the information databases organized into two different tabs – one for News & Information and the other for Law sources.

On the **News & Information** tab, the search options are presented in two frames: the left-hand

frame offers “Shortcuts” allowing the user to search headlines, people in the headlines, companies in the Headlines, or specific databases in “Search these databases.” These shortcuts are intended to offer the user easy ways to identify information resources relevant to a particular research project (e.g. searches for people or companies).

The “Search these databases” shortcut in “News and Information” is confusing since there are hundreds of “databases” that make up the CR content. No drop-down menu is provided in the “**Search these Databases**” box and users will have to figure out what to enter in the search box. It is not clear where to click and how to find these databases. Clicking the “**i**” will bring the following message: A valid database identifier is not provided. Clicking the “**go**” button will take the user to the Westlaw Directory page with some options to search all databases or new databases. To access a database, users are required to type all or part of a database name or identifier in the “Search these databases” text box. To access multiple databases, users have to type up to “10 database identifiers separated by commas or semicolons in the “Search these databases” text box.”

The Law search screen offers the option to search by case citation or name, or one can do a “quick search” of various legal resources including legal encyclopedias, law reviews, federal, regional, or state case law and codes, and EU materials. Also useful are direct links to full-text legal documents (such as the U.S. Constitution or Roe v. Wade) and selected legal guides.



Both natural language and Boolean searching are supported.

Terms and Connectors searches support standard Boolean operators **OR** symbols, but the non-standard connectors and symbols might cause initial confusion (a space between terms constitutes an OR; % is a NOT). One rather disturbing feature is a dropdown list of “Recent searches & locates” which shows searches done by others on the account—a definite privacy issue. At several points there is mention of “billing notes” with off-putting references to access and document view costs. Obviously this model would not work in our setting. Help screens are not context specific and most relate to legal research. Some of the links in help mode are dead ends.

User Support:

While the link for “Help (FAQs)” on the search pages provides help related to searching legal information, there is very little guidance about searching for news. The user has to go the vendor’s home page, and choose “Campus Research” to find information about the product. An 8-page product brochure in PDF format is available on the vendor’s home page providing general information about the content and the search features in a printable format. An individual request for a free trial didn’t get any response.

The Service was accessible quickly both from campus computers and from remote site DSL but searching the database was a bit slower.

While Campus Research has good information for news and law information, its strength lies in its legal coverage, which is beyond the scope of the community college students. The database has potential but its use of terms and connectors in the interface makes it difficult to master, and requires time and training for both students and librarians.

At this time, the review team believes Thomson West may not be ready for “prime time,” at least for community college students. The list of “databases” as divisions to particular industries and subject areas is an improvement over the category/drop-down subcategory organization of Lexis-Nexis, but it still may not be intuitive enough for community college students. The lack of clear information regarding its content is another drawback as well as lack of a direct path to search for a particular title. Hopefully the vendor will consult with a variety of academic librarians (including community college librarians), especially non-law librarians in order to smooth out the product for the mainstream academic market. Recommend waiting 6-12 months and re-visiting.