

VIP Report

Comparative Review of Lexis® Library and Westlaw UK

In-depth, independent review of the products,
plus links to related resources

“Traditional legal print publishers have enhanced their product and offered it online in a format that makes it more attractive to lawyers than the free information. These publishers use the expertise of their legal editors to make the information available in an up to date format and allow lawyers to concentrate on providing advice to clients, rather than spending time trying to update and access the law in an updated format.”

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About this Report

VIP Report

VIP (<http://www.vivaVIP.com/>) publishes in-depth reports on products, vendors and user experiences relating to premium content products. The monthly *VIP Magazine*, available by paid subscription, includes news analysis and highlights from the latest product reviews. Subscribers also receive, as part of their subscription, the full product review reports published each month.

Users can also purchase individual reports and back-issues of the magazine to meet their immediate needs. The free *VIP Wires Weekly* HTML newsletter offers a regular update of the material which VIP's editorial team is reviewing and commenting upon.

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Publisher's Note

To improve the usability of VIP, we have shortened many long URLs with DigBig, a free utility that creates persistent links (<http://www.digbig.com>). When you click a DigBig URL, or paste it into your browser, you will be directed to the original URL.

Lexis®Library and Westlaw UK

By Diane Raper



Diane Raper

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“Those who are prepared to spend time and effort in learning how to use the complex online legal services will be well rewarded with up to date, timely and accessible material.”

With so much free legal information now available through the independent legal information institutes on the web – BAILII in the UK - it is easy to question the need to pay a substantial sum for access to legal information online. Traditional legal print publishers have enhanced their product and offered it online in a format that makes it more attractive to lawyers than the free information. These publishers use the expertise of their legal editors to make the information available in an up to date format and allow lawyers to concentrate on providing advice to clients, rather than spending time trying to update and access the law in an updated format. Of the services currently available, the two best known and most widely sold are Lexis Library and Westlaw UK. They both provide full-text access to legal materials. They can be used to find an up to date statement of the law and to access opinions (in the form of commentary and journal articles) on its application.

Having legal materials presented in this format in a complex legal system like the UK's is not a cheap option and it is common, in the current economic climate, to find lawyers and others who need to fund these services, querying the subscription rates offered and wondering whether they need to subscribe to both services.

In the past lawyers had often hoped to ignore online products. Many still prefer to use print over online. Online does not appear to offer them any easier method of coming to terms with complex legal information than the more familiar print. Now, younger entrants to the legal profession, who are used to finding information in a time sensitive manner by Googling, find the concept of full-text online searching, as presented by Lexis Library and Westlaw UK, confusing. To date, in the UK, neither service has been able to develop nor offer more acceptable alternatives as a core part of the service offered. Those who are prepared to spend time and effort in learning how to use the complex online legal services will be well rewarded with up to date, timely and accessible material.

Lexis®Library and Westlaw UK: VIP's View

	Lexis Library	Westlaw UK
<i>Presentation of legal material in timely and updated manner</i>	✓	✓
<i>Variety of methods to access material with good range of output options</i>	✓	✓
<i>Well developed training options</i>	✓	
<i>Good range of commentary and handbooks covering majority of specialisms</i>	✓	
<i>Excellent access to what is being published in UK legal journals</i>		✓
<i>Product developments reflect good use of interface and are no longer reliant on print legacy</i>		✓
<i>Need for further options on search interface to appeal to younger lawyers</i>	✗	✗

As a more recent entrant to the market and lacking some of the detailed traditional legal editorial comment, Westlaw UK has turned what was a disadvantage to its advantage with some very creative thinking when upgrading services. Annotated Legislation is a case in point. There really is no need for annotations to be so

heavily codified that an expert is needed to decode them. Taking that view is off-putting and a bit insulting to the end user. Westlaw has brought a plain English breath of fresh air to the way in which legislation is annotated. It is using its data to provide developments in presentation that make using the material more straightforward.

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