

Casemaker4

New and Improved, Yet Reassuringly Familiar

BY NORMAN WOOLWORTH

Later this month, Colorado Bar Association members will be introduced to Casemaker4, the next-generation legal research platform from Casemaker, which is a free CBA member benefit.¹

In creating Casemaker4, the Casemaker development team was presented with two overarching imperatives:

1. improve search speed, modernize the interface to enable more intuitive site navigation, and upgrade design responsiveness to better accommodate mobile devices; and
2. retain features and design elements that loyal Casemaker users value and trust, and minimize changes with the potential to disorient.

Put another way: Make it new. Make it better.

But avoid change for change's sake.

Finding the Balance

"The history of platform redesigns across various industries is littered with examples of solutions in search of problems," said Dan McCade, Casemaker's chief information officer. "We were very conscious throughout the development process of only adding features that would matter to our users, and of not throwing out the baby with the bath water, so to speak."

To achieve the desired balance, the development team relied on several years of user feedback and incorporated refinements suggested through an extensive beta testing process, which included CBA representation. The result is a new and improved platform that remains reassuringly familiar.

Casemaker4 features a clean and uncluttered layout, with all of the features CBA members

In designing the new platform's user interface, much thought was put into making the user experience not only more intuitive, but also more efficient.

previously enjoyed, along with faster search speeds, better search filter tools, and new functionality such as (type-ahead) searching. It is both W3C and ADA compliant and includes a much more responsive design for enhanced display on smaller devices.

Not every change to the new platform is visible to users. As McCade explained, Casemaker invested in significant "back end" enhancements.

"We have upgraded our load balancing and database clustering technologies," McCade said. "And then along with hardware improvements, we've invested in our server operating system, and database and search engine software. The result is faster response time and greater platform stability."

A More Intuitive, Efficient Experience

In designing the new platform's user interface, much thought was put into making the user

experience not only more intuitive, but also more efficient. To that end, notable enhancements include:

- moving the main navigation to the header area so there is no longer a need to return to the home page;
- enabling a search of anything from anywhere by including the jurisdiction selection menu on every page (see figure 1). In concert, the system automatically updates the search jurisdiction as the site is navigated, so that searching on just the content you are browsing remains the default;
- adding time-saving options to the Search Input box, including "Recent Searches," "Search Tips," "Advanced Search," and predictive "Type Ahead" functionality (see figure 2).
- adding Casemaker Digest (daily summaries of leading cases), Casemaker Libra (eBooks), CiteCheck, and CLE Events to the main navigation for easier access, as well as the inclusion of links to Libra citing references where applicable;
- a new Alerts feature that allows users to be notified of any new developments pertinent to a predefined topic based on a saved search or list of primary sources;
- incorporating intelligent algorithms to suggest related primary and secondary materials not previously displayed;
- and much more!

What's not changing? The expert care and handling of legal content by editorial staff that has long distinguished Casemaker from low-cost legal research providers that rely on algorithmic approaches to capturing and organizing legal content, with comparatively little to no human intervention.

A Trusted Resource

In a study circulated at last summer's Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries,² three Connecticut law librarians set out to objectively evaluate seven legal research services by researching six topics. They performed identical searches on each service and then assessed each result against five predetermined criteria.

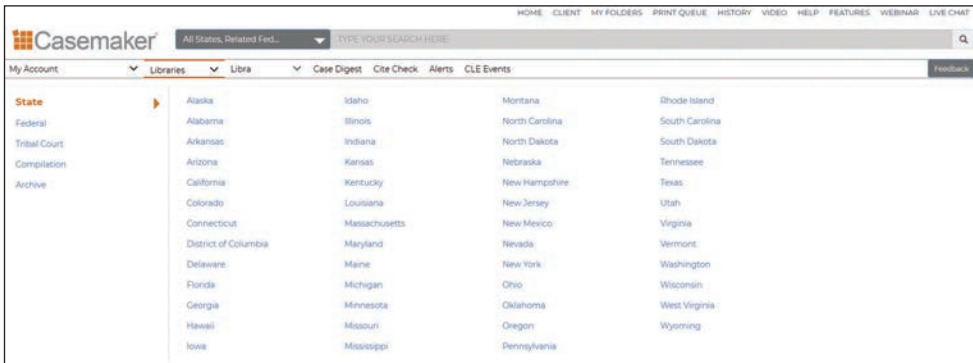


Figure 1. The new interface enables a search of anything from anywhere.

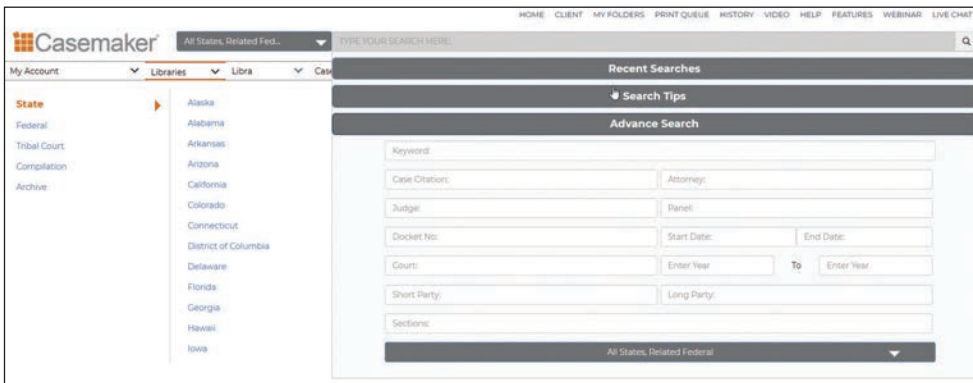


Figure 2. The Search Input box provides time-saving options.

The study showed that (1) Casemaker consistently returned more relevant results than other low-cost services, (2) its content was more current, and (3) its citator, CaseCheck+, was more precise and less cumbersome to use than other providers' citation-checking tools. In

fact, Casemaker performed on a par with (and in some cases even surpassed) the leading high-cost services across multiple points of comparison.

As Casemaker Chief Operating Officer Sarah Gorman said at the time, "These results are truly gratifying. Our editors take great pride in

their work and here we can see that the human touch really does make a difference."

Now, as a CBA member, you can have the best of both worlds: a much-improved platform with state-of-the-art functionality, and content you can continue to rely on with confidence. **CL**



Norman Woolworth joined Casemaker as director of marketing in spring 2018. He is a seasoned veteran of the online legal research industry, having served in a variety of marketing leadership and general management roles during a nearly 20-year career at LexisNexis, most recently as the head of the company's Federal Government market segment.

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NOTES

1. CBA members get free access to Casemaker's libraries, covering all 50 states and federal materials, as well as Casemaker's Premium services, including Casecheck+, CiteCheck, and Casemaker Digest.
2. Stock et al., "Database Evaluation: Drawing The Silken Thread," <http://casemakerlegal.com/pdf/public/database-comparison.pdf>.

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