Collaboration among Legal Information Providers in Quebec: CAIJ and Lexum's Shared Vision

Frédéric Pelletier*, Sonia Loubier°

Abstract. This note describes how collaboration among various providers of legal information can maximize the benefits for their respective users. The phenomenon is described from the perspective of two organizations heavily involved in providing access to law in the province of Quebec, Canada. The Centre d'accès à l'information juridique (CAIJ) serves members of the Quebec Bar by providing online access to case law, legislation and quite a rich selection of secondary materials. With respect to secondary materials, Lexum plays an important role in helping the CAIJ to publish numerous documents in HTML format, which are fully searchable and integrated with other CAIJ collections.

Keywords: Canada, digitization, legal publishing, online, Quebec, secondary legal literature

1. CAIJ's Role in the Provision of Legal Information in Quebec

Quebec is a Canadian province with a population of over 8 million, representing 22% of the country's population. Unique for its French-speaking majority and related cultural specificity, Quebec also stands out for its bijuralism, which makes common law and civil law traditions coexist and interact, not only within the province but also at the provincial and Federal.¹

Around 25,000 lawyers are registered in Quebec, a majority of which have French as their mother tongue. Due to the bilingual nature of the primary sources and secondary literature, a Quebec jurist nevertheless has to be bilingual up to a certain degree, depending upon the field he or she practices in.

1.1. THE CAIJ, IN A NUTSHELL

CAIJ stands for "Centre d'accès à l'information juridique" which would translate into "Legal Information Access Centre". It is a non-profit organization related to the Quebec Bar. When it was created in 2001, the CAIJ took over the assets of Quebec's law libraries with a mandate to

^{*} Director of Legal Information at Lexum

Director, Digital Content and Information Technology at the CAIJ

Canada, Department of Justice, *About Bijuralism*, available at: http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/harmonization/bijurilex/aboutb-aproposb.html (accessed 8 February 2016).

"[answer] the contemporary demands regarding access to legal information"².



Figure 1 - CAIJ's network of courthouse libraries

Since the CAIJ's inception, Quebec's mere brick-and-mortar network of 40 courthouse libraries has truly transformed into a legal information service with a strong online presence. A key goal of the CAIJ is to ensure uniform access to legal information regardless of geographical location of work environment. Employing around 50 law, information and computer sciences experts, the CAIJ serves the needs of thousands of Bar members, adjudicators, law students and paralegals across the province, with a yearly budget of 12M\$ (CAD) mainly accruing from a mandatory contribution of 450\$ per Bar member.

1.2. CAIJ SERVICES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

Besides the on-site regular services offered in any law library, the CAIJ provides its clients with several off-site and online services. Lawyers can submit research questions, either for a specific document or for a legal issue or point of law. Lawyers and law students also receive training on the various online search tools offered on the CAIJ website.

1.2.1. The JuriBistro Suite

The CAIJ research tools are branded under the name JuriBistro, in which the suffix "Bistro" refers to a fundamental objective pursued in these tools' development. Just like a French bistro, clients feel the comfort of a

² Centre d'accès à l'information juridique, *CAIJ Overview*, available at: http://www.caij.qc.ca/en/about-us/caij-overview (accessed 8 February 2016).

familiar place where they enjoy coming back to. JuriBistro is their one-stop shop for primary law, legal literature, research questions, annotated legislation, libraries' catalogue and much more.



Figure 2 - The JuriBistro suite

Here is a brief description of each JuriBistro component³.

eLOIS. Nearly 30 annotated Quebec and Federal statutes are available in this service. The annotations integrate, for each section of a statute, various components of the CAIJ offerings such as secondary literature, treatises, search questions, as well as contextual information externally available such as parliamentary debates.

eDOCTRINE. The term "Doctrine" in French means treatises and secondary literature. eDOCTRINE provides online, full text access to legal materials that, normally, would only be available on law libraries' bookshelves. Around 500 titles are made available on this platform, totalling over 150,000 pages. To make this happen, the CAIJ has established partnerships with the Quebec Bar, Wilson & Lafleur (W&L)⁴ and several law firms. The second part of this note will expand on the content of eDOCTRINE and its technical underpinnings.

TOPO. The service named TOPO is a knowledge base containing more than 4,000 questions on 55 different legal topics. Some of these questions are general, other ones more specific. For each question, relevant information about legislation, case law and legal literature is brought together.

BIBLIO. The libraries' catalogue is called BIBLIO. It also includes the Scott Index to Canadian Legal Periodical Literature which covers more than 30,000 legal articles published in close to 600 legal journals.

Centre d'accès à l'information juridique, *CAIJ Juribistro*, available at: http://www.caij.qc.ca/en/juribistro (accessed 8 February 2016).

W&L is a major legal publisher in Quebec.

eDICTIONNAIRE. The Dictionnaire de Droit Québécois et Canadien is the most widely used legal dictionary in Quebec, with around 9,000 legal terms defined in both languages.

1.2.2. UNIK Search

UNIK is the search engine that allows users to search simultaneously in all JuriBistro tools as well as in all CanLII legislation and case law, totalling close to 2M documents.



Figure 3 - UNIK search form

Including CanLII case law in UNIK sounds simple enough, but some explanation is in order to assess how collaboration is key in helping the end user feel as cosy and comfortable with this tool as in a French *bistro*.

1.3. ADDING VALUE THROUGH COLLABORATION

As hinted in our introduction, lawyers in Quebec operate in a federal state where at least two levels of jurisdiction should be taken into account: provincial and Federal.

At the provincial level, in Quebec, the major source of case law is a mandatory company called SOQUIJ, an acronym which stands for "Société Québécoise d'information juridique". The SOQUIJ operates under the authority of the Quebec Minister of Justice. One of its obligations is to make Quebec's courts, boards and tribunal decisions available to the public.

At the Federal level as well as in the 12 other provincial or territorial jurisdictions, the sources of case law are quite scattered – there is no equivalent to the SOQUIJ outside of Quebec. One of the key roles of CanLII⁶ is to regroup these resources into one platform. SOQUIJ publicly available case law content is among these resources.

Société Québécoise d'information juridique, *Products & Services Overview*, available at: http://soquij.qc.ca/fr/english (accessed 8 February 2016).

The Canadian Legal Information Institute, a non-profit organization funded by the Federation of Law Societies of Canada which includes the Quebec Bar. See Canadian Legal Information Institute, *About CanLII*, available at: http://www.canlii.org/en/info/about.html (accessed 8 February 2016).

Another key role of CanLII is to build added value upon these gathered contents, such as advanced search and navigational functionalities, a legal citator and hyperlinks between cited documents.

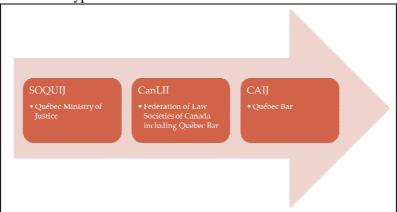


Figure 4 - Sources of case law for the CAIJ

The foregoing means that with respect to case law, the user of JuriBistro benefits from the combined efforts of both SOQUIJ and CanLII, not to mention the added value brought to these materials by the CAIJ itself. Indeed, the CAIJ adds value both among the JuriBistro tools and on the CanLII website. We will only mention the most significant ones as a conclusion to this part of our note.

eDOCTRINE. Whenever case law or legislation present on CanLII is cited in textbooks, treatises, articles, case comments or other eDOCTRINE material, a hyperlink is added to CanLII. UNIK also adds links to case comments when displaying search results of CanLII case law.

eDICTIONNAIRE. The legal dictionary that is available on CAIJ website is published by Wilson & Lafleur. Besides being available as a standalone publication with links to the CanLII website for cited legislation and case law, the eDICTIONNAIRE (the legal dictionary) can be consulted via all other materials available within the JuriBistro suite. Highlighting a defined term in any text found in JuriBistro opens up a pop up window displaying the corresponding definition from the eDICTIONNAIRE.

eLOIS. In order to help interpret the structure of any given section of the new Code of civil procedure, a version of this important piece of legislation is made available in synoptic tables, through collaboration with the University of Sherbrooke.

CanLII. The CAIJ also funded the addition of primary materials to the CanLII website, namely:

- 546 Supreme Court of Canada judgments appealed from the Quebec Court of Appeal between 1876 and 1916, thus completing the collection since the inception of the country;
- 3,700 judgments published in the Revue légale case reporter between 1869 and 2012; and
- Quebec and Canada annual statutes.

CAIJ TOOLS	PARTNERS
eDOCTRINE Full-text Legal Literature	CanLII Lexum Québec Bar Wilson & Lafleur Law firms
eLOIS Annotated Legislation	Québec Official Publisher CanLII Sherbrooke University
eDICTIONNAIRE Legal Dictionary	CanLII Lexum Wilson & Lafleur
UNIK	All partners

Figure 5 - CAIJ partnerships

2. Lexum Collaboration with the CAIJ for eDOCTRINE

The first part of this note pertained to the various partnerships the CAIJ put together for the creation of such an integrated online service. But there is more to it; once the political, legal or commercial issues are settled between partners, materials originating from different sources can't just be reproduced "as is". They have to be converted and edited for coherence and user-friendliness. As an example of the technical challenges involved in this kind of endeavor, the following briefly presents the role of Lexum⁷ in the processing and online publication of secondary legal literature in CAIJ's eDOCTRINE collection.

Lexum is a software firm with expertise in legal informatics. See Lexum, *Our Company*, available at: https://lexum.com/en/about-us (accessed 8 February 2016).

2.1. EDOCTRINE CONTENT

As mentioned above, the eDOCTRINE collection includes many types of secondary legal literature originally printed by the Quebec Bar, Wilson & Lafleur (a major legal publisher) and several law firms⁸.

2.1.1. Quebec Bar Publications

Collection de droit. Updated annually and primarily intended to support Quebec Bar students, this 12 volumes legal compendium is also widely used by practicing lawyers needing to get acquainted with a new area of Law.

Congrès du Barreau. The proceedings of the Quebec Bar annual conference (proceedings from local bar associations are also being added).

Développements récents. The proceedings of continuing legal education conferences or training sessions about significant changes in legislation or case law in a specific area of law. Around 15 are published yearly. Revue du Barreau. The Quebec Bar review, generally published twice per year.

2.1.2. Wilson & Lafleur Books

The year 2015 saw the 100th law book posted online in the Wilson & Lafleur collection, and the collection continues to grow steadily. Wilson & Lafleur publishes textbooks and law treatises that are among the most consulted in Quebec.

2.1.3. Law Firms Publications

Most major law firms offer a wide variety of case summaries and commentaries as well as legislative updates on their website most often in the form of newsletters. The law firms publications collection aims at gathering this scattered content from a growing number of firms (currently 20) and reproduce each article with a common look and feel on the CAIJ website.

⁸ Centre d'accès à l'information juridique, Juribistro eDOCTRINE http://edoctrine.caij.qc.ca/eDoctrine.aspx.



Figure 6 – eDOCTRINE's types of content

2.2. EDOCTRINE PROCESSING

As mentioned above, the eDOCTRINE collections include all kinds of secondary legal literature: issues of law journals, bar exams preparation books, continuing legal education articles, conference proceedings, law firms' newsletters, legal textbooks, etc. These materials are prepared by various types of people, from professional publishers to scholars to practitioners, the latter category being generally less familiar with the preparation of documents intended for electronic publication. This variety of sources also entails a variety of formats: printed, image or text-based PDF, MS-Word, RTF and HTML.

This assorted mix of documents is undergoing several processing steps in order to bring the uniformity and structure sought after in the eDOCTRINE collection. Documents available only in print are scanned. Optical character recognition (OCR) is performed on images to obtain text-based documents. Since they are expected to have a common look and feel and to be easy to navigate on the CAIJ website, the text-based documents must be converted and edited, as required, in order to have their content and formatting standardized.

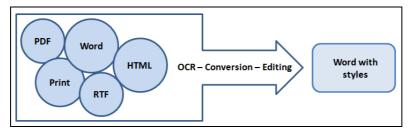


Figure 7 - From various formats to standardized Word documents

Lexum uses an MS-Word template to perform standardization of the documents' content and formatting. All the above-mentioned documents (including those already made available in Word by the source) are converted and edited by specialized firms guided by Lexum's instructions in order to obtain a Word document in which the structure and content are marked up with specific styles.

Styles are of the utmost importance in modern word-processing applications. One of their key functions is to add structure to a text. Word's built-in heading styles allow for the creation of an automated table of content that, once converted into HTML, transforms into hyperlinks to any section of the text. Another important function of styles is to better control the visual presentation of similar elements. Lexum takes advantage of these features and uses styles as markup to automatically extract metadata from the processed documents, determine their visual presentation on the CAIJ website and even break down large and heavily structured documents in separate HTML pages, at the publication stage.

2.3 EDOCTRINE PUBLICATION

After having processed the documents, they require integration into the CAIJ website. Lexum devised a custom publishing platform for the eDOCTRINE project which supports the management of 6 sub-collections, each with different characteristics.

The sub-collections share common metadata such as authors' names, subjects, keywords and so on. Other sets of metadata are extracted depending upon their nature and the manner in which they will be accessed on the CAIJ website. For instance, Wilson & Lafleur books are presented by title, subject matter and authors, whereas newsletter content from law firms also needs to be broken down by firm.

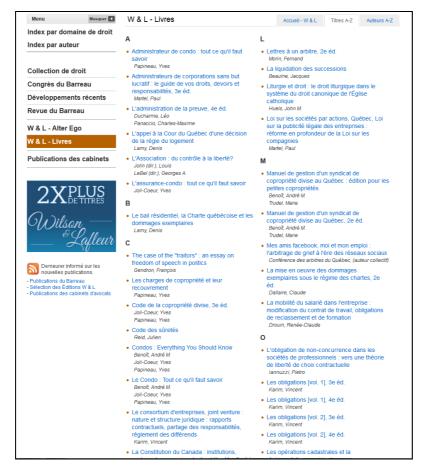


Figure 8 - Index by title of Wilson & Lafleur books



Figure 9 - Index by firm for law firms publications

Once entered into the publishing platform, the HTML version of the document gets automatically processed to add hyperlinks to any primary sources present on CanLII, with Lexum's citator technology.

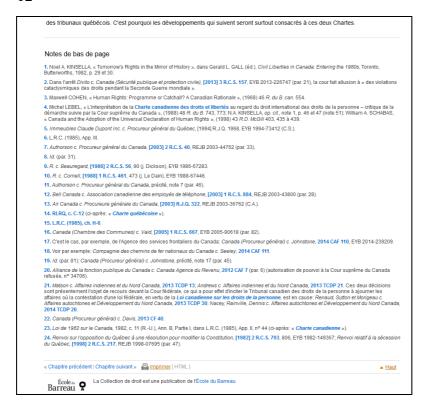


Figure 10 - Footnotes with hyperlinks to CanLII primary materials

The final result is a document that is convenient to search and navigate, with links to its various sections, to other CAIJ content as well as to CanLII content.

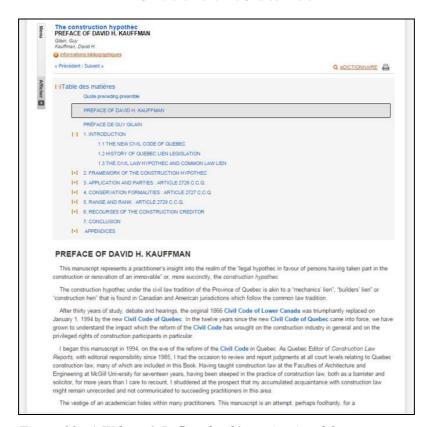


Figure 11 - A Wilson & Lafleur book's navigational features

Finally, the CAIJ performs its own processes to integrate Lexum's generated HTML pages into the eDOCTRINE final product.

Over the past 8 years, Lexum processed and published nearly 500 works of secondary legal literature in the CAIJ eDOCTRINE collection, totaling over 150,000 pages processed. The resulting documents are text-based, have several navigational features and are fully searchable. This collaboration for the processing and publication of documents in eDOCTRINE has made the CAIJ one of the most important sources of secondary legal materials on the Internet in Canada.

Conclusion

With the creation and evolution of the CAIJ, what used to be a mere physical network of law libraries in Quebec in 2001 has evolved to play a central role in the provision of legal information, in the new world of digital information. CAIJ's collaboration with other providers such as CanLII enhances access to law in Quebec, via both the CAIJ and CanLII websites. Using a proper balance of outsourced manual editing and text-processing technology, Lexum provides the CAIJ with a platform that allows for the timely and efficient publication of high volumes of secondary materials that would otherwise be available only through scattered resources and inconsistent formats.

References

- Canada, Department of Justice, *About Bijuralism*, available at: http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/harmonization/bijurilex/aboutb-aproposb.html (accessed 8 February 2016).
- Canadian Legal Information Institute, *About CanLII*, available at: http://www.canlii.org/en/info/about.html (accessed 8 February 2016).
- Centre d'accès à l'information juridique, *CAIJ JuriBistro*, available at: http://www.caij.qc.ca/en/juribistro (accessed 8 February 2016).
- Centre d'accès à l'information juridique, *Juribistro eDOCTRINE*, available at: (accessed 8 February 2016).
- Centre d'accès à l'information juridique, *CAIJ Overview*, available at: http://www.caij.qc.ca/en/about-us/caij-overview (accessed 8 February 2016).
- Lexum, *Our Company*, available at: https://lexum.com/en/about-us (accessed 8 February 2016).
- Société Québécoise d'information juridique, *Products & Services Overview*, available at: http://soquij.qc.ca/fr/english (accessed 8 February 2016).