

Role of Internet in Legal Education

Dr. Nitya Nand Pandey

Professor & Dean, School of Law, G H Rasoni Skill Tech University Nagpur

ABSTRACT:

The Information Age, often referred to as the Computer Age, is marked by swift technological progression and a vast increase in available information. This wave of innovation has significantly influenced various fields, including legal education, research, and practice. The term encompasses technologies such as mobile phones, digital media players, high-definition TVs, digital cameras, and especially the internet. These technological advancements have transformed the way information is communicated and shared, allowing instant access to knowledge—something unimaginable in earlier times. Since these tools are primarily designed for storing and transmitting data, their impact extends to nearly every human activity, including the legal sector. Among these tools, the internet plays a crucial role in enabling this seamless flow of information. It consists of a global network of millions of interconnected computers, allowing data to be transferred between any two points at any time of day. These linked systems include personal computers, corporate workstations, and devices in educational institutions and government offices. Regardless of the type or location, being "online" simply means being connected to this vast digital network¹.

Keywords: Legal Education, Internet, Role of Internet

INTRODUCTION:

A prominent thinker once observed that the future of the legal profession is both challenging and filled with immense potential for transformation. As legal practitioners and scholars, it is essential that we not only foresee these changes but also prepare for and influence them, rather than be overtaken and outdated by them. Today, **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** has become a defining feature in the realms of legal education, teaching, and research. The current era is marked by a rapid shift from traditional information formats to digital and electronic forms, bringing with it considerable challenges and far-reaching consequences.

INTERNET AND LEGAL EDUCATION:

As we move further into the 21st century, law school libraries, like many other institutions, are grappling with the effects of globalization and technological progress. While their core mission—to provide access to legal information and support legal scholarship—remains largely the same, the strategies for achieving this have undergone major changes. The evolution of academic law libraries can be seen in their growing focus on expanding foreign and international law resources, broadening interdisciplinary collections, and improving access to digital legal materials. Many have launched electronic publishing initiatives or hosted mirror sites to make external legal resources more accessible. Moreover, law

¹ <https://bestcolleges.indiatoday.in/news-detail/the-role-of-technology-in-modern-legal-education>

librarians have increasingly become leaders in adopting and developing technology within their schools².

One of the most valuable features of the internet is its accessibility and flexibility—it can be used anywhere, whether at home, at work, or wirelessly on the go. It serves as a powerful global communication tool that has quickened the exchange of information and facilitated societal progress. However, the internet also comes with challenges, particularly in the field of academic research. The ease of copying online content has led to increased incidents of plagiarism among students, which can carry serious academic and even legal consequences. Excessive screen time and unmonitored internet use may also impact students' health. Still, the overall benefits of the internet far outweigh these drawbacks.

When it comes to legal research, the internet offers a **low-cost alternative to commercial legal databases** like LEXIS and WESTLAW, especially for accessing primary legal materials such as statutes, cases, bills, and regulations in the United States. In certain areas—such as cyberlaw, free speech, intellectual property, or high-profile criminal cases—legal documents may appear online even faster than on paid platforms. In addition, the internet is sometimes the **only source** for foreign legislation, international treaties, global legal directories, or information in niche or emerging legal fields like human rights or legal issues relating to the LGBTQ+ community. Beyond legal materials, the web also provides access to a wide range of non-legal and interdisciplinary resources essential for broader legal studies, such as historical texts, demographic data, literary works, music archives, tax forms, sports statistics, and more³.

Thus, while the internet introduces certain challenges, especially regarding academic integrity and screen dependency, it remains an indispensable resource for modern legal education and research.

SIGNIFICANCE OF INTERNET IN LEGAL EDUCATION:

The internet can significantly enhance the resources of a typical law library by offering digital versions of print materials as well as access to information that may not exist in physical or digital formats within the library. For example, the internet provides a wide range of valuable resources including census data, uniform laws, model acts, news updates, publishers' catalogues, global library listings, journal tables of contents, full-text articles from law and non-law disciplines, classic literature, academic books through online stores like Amazon or Barrister Books, poetry, works of Shakespeare, classical music, famous quotations, song lyrics, comics, tax forms, sports statistics (including salaries of professional athletes), travel information, and various legal documents such as case transcripts, legal briefs, indictments, and hearing reports. While the internet excels in providing non-legal resources, it is also particularly useful for accessing legal materials that are either not available or not as easily accessible on platforms like LEXIS and WESTLAW or in traditional law libraries⁴.

Computers likewise have a transformative role in the legal research process. For instance, researchers at various levels—whether they are preparing an LL.M. dissertation, M.Phil. thesis, or Ph.D. study—typically need to compile a working bibliography. Traditionally, this involves manually recording sources on notecards or paper and later organizing them alphabetically before handing them to a typist. Any error in card arrangement could lead to mistakes in the final printed bibliography. Furthermore, if

² <https://karnavatiuniversity.edu.in/the-role-of-technology-in-modern-legal-education/>

³ <https://www.studocu.com/in/document/gujarat-university/constitutional-law/use-of-internet-in-legal-practice/26717712>

⁴ <https://karnavatiuniversity.edu.in/the-role-of-technology-in-modern-legal-education/>

the researcher discovers new relevant material after the document has been typed, updating the bibliography becomes cumbersome.

However, using a computer streamlines this entire process. Once bibliographic data is stored digitally, it remains accessible indefinitely and can be edited, reordered, or deleted at any point without starting over. If new sources or cases must be added—even late in the research process—they can be incorporated smoothly, with the computer automatically adjusting the formatting and page numbers.

Another significant benefit of using computers for legal data management is the enduring accessibility of stored information. Even after the thesis or dissertation is submitted, these digital records can be reused efficiently for future articles or research projects, without retyping. The same applies to lists of cases, statutes, abbreviations, and even whole chapters. With computer-assisted research, text can be updated or revised repeatedly up until final printing, eliminating the need for complete rewrites. For example, removing or adding a paragraph does not require recreating a full page, because the system adjusts content and pagination automatically⁵.

Another advantage of using computers for legal research is the ability to share digital storage devices, such as floppy disks, with peers and fellow researchers. This allows for easier exchange of information between individuals working on similar or related topics. It also enables researchers to divide their work—for example, each scholar can focus on a different aspect of a broader topic and then exchange results. The same applies when compiling bibliographies, which can save time and achieve greater efficiency through collaboration.

BENEFITS OF THE INTERNET IN LEGAL EDUCATION:

The Law Commission of India defines legal education as a scientific process that equips students with an understanding of legal principles and laws to prepare them for roles in the legal profession. Legal education trains future lawyers, judges, administrators, and legal scholars to comprehend how the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government function. It also serves as a method and platform for resolving disputes rationally and peacefully⁶.

To summarize, the benefits of the internet include:

- A vast supply of data and information across different media formats
- Powerful and fast online search engines
- Ease of use, enabling students to become researchers through accessible data
- Opportunities for students to share their work online with a global audience
- Support for various learning preferences and styles
- The ability of the web to present dynamic, constantly updated data
- Reliable transmission of text via email over long distances
- Access to libraries worldwide

In many college libraries, a noticeable trend is the shift from books to computers. While the book sections often remain empty, computer rooms are constantly busy, leading institutions to add more computer stations. This suggests that education is increasingly becoming digital rather than book-based.

⁵https://www.journalpressindia.com/siteadmin/upload_paper/1609406555_02.03.%20ROLE%20OF%20INFORMATION%20%20Disha%20Dagar_34%25_pg.%209-15.pdf

⁶<https://doonlawmentor.com/future-of-legal-education-is-online-learning-the-new-standard/>

Students are drawn to computers and the internet because of their interactive nature, allowing them to seek out information actively rather than passively receiving it⁷.

As this continues, more education will take place outside traditional classrooms. Students already have access to recorded lectures online, enabling them to watch at their own pace. Although some may use this freedom to explore inappropriate content, curiosity tends to lead them back to academic subjects. However, this shift brings challenges for educators: with each student potentially following a unique learning path online, it becomes difficult for teachers to keep track of and manage everyone's progress. And electronic learning is still in its earliest phase.

Although the internet is a valuable research tool, it must be used carefully. Many online sources are not peer-reviewed or evaluated by experts. Anyone with technical knowledge can publish anything, making it difficult to assess credibility. Therefore, it is necessary to critically evaluate information found online. The following points offer guidance for assessing individual sources.

- Who is the author of the content?
- What qualifications does the author have?
- Has the author published other work?
- Is the author clearly identified?
- Is the author associated with a reputable institution or organization?
- Is the content original, or has it been adapted from others?
- Is the information current, outdated, or has it been recently reviewed?
- It is worth noting that the organization of online content is often far less structured than the highly sophisticated categorization systems used in libraries and archives. This lack of order can make navigating the internet confusing, and students must develop strong search skills to conduct thorough and accurate research.
- Researching online can be time-consuming and distracting due to the vast amount of information available. It is easy for students to deviate from their original research question or assignment focus. The internet is filled with both useful and irrelevant information, making it tempting for students to use unverified content without proper attribution⁸.

CONCLUSION:

It is clear that while technology has dramatically improved access to information, it cannot replace human expertise. A legal professional's role extends far beyond accessing information; they must also guide, assist, and interact with the content meaningfully. Despite this, ongoing learning and staying updated with the latest legal developments is crucial—and the internet is an invaluable tool in this respect.

In the near future, no serious lawyer, legal academic, or researcher in India will be able to function effectively without at least a basic understanding of computers. Increasingly, legal publishers are distributing case law and other materials digitally. Law libraries across India, following international trends, are also moving toward full computerization.

Therefore, it is essential that lawyers, law teachers, and legal researchers familiarize themselves with computer technology as early as possible. Even if an institution has only one computer, it should be used to introduce faculty, researchers, and postgraduate students to digital legal research tools and methods.

⁷ <https://www.taxmann.com/post/blog/legaltech-in-india>

⁸ <https://cl.cobar.org/departments/why-lawyers-need-to-use-the-internet/>