



British and Irish Legal Information Institute (<http://www.bailii.org>)

BAILII Update

Background

The British and Irish Legal Information Institute, BAILII, is a freely available public service which supports access to justice, fairness and inclusion. Since its inception in 2000 after a successful campaign to 'Free the Law', BAILII has delivered a valuable service that is free to access for everyone. It provides reliable information resources for private individuals, organisations serving civil society, those in legal education and training, and those involved in and serving the legal system. The service is low cost, good quality, easy to use, free at point of use and does not require registration or login.

In 2018 BAILII received almost 11.5m visits, totalling 63.4m page views. BAILII added 38,975 judgments and other legal materials all on budget of £161,000, with a staff of 2.85 FTEs.

Feedback on the BAILII service is positive. According a recent independent survey of BAILII users, 92% of recent survey respondents said BAILII is very important in enabling free access to law, 95% of respondents rated BAILII's service as excellent or good and 71% of barristers and 60% of solicitors who responded said it is very important to their work. 83% of members of the public who responded said they find BAILII very or fairly important to them.

Funding and Fundraising

For BAILII to remain strong and independent it continues to need core funding from those who share both its ideals and its belief that it is providing a valuable and unique free access public service. BAILII relies mainly on donations, supplemented by a small but important contract with the Ministry of Justice. Thanks to continuing generous support from donors including the support of all four Inns, BAILII has generated funds to cover its costs for most of the past 19 years. From 2015 to 2017 running costs exceeded income and resources became over-stretched. However, recent progress has been made to secure a sustainable future. In 2018 new fundraising arrangements were put in place, overseen by Guy Beringer QC, and about £130,000 of philanthropic income was generated.

BAILII has also obtained a grant from the Legal Education Foundation (LEF) over two years from 2019 to establish sustainability and a development path. The grant funded an independent business development report from not-for-profit Social Finance. It also covers short-term arrangements for a modest increase in capacity at operational and strategic levels but it is likely that in the longer-term staffing will need to increase and the recurrent budget will need to increase accordingly. Commitment to new projects, such as digitisation projects or new services, will need to take into account further additional costs.

BAILII's objectives include research and the publication of research results in areas relevant to its services, to be achieved in collaboration with academic institutions, and will consider joint applications for research grant funding.

Sustainability

BAILII is addressing the following issues as priorities, while continuing to ensure its primary purpose that the databases are up to date, expanding and accessible to all at no cost to the end user: ensuring robust and responsive governance and management processes are in place, managing succession to the key post of Executive Director, making small increases in capacity, securing a reliable and increased funding stream to cover current annual costs, and rolling out minor upgrades to improve usability.

Recent Developments

BAILII has recently addressed governance and management by appointing a new Chair, Professor Sir Ross Cranston, recruiting two new trustees by advertisement, appointing a part-time consultant, the former Director of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies and it is about to advertise a part-time post in the BAILII office which, among other duties, will increase BAILII's contributions to social media. BAILII also intends to form an Advisory Council to support its Board of Trustees.

BAILII has concluded an agreement to continue and enhance support from the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (IALS), University of London. BAILII receives donations in kind which reduce various overhead costs and BAILII continues to benefit from employment services, office accommodation and services, local computing, server accommodation, and fast internet access. As part of the agreement BAILII has also secured the professional services of the Development Office of the University and a part-time fundraising officer, Yvette Rathbone, who has already made significant progress in building philanthropic income.

A modest upgrade of BAILII's homepage to a cleaner and more modern look is being planned, following user consultation. There is no ambition to emulate the sophisticated search engines and data tagging of subscription databases. However, BAILII's search functionality will be reviewed, and recent search engine improvements by other LIIs will be examined.

Events

The Sir Henry Brooke BAILII Annual Lecture will be given by Lord Sales and take place on November 12th kindly hosted by Freshfields. BAILII is planning a reception in Dublin in early Spring 2020 and BAILII jointly with IALS will host the international 'Law Via the Internet' conference in Autumn 2020 under the auspices of the Free Access to Law Movement.

Content

BAILII will continue to prioritise primary legal information and in particular speedy publication of judgments of the courts. There is ongoing engagement with the MoJ and HMCTS to maintain and improve content delivery, including extempore judgments of legal significance. BAILII will actively investigate and take every opportunity to extend both current and retrospective coverage, through funded projects and data agreements.

Future developments will be investigated and considered subject to available funding:

- the possibility of pro bono contributions to the work of BAILII, in adding value to data, text processing, and technical work where suitable opportunities arise.
- how BAILII might link from judgments on BAILII to case comment and summaries published online, e.g. by practitioners in their blogs.
- obtaining or creating subject descriptors utilising pro bono or part-time freelance assistance.
- republishing relevant available scholarly material from open access platforms.
- possible collaboration with partners to develop case analytics and other initiatives driven by BAILII data.

How you can help BAILII

If you use BAILII and appreciate its value to the user groups it serves, we would encourage you or Chambers to make a donation by visiting <https://www.bailii.org/bailii/appeal.html>. The Trustees are most grateful for your support and the support of existing donors including the four Inns, chambers and individual barristers acknowledged at <https://www.bailii.org/support/donors.html> who ensure that BAILII can continue to fulfil its mission of providing free access to the law for all