

THE DAILY RECORD

WESTERN NEW YORK'S SOURCE FOR LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908

LegalLOOP

Internet research tips and tricks for lawyers

I was recently provided with a review copy of "The Cyber-sleuth's Guide to the Internet," written by Carole a Levitt and Mark E. Rosch. This book, which was recently updated and is now in its 12th edition, was written to help lawyers learn how to use the Internet to conduct effective and free investigative and legal research.

When I first started reading this book, I smugly expected that, given my knowledge of online tools, I wouldn't find much that was new to me. Was I ever wrong. In nearly every chapter I learned at least a few new tricks, and by the time I had finished the book, I had learned a vast array of new and practical tips that I would have otherwise never known about.

And, since I'm feeling altruistic, I figured I'd pass along a few of them to you.

First, you probably already know that when you perform a Google search, you can limit the results to certain categories, such as videos, images or news. But did you also know that you can limit your search to provide results from certain timeframes, including the past 24 hours, the past week, or the past month?

Another interesting Google fact: you can conduct patent searches on Google at www.google.com/patents.

And, Google tip 3: you can search for definitions of words by typing "define:" into the search box followed by the word you would like to define. This search will bring up definitions of the particular word from across the Web. Similarly you can also search for synonyms of a certain word. To do so you add a tilde (~) next to the term for which you would like retrieve synonyms.

Now, on to the next tip. Have you ever wanted to view a older version of a website? You can do so using using a website called the "Way Back Machine" which can be found at www.archive.org. You type in the website's address and then choose, from the dates available, the version of the website you would like to see.

The next few tips are from Chapter 7, which is, without a doubt, one of the most useful chapters in the book. This chapter

focuses on using the Internet to conduct free investigative research and explains how you can use the Internet to locate people and conduct background checks.

At the beginning of this chapter, the authors provide you with a very helpful list of useful websites which provide access to free public records and publicly available information. I've reproduced that list below:

- Search Systems (www.searchsystems.net)
- RootsWeb (rootsweb.com)
- USGenWeb (usgenweb.com)
- Portico (indorgs.virginia.edu/portico)
- BRB Publications (www.brbpub.com/free-public-records)
- Zabasearch.com (www.zabasearch.com)
- Black Book Online (blackbookonline.info)
- Zoominfo.com: (zoominfo.com/search)
- 123People.com (www.123people.com)
- Pipl.com (pipl.com)
- Spokeo.com (www.spokeo.com)

Also from this chapter comes another interesting tip. Did you know that you can use your public library card to gain access to expensive pay databases for free via

your library's online portal? It's true. Just visit Libdex (www.libdex.com) to locate your local library's website and determine which databases you have access to as a result of having a library card with that library. Databases available at some libraries include the full text of the Wall Street Journal, Gale's Business Directory (provides background information, broker reports, and more), and RefUSA (includes addresses and phone numbers for millions of people and businesses.)

But Chapter 7 doesn't stop there. The remainder of this chapter includes a wealth of information regarding ways to locate information and people, including how to: find military personnel, locate assets and personal property, verify aircraft registration and pilot certification, and research copyrights, trademarks, and patents.

Continued ...



By **NICOLE BLACK**

Daily Record
Columnist

THE DAILY RECORD

WESTERN NEW YORK'S SOURCE FOR LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908

Continued ...

Believe it or not, Chapter 7 is followed by 11 more chapters. In the chapters immediately following Chapter 7, the authors provide, among other things, an exhaustive look at ways to find additional types of information, including locating and researching experts, attorneys and judges.

Finally, the last few chapters of this book focus on methods to conduct legal research online for free. These chapters provide invaluable information for lawyers trying to run their law practices on a dime in this competitive economic climate.

My only criticism of this book is that some of the information is already outdated even though this latest edition was published just a few months ago. But, that's the nature of the beast and is to be expected when you're covering the Internet — where web-

sites and interfaces are updated every day — sometimes multiple times in one day.

The bottom line: this book provides a wealth of information for attorneys (or anyone else) seeking to use the Internet to conduct free investigative research and for that reason alone is worth its weight in gold. I highly recommend it.

Nicole Black is VP at MyCaseInc.com, a cloud-based law practice management platform. She is also of counsel to Fiandach & Fiandach in Rochester and is a GigaOM Pro analyst. She is the author of the ABA book Cloud Computing for Lawyers, co-authors the ABA book Social Media for Lawyers: the Next Frontier, and co-authors Criminal Law in New York, a West-Thomson treatise. She speaks regularly at conferences regarding the intersection of law and technology. She publishes three legal blogs and can be reached at niki@mycaseinc.com.