

Chat room transcript of the 4 December 2009 BlogTalkRadio show, The Law Librarian, "Conversation with Anurag Acharya, Chief Engineer of Google Scholar"

*** (00:34:45):Welcome to the Richard Leiter Chat Room.

Marcia Dority Baker says (00:51:59):

Good afternoon! The show will start soon.

weblawlib says to (00:52:22):

Hello Room. Doing some mental stretches and exercises, getting ready for the show.

- Roger

MitchLawLib says to (00:55:53):

Hi, all!

MitchLawLib says to (00:56:25):

Really looking forward to this program today.

libhtlaw says to (00:56:47):

Me, too. I hope to learn a lot of interesting things....

jrivers says to (00:58:18):

Hi, Everybody.

Marcia Dority Baker says (00:59:36):

Twitter handle TLLBTR

Margie Maes says to (00:59:50):

Hi everyone - @roger, hope those mental stretches are making you limber.

stephdavidson says to (01:00:50):

hi all!

Sarah Glassmeyer says to (01:00:51):

Hi everyone. I'm on the ref desk, so no audio for me. :(

MitchLawLib says to (01:01:05):

Hi, Sarah!

stephdavidson says to (01:01:09):

We'll have to livechat/tweet, then, Sarah

Marcia Dority Baker says (01:01:26):

Hi Sarah.

Sarah Glassmeyer says to (01:02:38):

My parents are probably listening, though, because they've become quite the fans.

weblawlib says to (01:03:39):

Twitter hashtag: #tllbtr - follow on Twitterfall.com or your favorite real-time client

CyberV says to (01:04:26):

Hi Sarah, It's Virginia @LouisvilleLaw and @CyberV

Sarah Glassmeyer says to (01:06:10):

Oh, hey!

Marcia Dority Baker says (01:06:57):

<http://scholar.google.com/>

Susanna Leers says to (01:14:13):

Hi Glassmeyer mom and dad!

Marcia Dority Baker says (01:15:04):

<http://scholar.google.com/intl/en/scholar/about.html>

Marcia Dority Baker says (01:18:50):

Cases purchased from vendor not retrieved from court or state.

Ken Hirsh says to (01:18:51):

Do they have a specific audience for the cases, and if so, who is that audience?

Ken Hirsh says to (01:19:05):

I meant target audience.

MitchLawLib says to (01:21:36):

It can also be very relevant with decisions that are withdrawn and revised, or where an entire new opinion is released.

MitchLawLib says to (01:22:04):

Florida appellate courts do that all the time.

Virginia E. says to (01:23:00):

Can the search results be sorted?

Ken Hirsh says to (01:24:37):

Are there empirical studies on this issue? Frequency of significant publication errors or revisions in decision?

stephdavidson says to (01:24:38):

Isn't the versioning q'n more of a trust issue, than about actual difference?

MitchLawLib says to (01:25:10):

Smith v. Jones I, II et cetera.

Ken Hirsh says to (01:25:20):

Echoing stephdavidson, what about authentication?

stephdavidson says to (01:25:52):

Which is really trust, right?

weblawlib says to (01:26:17):

Virginia E. : I hope we get to this question of sorting (filtering, ranking, display customization, etc.)

MitchLawLib says to (01:26:40):

Pardon my imprecision! You're right, it's just that it happens often enough to be worrisome.

Susanna Leers says to (01:27:53):

Ha! "Our profession's OCD. Which can be severe".

merleslyhoff says to (01:28:59):

When you discuss journals, please ask him to comment on Hein's statement:

Marcia Dority Baker says (01:29:42):

I want to know - who the intended audience for Google Scholar?

MitchLawLib says to (01:31:03):

I rana asearch in Westlaw, in JLR and TP-ALL

MitchLawLib says to (01:31:21):

"ti(empiric! & opinion & revis!)"--nothing. does anyone know of anything empirical on the subject?

Susanna Leers says to (01:32:43):

Reducing legal authority to mathematical terms... Supreme Court is X, Fed. appeals courts are X-1 ? Is that what he said?

Marcia Dority Baker says (01:32:51):

YEs

merleslyhoff says to (01:33:02):

Hein claims that GS only indexes 50% of their material and it's based on "programming and/or processes put in place by Google Scholar." Therefore many key articles are overlooked. Can he comment?

Christine Sellers says to (01:33:30):

So are there any attorneys or law librarians overseeing or taking part in this? (Sorry if this was asked or answered earlier - had to answer a question that came in!)

Lawibdiva says to (01:34:57):

Can one only search journals w/o searching cases?

Ken Hirsh says to (01:35:21):

But does GS actually note when an opinion is no longer "good law?" And is anyone expecting them to have the same functionality as Shepard's or KeyCite?

MitchLawLib says to (01:36:05):

They do a certain amount of citation indexing for cases and articles, but I don't think they exclude duplicates, for example.

merleslyhoff says to (01:36:25):

But with journals ranking is moot if they're not even indexing all that is accessible thru Hein. See <http://tinyurl.com/yhlzast>

MitchLawLib says to (01:36:31):

Sheesh. "They do a certain...." Can't type today.

libhtlaw says to (01:36:34):

I wouldn't expect the ability to do Shep or Keycite.

merleslyhoff says to (01:37:02):

Nor can I! That was "thru Hein"

MitchLawLib says to (01:37:08):

Merle, I don't understand why they didn't crawl all of Hein's holdings.

Marcia Dority Baker says (01:37:13):

Two searches options on the first bag of GS, Articles w/without patents or Legal opinions and Journals

libhtlaw says to (01:37:22):

Maybe Hein had protection in place?

merleslyhoff says to (01:37:38):

That's what Hein says - use HOL before Google, but folks are using GS before HOL.

merleslyhoff says to (01:38:00):

Read Hein's article - they gave them access to more than they index.

MitchLawLib says to (01:38:07):

It *sounded* like Hein gave them full access, and they only saved what their algorithm told them to--that 50%.

MitchLawLib says to (01:38:18):

Right, merle.

Susanna Leers says to (01:38:31):

Nobody used additional filtering ... so Google eliminated it (like most important authors). Look at search behaviour to shape how the database search is structured.

merleslyhoff says to (01:38:32):

English major here - algorithms give me a headache!

libhtlaw says to (01:38:36):

then their mathematical calculation must not recognize easy way to remove duplicate entries?

MitchLawLib says to (01:39:21):

LOL. I was a general studies major, so I sometimes sound like I know what I'm talking about.

Marcia Dority Baker says (01:40:29):

"The audience is pretty much everybody"

stephdavidson says to (01:41:12):

wow, are they really thinking legal scholars have the same needs as the rest of the scholarly community?

Margie Maes says to (01:41:15):

"everybody" is a little naive

MitchLawLib says to (01:41:27):

I agree, Margie.

MitchLawLib says to (01:41:47):

Isn't a tool suitable for everyone also well-designed for no one?

Ken Hirsh says to (01:41:51):

What kind of audience/user measurement are they doing?

Marcia Dority Baker says (01:41:55):

One more tool in the swiss army knife.

juliemjones says to (01:42:33):

I had hoped this might be a real free competitor. But if they assume the user is the lowest common denominator without more advanced tools, perhaps not.

weblawlib says to (01:42:40):

Oh yeah, there's a corkscrew on the swiss army knife too, and a toothpick for your olives, if you're so inclined.

Marcia Dority Baker says (01:42:56):

You get what you pay for?!?

Ken Hirsh says to (01:43:09):

Rich, that is the physical world and not a good analogy.

juliemjones says to (01:43:12):

Indeed. I have such a difficult time learning that lesson!

Marcia Dority Baker says (01:45:37):

So one assumes what the user wants and then provides the ranked results.

Ken Hirsh says to (01:46:13):

How does the user know this ranking methodology? Or are you saying he/she doesn't need to know?

juliemjones says to (01:46:47):

KH - Google knows so the user doesn't need to?

Ken Hirsh says to (01:47:10):

But is that demonstrably true?

Marcia Dority Baker says (01:47:11):

With just one box to input a query, how does the user know how the results are retrieved?

Laura Suttell says to (01:47:42):

I've just arrived and wonder if I'd be more confused if I'd been here from the start - or not. Glad to be here, though.

juliemjones says to (01:47:56):

KH. Exactly.

Margie Maes says to (01:48:41):

Ken and Marcia - That's why this is not a good tool for the sophisticated researcher, and why I think it's naive to say the target audience is everyone.

Marcia Dority Baker says (01:48:41):

If GS is only providing legal opinions, cases and articles - where is the secondary sources that explain the results?

MitchLawLib says to (01:48:55):

Well, I don't think Wexis has a monopoly on paternalism. Eh, Sarah?

Ken Hirsh says to (01:49:13):

JJ and others - but how do the three people doing this work know what legal researchers are thinking in making their queries?

Margie Maes says to (01:49:28):

Ken - They don't!

libhtlaw says to (01:49:56):

Per KH - did they discuss anything with legal researchers while the 3 were developing the product?

Marcia Dority Baker says (01:49:59):

What is their background? computer science, legal, engineering etc.

juliemjones says to (01:49:59):

MDB, well, there is the Hein journal articles as 2dary sources.

Ken Hirsh says to (01:50:04):

Q: How can assumptions for articles in scholarly pubs be applied to cases, which are different animals?

Lawibdiva says to (01:50:09):

When they test do they identify professional researchers as focus group to help upgrade the databas

merleslyhoff says to (01:50:26):

On their web page:Google Scholar aims to rank documents the way researchers do, weighing the full text of each document, where it was published, who it was written by, as well as how often and how recently it has been cited in other scholarly lit.

Jeff Buckley says to (01:50:35):

Has Google considered creating a separate platform for legal content? Maybe law.google.com instead of combining it with Google Scholar?

merleslyhoff says to (01:50:46):

Do they think this covers the explanation of their ranking????

Marcia Dority Baker says (01:50:58):

JJ I wonder how users know about Hein's 2dary in the rankings.

Ken Hirsh says to (01:51:53):

OASIS

Ken Hirsh says to (01:52:00):

Rather, OASIS

Laura Suttell says to (01:52:06):

MDB, thanks for your points.
juliemjones says to (01:52:17):
MDB I guess they just notice. Or ask a librarian? ;-)
Marcia Dority Baker says (01:52:43):
<http://dublincore.org/>
Ken Hirsh says to (01:53:44):
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Archival_Information_System
Marcia Dority Baker says (01:54:06):
<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/publications/durhamstatement>
Marcia Dority Baker says (01:55:14):
<http://www.bepress.com/ir/>
Laura Suttell says to (01:55:35):
Aha...
Marcia Dority Baker says (01:56:44):
Time limit to availability of online articles? 90 days, 1 year, forever?
Lyo Louis-Jacques says to (01:57:43):
Okay, I'm in! :-)
Marcia Dority Baker says (01:58:18):
Agreement with big name vendors for access to collections.
Lyo Louis-Jacques says to (01:59:35):
Yeah, what's up with "heinbackup.com"? They index, but now they seem to give free full text to non-HeinOnline subscribers?
Lawibdiva says to (01:59:35):
Is there a posted list of the partners 2 Google Scholar? Like JSTO, Hein & others?
Anyone know?
juliemjones says to (02:00:08):
Search test in GS for an exact phrase finds cases without the exact phrase, without even all of the words in the phrase. Worrisome.
MitchLawLib says to (02:00:19):
I think they only give that first page to non-Hein subscribers.
Lyo Louis-Jacques says to (02:00:43):
MLL: Ah, okay. I can't tell because we subscribe.
Marcia Dority Baker says (02:01:30):
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Scholar Here's a little bit of info on partners.
Christine Sellers says to (02:01:32):
Oh, those pesky statutes. They change so we just won't worry about them. Awesome
Ken Hirsh says to (02:02:13):
CS: No, they change so we'll leave it to the companies using people instead of merely automation.
MitchLawLib says to (02:02:44):
Some articles go directly to heinonlinebackup.com, even when you do subscribe--at least in my experience. It's weird.
juliemjones says to (02:03:05):
Statutes and regulation language too unusual/unnatural for algorithms to work.
Lyo Louis-Jacques says to (02:03:11):
MLL: Okay, that is odd. Wonder why?

Ken Hirsh says to (02:03:41):
MLL and LL: Could be load-balancing, among other things.

weblawlib says to (02:03:46):
part of the statutes/reg problem is also that there are no post-search browse features (e.g. book browse)

Marcia Dority Baker says (02:03:46):
How to make finding easier.

Jeff Buckley says to (02:04:02):
Re US Code, the Office of the Law Revision Counsel should maintain a current version, but it doesn't.

MitchLawLib says to (02:04:40):
Good point. The first time I tried to look up a law review article in GS (this Monday), I got a server error.

MitchLawLib says to (02:04:56):
That was directed at KH.

Margie Maes says to (02:05:53):
I'm troubled by his views on indexing, metadata, Dublin Core, etc.

Lyo Louis-Jacques says to (02:06:14):
KH, MLL: HeinOnline having load problems?

MitchLawLib says to (02:06:23):
MM, at least it's consistent with Google's practice.

Lyo Louis-Jacques says to (02:07:01):
MDD: I missed the first 5 minutes. Is this Greg speaking?

MitchLawLib says to (02:07:33):
Or what if someone wants to write a Web document with links to cases & secondary sources?

Marcia Dority Baker says (02:07:37):
Roger.

Margie Maes says to (02:07:42):
MLL - Yes, unfortunately.

Lyo Louis-Jacques says to (02:07:48):
MDD: Thanks!

merleslyhoff says to (02:08:58):
I'm troubled by just about everything he's saying. It's so opposite what we as librarians think and do.

stephdavidson says to (02:09:19):
it's the "good enough for most everyone"-type answers that bother me most.

Lyo Louis-Jacques says to (02:09:42):
MS: It's great for out of the box thinking, or seeing another "view" or "voice" on this.

MitchLawLib says to (02:09:43):
merle, I agree. "You don't need that" in re metadata--an excellent example.

Margie Maes says to (02:10:14):
MS - I agree, he dismisses some serious issues as not being important..

Lyo Louis-Jacques says to (02:10:29):
Y'all, he's got usage data...

Lyo Louis-Jacques says to (02:10:54):

LS: ROFL! :-)

merleslyhoff says to (02:11:16):

Our ref librarians are going to be teaching GS to 1Ls next semester. I'm going to suggest they listen to this program!

Lyo Louis-Jacques says to (02:12:20):

I got a question - does Google Scholar consult with law librarians/legal information professionals?

MitchLawLib says to (02:12:25):

I think stable URLs are very reasonable to expect.

Ken Hirsh says to (02:12:53):

Merle, Margie: Don't court rules largely govern which source's legal opinions will garner judicial notice?

Ken Hirsh says to (02:13:09):

I can't see them adding Google.com to their rules.

MitchLawLib says to (02:13:19):

Not from what the guest's been saying, LLJ.

merleslyhoff says to (02:13:35):

Ken, you asked me that question??

Ken Hirsh says to (02:14:29):

ML - Yes. I don't see how GS legal opinions can be used by practicing bar except to set outside parameters of cases that I would then get on CALR services.

Margie Maes says to (02:14:35):

Ken - So you mean we shouldn't worry about it?

Susanna Leers says to (02:14:59):

Google's approach is user-centric: watch how the users search and structure the information to match that; law librarians are information-centric: organize the information in the most faceted way to get at all the info, then train users to use our structur

Ken Hirsh says to (02:15:13):

MM - Not worry, but stay abreast on it It will change, and the courts may catch up to reality.

Margie Maes says to (02:15:36):

What reality?

libhtlaw says to (02:16:21):

Maybe in its 13 years of existence, Google has determined that it is best to go out to everyone and meet all their demands, rather than being the more search specific useful resource it began as. I think this must echo Susanna.

Ken Hirsh says to (02:16:27):

MM: I should have said, take notice of, and ultimately adapt to, changes in technology.

Lyo Louis-Jacques says to (02:17:00):

SL: Yep. From what AA's saying, GS just reacts to users.

Ken Hirsh says to (02:17:15):

Of course, if courts would adopt uniform forms of citation for cases, that would eliminate one part of the issue.

libhtlaw says to (02:17:36):

Of course, I would really like to see them develop the parameters they use in a way that provides better competition to WEXIS monolith.

Margie Maes says to (02:17:37):

KH, yes I agree with that, but I hope the standard doesn't fall to the level of the lowest common denominator.

Margie Maes says to (02:18:00):

Yes to universal citation!

Marcia Dority Baker says (02:18:05):

<http://www.resourceshelf.com/2009/11/21/six-law-libraries-set-to-close-in-connecticut/>

libhtlaw says to (02:18:10):

yes - universal citation!

Ken Hirsh says to (02:18:10):

MM: I agree. libhtlaw: I don't think GS sees that as their mission.

merleslyhoff says to (02:18:11):

"Google's view of itself" = authority!~

libhtlaw says to (02:18:45):

Google "do no evil" - but dumb things down.....

libhtlaw says to (02:20:12):

Well, when I give my GS presentation to our firm litigation group in January, I will definitely be using my usual caveat of why we have our various paid online services.

Ken Hirsh says to (02:20:17):

libhtlaw: But they are not dumbing it down - they are bringing it to the masses.

Those who need more precision or coverage can still get it, granted likely at higher cost.

Marcia Dority Baker says (02:20:45):

Google a friend and supporter of libraries.

libhtlaw says to (02:20:46):

Yes, I chose the wrong expression.

juliemjones says to (02:20:49):

Is Google's view of this the same as AA's?

Marcia Dority Baker says (02:21:08):

JJ not sure!

weblawlib says to (02:22:07):

five minutes left. what else should we ask??

Jeff Buckley says to (02:23:06):

Question: Has Google considered creating a separate platform for legal content?

Maybe case law via law.google.com instead of Google Scholar? Users might like a separate platform for legal content.

Ken Hirsh says to (02:23:25):

Does GS site list time scope and jurisdictional coverage of cases?

juliemjones says to (02:24:45):

Can we add a gadget search box for google scholar on our library home pages?

libhtlaw says to (02:24:56):

I think a separate platform is a good idea.

Jeff Buckley says to (02:25:03):

How comprehensive are the case law databases on Google Scholar?

Marcia Dority Baker says (02:25:49):

Support for libraries: <http://scholar.google.com/intl/en/scholar/libraries.html>

Jeff Buckley says to (02:26:29):

Is there a way to check the scope notes for the case law databases?

Ken Hirsh says to (02:26:42):

Cases are not scholarship!!!!

MitchLawLib says to (02:26:52):

JB< I haven't been able to find any scope notes.

MitchLawLib says to (02:27:05):

GS: it is what it is.

Jeff Buckley says to (02:27:06):

Please add scope notes.

Lyo Louis-Jacques says to (02:27:20):

libhtlaw - well, they're responding to how Google Scholar is used. Being user-friendly, user-responsive does not necessarily equal dumbing things down.

weblawlib says to (02:27:22):

Some of the Google decisions seem to be like Apple's approach: we know how the interface should be built.

Ken Hirsh says to (02:27:27):

I repeat, cases do not meet the meaning of scholarship.

merleslyhoff says to (02:27:28):

Use with caution...

Margie Maes says to (02:27:49):

"It is what it is" does seem to be the message here.

Jeff Buckley says to (02:27:57):

law merits its own platform.

weblawlib says to (02:28:01):

I still love the search complexity, don't get me wrong, and the links to licensed content are great.

Ken Hirsh says to (02:28:20):

Bye all.

libhtlaw says to (02:28:33):

again, I understand - I used poor terminology ("dumbing down"). They are responding to users, and I am coming from an entirely different direction. In the grand scheme of things, I generally like and use Google myself!

Donna Nixon says to (02:28:40):

Bye Ken. Have a good weekend.

Marcia Dority Baker says (02:28:52):

Thank you everyone, the transcript of the chat room will be posted soon.

libhtlaw says to (02:29:00):

Thanks all, very informative and interesting!

juliemjones says to (02:29:05):

Great session. Thanks, Richard, AA, Greg, et alia!

Jeff Buckley says to (02:29:14):

Case law on Google is a good step forward! Thank you Google!

merleslyhoff says to (02:29:23):

Thanks for a great topic! Good weekend to all.

MitchLawLib says to (02:29:23):

Great show! Bye, all!

Lyo Louis-Jacques says to (02:29:40):

Thanks everyone! This was great. Would love to have everyone on again. More GS questions to ask! :-)

Marcia Dority Baker says (02:30:38):

Good bye everyone.

weblawlib says to (02:30:41):

so long all.