

# Library Notes *from* Broadway

Volume 5, Issue 2

April 2008

## Information Advocacy

By Laureen Lentz

Access to public information is a fundamental cornerstone of good government. Ethics reform has been at the forefront of recent political changes in Louisiana and the push for improved transparency is vital to rebuilding. Sunshine Laws have been adopted in all fifty states, providing public records access. Regardless of the right of public's right to know about the work of government, some agencies have not been able to keep pace with the requests for public information, and leave citizens waiting for months, or even years, for files. Others charge exorbitant fees, effectively deterring citizens and eroding public trust.

At the federal level, the Open Government Act of 2007 was signed into law by president Bush to promote accessibility, accountability, and openness in Government by strengthening section 552 of title 5, United States Code (commonly referred to as the Freedom of Information Act), and for other purposes. This act created the Office of Government Information Services which, operating within the National Archives and Records Administration, was designed to ensure compliance with FOIA legislation and clear backlogs of requests. However, funding support for this legislation was redirected to the Department of Justice in the last budget cycle. The Department of Justice offers seminars designed for attorneys who use this legislative instrument. The schedule of seminars can be found here:  
<http://www.usdoj.gov/oip/foiapost/2007foiapost6.htm>

Increasingly, government depends on

electronic information, and legislation dictating public access to this information is challenged on both content and format. In *Office of the State Court Administrator v. Background Information Services*, 994 P.2d 420 (Colo. 1999), for example, the Colorado state supreme court ruled that the state court administrator was not obligated to provide bulk data in electronic format. Conversely, other state courts recognize the important role that format plays in accessibility. In *Farrell v. City of Detroit*, 530 N.W.2d 105 (Mich. App. 1995), the Michigan appellate court overruled the lower court's decision denying a reporter a computer tape format of all persons paying property tax in the city. The court ruled that the agency was required to provide the actual 'public records', not just the information contained therein.

At the local level, a public request for information can be submitted via email to the City Attorney of New Orleans for any department. A typical statement requesting public information from any agency looks something like this:

*RE: Request for Public Information Under Louisiana Revised Statute 44:1*

To Whom it May Concern:

In light of recent \_\_\_\_\_ regarding the \_\_\_\_\_, I respectfully make the following Request for Public Information as authorized by the Louisiana Public Records Law enumerated in LA R.S. 44:1 et seq. and adopted by the City of New Orleans in Section

2-773 of the Code of Ordinances, City of New Orleans.

The following information is being requested of your office:

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_;
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_.

Should you have any question regarding this request or the legal obligations arising herein, you should contact the City Attorney's Office.

I trust that you will find this request in order; however, should you have any question, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at \_\_\_\_\_. Otherwise, I remain very truly yours,

Before resorting to this formal process, be sure you have done thorough background research, the more specific your request, the

better your chances for success. A number of tools are low-cost and freely accessible to anyone with access to a computer:

**Court Documents:** <http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov/>  
Get local court documents for a small fee.

**Louisiana Supreme Court:** <http://www.lasc.org/>  
( Sign up for press releases of decisions via email.)

**Orleans Parish Civil District Court:**  
[www.orleanscdc.com](http://www.orleanscdc.com)

**Orleans Parish Criminal Sheriff's Office:** <http://www.opcso.org/dcktmstr/dcktmstr.php>

**Permit Tracking:** [www.velocityhall.com](http://www.velocityhall.com) This site can be used to see if construction or demolition in your area is properly permitted.

**Municipal Codes :** [www.municode.com](http://www.municode.com)

**Orleans Parish Property Information:** <http://www.opboa.org/Main/Home.aspx> Previous sale prices and names of current owners.

## Déjà Vu Without Denzel

Time travel is not yet a real possibility, but very soon some students may wish that it was real. A laptop will be stolen or suffer damage. A student's outline and notes will be lost or corrupted. This student could be you.

Final exams can be stressful enough

without the anxiety of losing all of your study materials. Take a few moments to back up all of your outlines and notes onto a flash memory drive, and then place that drive in a secure location. You can't control the future, but you can control what you bring into it. Be prepared.

## Crossword

### Across

1. Federal or cash
9. Reduce
14. Labor law?
16. Collection agency
17. Trademark office (abbr.)
18. Clerk's assistant (abbr.)

### Down

1. Regional or state
2. Employment Tax Ruling (abbr.)
3. Govt. Access site
4. Lincoln's home state (abbr.)
5. Security type
6. Tyler on Infancy and Coverture (abbr.)

- 19. Registration Board of Architects and Professional Engineers (abbr.)
- 20. 42's home state (abbr.)
- 22. Industrial & Intellectual Property in Australia (abbr.)
- 23. Air Force One home (abbr.)
- 24. Revenue agents report (abbr.)
- 26. Bar Harbor Park (abbr.)
- 27. Whistleblower's work
- 30. University of Illinois Law Forum (abbr.)
- 31. Pocket part's job
- 33. Flair
- 36. Arizona Revised Statutes (abbr.)
- 37. Supreme Court (abbr.)
- 38. Federal rule
- 42. United Nations Administrative Tribunal (abbr.)
- 43. U.S. law, chronological
- 46. Note (abbr.)
- 47. Without warrants (abbr.)
- 48. Joint (abbr.)
- 49. State Department (abbr.)

- 7. Emergency Court of Appeals (abbr.)
- 10. Dictionary for abbr.
- 11. Ontario Appeal reports (abbr.)
- 12. Airport checker
- 15. Spies like us
- 19. Air Force Law review (abbr.)
- 21. Say again
- 25. 40's library
- 28. American Electrical Cases
- 29. Knapp's Privy Council Cases (abbr.)
- 34. Permit
- 35. A legal shell
- 39. Luxembourg (abbr.)
- 40. Atwater's reports (abbr.)
- 41. Tenancy by the entirety (abbr.)
- 42. Laritz, Attorney Guide to Social Security Claims (abbr.)
- 44. Australian Digest (abbr.)
- 45. Rolle's Abridgement (abbr.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13
14								15		16			
17				18					19			20	21
				22				23					
24		25		26					27		28	29	
				30				31	32				
33	34		35				36				37		
38				39	40	41						42	
43											44	45	
		46		47			48			49			

# A Google For All Seasons

As many of you know, Google is a multi-faceted search tool. In addition to basic web searching, a user can perform specialized searches for images, videos, news, and maps. Google is also offering many Beta search tools, including the oxymoronic Google Scholar. (Some students might also qualify for this moniker.)

Google Scholar, one of the more useful incarnations of basic Google, is now indexing law journals. What does this mean for you? Well, Google aficionados can use Google to search for *and actually find* relevant scholarly articles. The results listed include working links to available versions of the article. If an article is available in JSTOR, the link will take you there. If an article is available at HeinOnline, the link will take you to it. Please remember, you may access these databases

only because of the library subscriptions, which are IP address driven.

Of course, one could simply search JSTOR and HeinOnline at their own websites, but that would eliminate the intervention of Google, and who would want that?

Also, please remember that this is still a Beta stage tool. Many law journal articles are indexed, but many articles are not. It will take time for the folks at Google to get all published law articles indexed. They will they have to maintain their indexing effort. And, inevitably, there may be bugs.

In the near future, this may be a commonly used research tool. Until then, please continue to use both JSTOR and HeinOnline in their regular formats.

[Scope of the 1939 Amendment to the Federal Employers' Liability Act, The](#)

[JA Dooley - DePaul Law Review, 1954 - HeinOnline](#)

... commerce.<sup>26</sup> But on the other hand the Supreme Court of Idaho, in a three-to-two opinion, held that an **employee who sprained his back while** working on a new ...  
[Web Search](#)

The Green citation shows that the article is available on HeinOnline.

## Library Hours

Please call the Circulation Department at 861-5545 if you have any questions regarding the hours of operation.

### Regular Library Hours:

Sunday: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m.  
Monday - Thursday: 7:30 a.m. - 12:00 a.m.

Friday: 7:30 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.  
Saturday: 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.

### Reference Desk:

Monday - Thursday: 8:30 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.  
Friday: 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Saturday and Sunday: 1:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.