

## CAIJ: Identifying and Meeting Quebec Lawyers' Information Needs

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**Abstract.** This paper details the role the CAIJ plays in providing free access to legal information in Québec, a bilingual and mixed jurisdictions province in which there are nearly 24 000 members of the Bar, representing more than 25% of all Canadian lawyers. These lawyers can already access free public legal information on diverse websites. The CAIJ's priority is given to identifying and meeting lawyers' needs beyond primary legal materials, such as finding legal information by topic, staying up to date in their field and making research as simple and efficient as possible. To do so the CAIJ has developed the JuriBistro<sup>®</sup> suite of research tools freely available online.

**Keywords:** Free Access to Law, Québec, library, legal texts, research tools.

### Introduction

In the province of Québec, we have the privilege of having many actors share the stage in providing free access to legal information.

Being a civil law province, in a common law country, access to legislation and case law is essential to all practitioners. Les [Publications du Québec](#) holds the lead role in legislative publications as the Province's Official Publisher. Since January 1<sup>st</sup> 2010, the electronic versions of statutes have an official status. As of 2012, regulations on the free website will also constitute the official versions<sup>1</sup>.

As for caselaw, a Court of Appeal decision in 2000<sup>2</sup> ensured that SOQUIJ, a mandatory company of the State, would respect its public interest obligation to make the province's caselaw available to the public. This led to the creation of the free access website [jugements.qc.ca](http://jugements.qc.ca), dedicated to make the Québec caselaw available free of charge to its citizens.

Free access to Québec's caselaw and legislation is also available on [CanLII](#), a non-profit organization created in 2001, which as a LII member publishes public legal information produced by a great number of provincial and federal public bodies in Canada.

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<sup>1</sup> [An Act respecting the Compilation of Québec Laws and Regulations](#), R.S.Q. c. R-2.2.0.0.2, ss. 7 & 17.

<sup>2</sup> [Wilson & Lafleur inc. v. Société québécoise d'information juridique](#), 2000 CanLII 8006 (QC C.A.)

To further the cause of the province's citizen access to justice, in 2000, [Éducaloi](#), a non-profit organization was created to provide public legal information in everyday language.

On a stage already occupied by so many actors, it is important to define the specific role the [CAIJ](#) holds in the play of free access to law on the Internet and how it has and will continue to meet the expectations of its target audience.

### **1. What is the CAIJ's Role?**

Created in December 2001, by the [Barreau du Québec](#)<sup>3</sup>, the [CAIJ](#) (Centre d'accès à l'information juridique/Legal Information Access Centre) is a key player in supporting the Barreau's mission to protect the public. It does so by helping members increase their competence level by accessing quality up to date legal information from diverse sources.

This non-profit network of 39 courthouse libraries has a clear mission to  
"Make legal information available, with priority given to members of the Barreau du Québec and Judiciary, and to ensure that access is the same regardless of geographical location or work environment."

First and foremost, the CAIJ differs in its mission with other actors in that its mandate is not limited to public legal information. Access must be provided to all quality legal information, whatever the format or the source may be. As such, it has to upkeep access to information available in paper, microform and digital formats while respecting copyrights.

Another distinctive component of the CAIJ's role lies in its target audience. The CAIJ's mission is to optimize access to legal information for the over 24 000 members of the Québec Bar as well as their upcoming members and those ex-members who have accessed the Bench. The CAIJ's target audience is not the general public.

That being said, the CAIJ, as a privileged partner, must also support the Barreau du Québec in its mission to protect the public. As recent polling and consultations of lawyers have shown (Zins 2011), it is believed that if the CAIJ were to close its virtual doors to the public, this would hinder the public's access to quality legal information and the promotion of the rule of law.

To play its role with confidence, the CAIJ has applied guiding principles it strongly believes in, such as giving the client's needs priority and meeting their expectations swiftly whether we have in-house expertise or not.

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<sup>3</sup> The Barreau du Québec is the provincial law society for Québec.

## **2. Targeting the Audience**

This core principle of giving priority to the client, which stems from client services in our libraries, has extended to the creation of research tools for lawyers. In recognition of the fact that legal information is at the heart of legal services, the CAIJ has developed multiple access paths that allow it to stay in tune with lawyers' needs.

### **2.1. DEFINING LAWYERS NEEDS**

#### **2.1.1. Bringing Lawyers Needs to the Surface**

Considering the CAIJ offers in-person services to its library clients, its employees have the advantage of real daily contact with a portion of our clients who communicate their high expectations when it comes to legal information. By supporting clients in their research, they can identify their research needs and what they perceive to be missing from free legal databases.

Furthermore, the research service employees who do outsourced researches for firms are daily users of research tools. They provide the online research tool developers and project managers with great insight on how our clients search and the vocabulary they use.

Legal Research Training Sessions serve many purposes beyond simple visibility and marketing. Clients' questions are often indicative of potential improvements and practical exercises throughout the sessions allow employees to observe how the clients naturally use the research tools and the most common barriers to finding quality information quickly.

Beyond observation of clients and use of legal information, we always keep in mind that we must answer the diverse legal information needs of lawyers throughout all the regions in which they practice and whatever technology they use. To do so, CAIJ directors meet on a regular basis with regional committees as well as professional associations that represent the distinct needs of their membership.

The use of online surveys and live focus groups allows us to reach the less regular clients or the members of the Bar who do not use our products. This gives us insight as to the type of research tools clients wish they had access to as well as to the reasons they shy away from the CAIJ legal information services.

### 2.1.2. Lawyers' Core Research Needs

The simple observation of logs is sufficient to identify that lawyers continue to search in full-text databases the way they searched in print legal indexes. Many searches are launched by general legal topic or statute section. In surveys and focus groups held since the CAIJ'S inception, lawyers have constantly mentioned how important it would be for search mechanisms to take into account their natural research patterns.

In the 2002 consultations of lawyers, a research pet peeve often identified was the use of varying Boolean operators in legal research tools. Lawyers wanted user-friendly intuitive query formulation.

In the 2011 consultation, one of the main obstacles lawyers mention is that finding quality results in online tools often requires analyzing all the key expressions that could be used and creating a complex query to find the results they are searching for.

Although the fact that lawyers no longer have to wait for a selection of caselaw to be published and laws to be consolidated heightens the lawyer's capacity to access up to date legal information, the proliferation of information makes it hard for lawyers to find the time to keep up to date in their field.

Unsurprisingly, considering the number of actors already providing free access to public up to date legal information, lawyers have in our two last focus group and survey periods (2007 & 2011) been clear about the fact that legal texts are a great source of overviews of legal evolution and that access to such texts online should be prioritized by the CAIJ.

Finally, Internet users have a growing expectation of finding all types of information by using a simple query in a single tool. A reoccurring request of Québec lawyers has been to access caselaw, legislation and legal texts by launching a simple query in a single research tool.

## 2.2. TOOLS DEVELOPED TO MEET THESE NEEDS

One of the solutions set out by the CAIJ to meet these needs was to create an online suite of research tools: JuriBistro<sup>®</sup>. The name stems from two principles that would guide the development of its:

- Content: Juri for juridique (legal in French) representing the high quality legal information it should include; and
- Fonctionnalités: the word Bistro evokes the comfort of a familiar place to which clients enjoy coming back.

### 2.2.1. Legal Information by Topic

Although the notion of access to information by topic is integrated in some fashion to each JuriBistro research tool, it constitutes the very foundation of two of these products.

[JuriBistro® THEMA](#) is a legal portal organized by practice field which allows users to access legal information by topic that is available in the CAIJ tools as well as the existing external websites. In 2011, following our latest focus groups, [JuriBistro® THEMA](#) will be dedicated to legal current awareness by practice field. Although this tool is only available in French, the bilingual reality of Québec is reflected by the fact that links are made available to documents in both languages.

[JuriBistro® TOPO](#) is a knowledge base containing nearly 3000 questions on more than 50 different legal topics. General questions compile the useful sources on a specific subject while more targeted questions tackle issues of law likely to be of interest to Québec practitioners.

Designed to help guide lawyers legal research, JuriBistro® TOPO offers value-added content that is unique in the market. Not only does this product bring together information about legislation, caselaw, and legal literature relevant to a question of law, it also integrates and takes advantage of resources available in other CAIJ research tools as well as free access to public legal information websites.

### 2.2.2. Natural Language Queries

To simplify legal research, the [CAIJ](#) allows users to query content available on [CanLII](#) and the Barreau du Québec's legal texts in natural language by using the [JuriBistro® CONCERTO](#) search tool. Catherine Best defines natural language as:

“Natural language searching allows queries without Boolean connectors or search templates. This apparent simplicity on the surface is supported by sophisticated programming underneath. The program automatically identifies phrases or legal concepts in the query, removes common words, and applies word stemming technology to identify linguistic variants of the search terms. It then carries out a statistical analysis based on the importance of these concepts in the database, and uses relevancy ranking algorithms to determine which documents in the database provide the best statistical correlation with the concepts.” (Best 2007:33)

### 2.2.3. Searching by Statute Section

To provide for easy access to legal information by statute section, the CAIJ in partnership with Timeless Consulting has developed a tool which allows lawyers to access a wide variety of interpretative information on statute sections such as direct links to the portions of legislative debates on the section, links to all JuriBistro® TOPO questions regarding the section as well as automated statute citation requests in full text content available in other JuriBistro tools.

This tool, to be launched in the fall of 2011, will cover a selection of the most consulted Québec statutes.

### 2.2.4 Increased Access to Legal Texts

Beyond the traditional document delivery proximity service offered by the library network, the CAIJ added to the services and content available through its bilingual online catalogue, [JuriBistro® BIBLIO](#), the *Scott Index to Canadian Legal Periodical Literature*. This Index covers over 22 000 texts in English and French including:

- legal articles published in over a hundred Canadian legal journals;
- legal articles published in journals from related fields;
- texts from legal conferences; and
- case comments.

The CAIJ also partnered with the Barreau du Québec and the École du Barreau du Québec to make the law society's publications freely available online to lawyers and the general public. The CAIJ aims in the next two years to add legal texts from other sources to its online offer of access to legal information.

### 2.2.5. Single Search

A recent focus group, held in March 2011, came to the conclusion that the ideal future legal information research tool would allow to search primary and secondary sources of law simultaneously using a simple query and would allow refining of that query to more relevant results (See also Best 2007:33).

In 2011, the CAIJ will launch such a free online product. Called UNIK, this product will allow users to simultaneously search among:

- Canadian caselaw and legislation
- Nearly 3000 research questions
- Over 2,000 full text publications from the Barreau du Québec.
- Nearly 60,000 titles listed in the library catalog and
- More than 22,000 journal articles listed in the *Scott Index to Canadian Legal Periodical Literature*

Once the search is launched, refining of search results is available based on metadata in the indexed documents, such as author, case name, subject and even community tags.

This research tool aims to meet the high expectations of Google era lawyers when it comes to free and easy access to legal information.

### **3. A Glimpse Backstage**

After having described the CAIJ's role in the Québec free access to law arena and some of the tools developed in the last ten years, the portrait would not be complete without providing a glimpse of the budgets dedicated to produce such tools and acknowledging the in-house and outsourced crews who make it all possible.

#### **3.1. FUNDING**

CAIJ funding is based primarily (88%) on the annual fee charged by the Barreau du Québec to its members. In 2011, the cost per member was of 334\$ annually<sup>4</sup>. This funding mechanism allows financial stability to the CAIJ while allowing it to be an organization that can develop without political interference in its operations.

It is important to note that the global CAIJ annual budget of approximately eight million dollars (2009-2010) includes the leases and the cost of operations of 39 courthouse libraries. The portion of the budget dedicated to promoting and making legal information available online for our users represents less than 30% of the global budget.

#### **3.2. EXPERTISE DRIVEN DEVELOPMENTS**

##### **3.2.1. In-house Multidisciplinary Expertise**

Deeply rooted in library science, the CAIJ strives not only to make legal information freely accessible, but also to organize it in a way that will meet the lawyers' needs, using the latest technologies. To do so, it has hired and trained its staff to be able to work on very diverse projects and tasks.

Each team is at its base multidisciplinary. To conceive multiple legal research tools at a steady pace, and often, in parallel, the collaboration between librarians, lawyers, communications specialists and computer analysts on a daily basis has been crucial to the success of the CAIJ's projects.

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<sup>4</sup> The annual cost was of 334.50\$ by lawyer who was called to the Bar over three years ago. Lawyers with three years or less of experience pay between 100\$ and 284\$ depending on the year they were called to the Bar.

The availability of paralegals, lawyers and research librarians in lesser used libraries makes it possible to ensure the stable and uninterrupted content update without having to continually train temporary staff members on our processes and applications.

### 3.2.2 In-house Resources Guiding Outsourced Development

Since the creation of a Virtual Library team in 2003, the CAIJ has always lead multiple projects at once to create new tools, all the while improving and updating the content of existing tools (See Appendix for an overview).

At present time, the Virtual Library and IT teams include twelve full time employees, who represents 25% of the CAIJ's staff. These in-house resources have a great understanding of existing tools, the development language used, the content development strategies and the CAIJ culture of legal information. Beyond documenting new products, the use of internal human resources ensures continuity and access to the contextual history of decisions regarding development.

At its very core, the CAIJ is able to juggle multiple projects due to the sound management principles that have been applied. Even though, a multi-disciplinary team is available onsite, the CAIJ always analyses which projects should be outsourced. Third-party delegation of certain operations is viewed as a way to benefit from our partners experience in their respective fields and make significant economies in human resources and overhead costs. This also allows the CAIJ to not have the burden of inherent risks to projects such as staff turnover and the uneven cycles of demand and workload.

To date, the CAIJ expertise and development partners have been used in many projects. The very first product, the library catalogue ([JuriBistro® BIBLIO](#)) was developed using existing library technologies. The CAIJ team went beyond the obvious possibilities of the library management tools and also used these existing tools to develop JuriBistro® [THEMA](#) and [TOPO](#). Even though the library management tools are proprietary, support is available for those who think outside the box and community user groups also expand access to expertise. To answer the needs of natural language search, the CAIJ developed [JuriBistro® CONCERTO](#) with an existing search technology and outsourced the development based on our specifications. The CAIJ has partnered with [LexUM](#) for the publication of legal texts. A partnership with [SOQUIJ](#) allows the use of its thesaurus and its case summaries in [TOPO](#). The rights to the Scott Index were bought and although the merge into the catalogue was conceived in-house, the continuous indexation of legal periodicals is done by self-employed workers who have clear and detailed work instructions and are supervised by a CAIJ employee.



The single search tool UNIK, to be launched in the fall, uses a technology developed by [COVEO](#) for Intranets and the initial delivery of the tool was developed by this company. Complete documentation of the solution and training sessions so that further developments can be done in-house have been provided. As for Sélection laws, the programming language and general specifications allowed for a consultant to develop the complete specifications, and [Timeless Consulting](#) to deliver the initial version of the tool.

### Conclusion

The CAIJ's role on the free access to law stage is well defined. As a legal information broker, it must provide access to both private and public legal information, as well as organize it in a way that will allow lawyers to easily find it using well established research patterns. To reach this goal, the CAIJ recognizes the expertise of other organizations in the legal information field. The application of sound management principles through outsourcing and in-house expertise has allowed the CAIJ to provide an impressive quantity of information to Québec lawyers in a very short time all the while respecting established budgets.

This has lead in 2011 to the fact that the CAIJ website and tools which average 3500 visits per weekday has a 93% satisfaction level (Zins 2011). The CAIJ, by providing increased access to legal texts and improving the relevance of search results aims to keep a high satisfaction level in the years to come and get closer to its founder's visionary objective: "a library on the desk of each and every lawyer".

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## Appendix: Parallel developments in JuriBistro Search tools

	BIBLIO	CONCERTO	THEMA	TOPO	Legal Texts
<b>2003</b> <i>SEPTEMBER : VIRTUAL LIBRARY TEAM CONSTITUTED</i>	<b>LAUNCH</b> Library catalogue				
<b>2004</b>	+ Tables of contents				
<b>2005</b>	+ Interlibrary loans + Acquisitions recommendations	<b>LAUNCH</b> CanLII legislation CanLII caselaw REJB caselaw	<b>LAUNCH</b> 15 subjects		
<b>2006</b>		+ Collection de droit + Results management	+ 2 subjects	<b>LAUNCH</b> Over 1,000 questions	<b>LAUNCH</b> Collection de droit
<b>2007</b> <i>NEW VISUAL IDENTITY FOR ALL TOOLS.</i>	+ English version	+ Congrès du Barreau	+ 1 subject	+ Spellchecker + 200 questions	+ Congrès du Barreau + Tables of contents
<b>2008</b>	+ E-mail courtesy notices + RSS	+ Développements récents (CLE materials)	+ Search function + RSS	+ SOQUIJ Thesaurus + RSS + 350 questions	+ Développements récents (CLE materials)
<b>2009</b>	+ Mobile version	+ RSS + Mobile version	+ Mobile version	+ Mobile version + 550 questions	+ Bar Review + RSS + Mobile version
<b>2010</b>	+ Online Payment + Scott Index + Video Tutorials			+ Suggest us a question + 800 questions	

**2011 : JuriBistro UNIK and Law Selections**