

"Magic in the web of it": more developments in SOSIG

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Further developments in SOSIG, the Social Science Information Gateway, are enhancing its role as a legal research and training tool. SOSIG is well known as a freely available, subject-based Internet service giving access to carefully selected business, government, parliamentary, social welfare and legal materials.

The SOSIG Law Gateway (www.sosig.ac.uk/law) provides access to quality-checked law related resources, utilising a structured web database to present detailed site profiles, content assessments and well-maintained dynamic links to sites publishing primary and secondary legal literature, making visible many useful law sources often hidden within the ever expanding Web.

In the last year, Law section editors at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, University of London and the University of Bristol Law Library have continued to develop the service and increase its relevance to the legal community. Much work has been done on adding quality law resources to the service, so the Gateway is now truly international in scope with coverage for over 190 countries world wide.

The SOSIG Law workbook, launched at the LILI Conference 2002, is a recent addition to the service. The workbook has been prepared to help in the teaching of legal information skills and Internet awareness. The workbook is designed to introduce the service, aiding practical workshop sessions as well as supporting self-paced learning. It contains examples and exercises to help you explore the wealth of legal materials available on the Internet, with suggestions on how to make full use of the SOSIG Law Gateway for law teaching and learning. The workbook looks at the range of materials included in and referenced through SOSIG. It highlights SOSIG features to try for yourself and shows how SOSIG can help you filter the mass of Internet information, making it easier to find useful sites for a given jurisdiction or legal subject area. The Workbook is an outline document in MS Word format that may be downloaded from SOSIG and adapted for local training needs. The Workbook is available from SOSIG (www.sosig.ac.uk/about_us/user_support.html) and the IALS web site.

In addition, a Law on SOSIG guide card has been published to raise awareness of the service and aid in its use. Printed copies are available from IALS with PDF versions available from the SOSIG Training Materials and Support page.

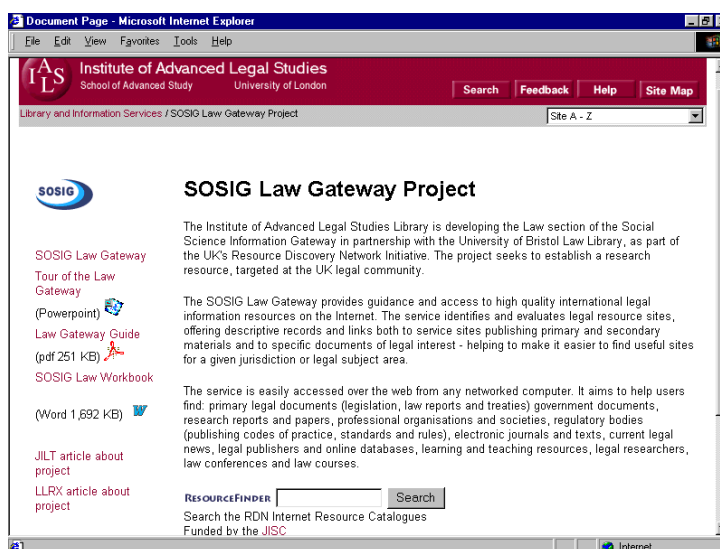
A new subject section called "Eurostudies", developed by the University of Birmingham, has been introduced on SOSIG to complement the Law and Politics sections with a focus on the European Union and its Member States. A new SOSIG feature called "Expert's Choice" is also being introduced showcasing web site recommendations from renowned specialists in a range of subject fields.



As an RDN service, SOSIG is a partner and major contributor to the wider UK Internet initiative called the Resource Discovery Network, providing content for a national multidisciplinary Internet Resource catalogue (www.rdn.ac.uk).

Over 30,000 evaluated resources hand-picked by a network of experts based at 60 top UK educational and research organisations are available through the RDN, building a service that helps to set law in an increasingly important inter-disciplinary and socio-legal context. A feature called ResourceFinder allows you to search all the contributory catalogues simultaneously.

A facility called "RDN-include" is an XML application being developed to install the ResourceFinder search box on your web site, library catalogue, or law firm intranet, so you can search the RDN databases remotely, and retrieve results from the RDN without leaving your own web environment. Rather than overwhelm your OPAC or server with records for offsite Internet resources, you can link your web catalogue to the RDN centre where the databases of descriptive resource links are checked and revised for you. RDN-include is free to the academic community and available to commercial clients for a fee.



Further information on a range of options for employing RDN-include is available from the RDN (www.rdn.ac.uk/rdn-i/). Sample HTML pages for RDNi-Lite (www.rdn.ac.uk/rdn-i/lite/howto/) and a working example are featured on the SOSIG Law Gateway Project page on the IALS web site (ials.sas.ac.uk/library/sosig/sosiglaw.htm). Future developments on SOSIG, including work on cross searching of well used social science databases and datasets through the subject portals project, will continue this trend of linking and joining the new information environment.

SOSIG is all about making worthwhile connections - when you have used the service and tried the new facilities please contact us with comments and suggestions.

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