

# Nine-tenths of the law

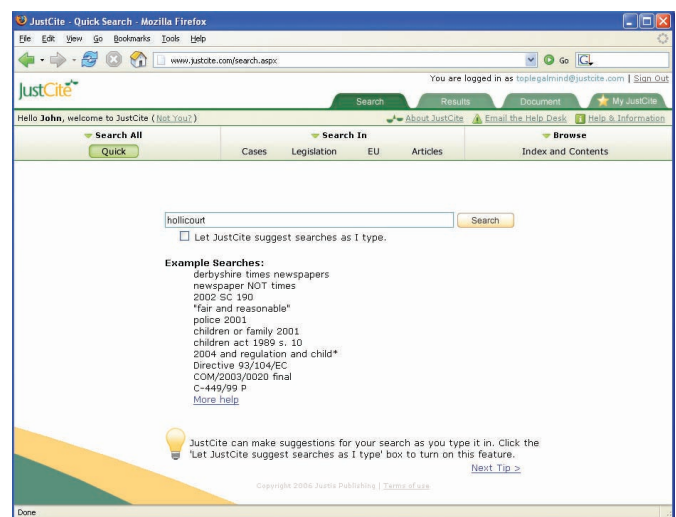
Despite its growing popularity, you may not be aware of JustCite. But you can bet your bottom dollar it's aware of the texts you need to access day in, day out. It could save you a huge amount of time and energy both as a student and later in your professional life. But why believe us when we have a vested interest? Quite. That's why we sought the unbiased opinions of our customers.

"Nine times out of 10 you need go no further," says barrister Don Ramble, referring to JustCite, the electronic citation finder that's been making practitioners' and students' lives so much easier since its inception in 2002. Its second incarnation was launched early last summer and Ramble, seven years a tenant of 5 St Andrew's Hill Chambers in London, is not alone in his praise of the time-saving service. Introduced to it a year and a half ago, the criminal law specialist now uses JustCite every week to find citations and texts for court preparation.

A subscriber service from Justis Publishing, JustCite is a simple-to-use web-based legal citator, to which academic and professional organisations have been quick to sign up as its benefits become more and more apparent. The only such product to offer completely unbiased coverage, it links to comprehensive content from all the top names in legal publishing, guiding users in an instant to the most relevant legal information documents from an index of over 1.6 million – and rising. Searches for case law and legislation can be performed with scant or detailed information alike, while results are displayed in order of relevance, accompanied by handy notes on each text's current validity. Remembering who publishes what in the morass of disorganised legal information becomes a thing of the past if one simply remembers JustCite.

All very well, you might say, but isn't this just company spiel? Well, no, since you ask. But it's hard to prove the point without accounts from independent witnesses. That's why we contacted a representative mix of customers at different stages in their careers and asked for their views. The results were persuasive. Participants highlighted numerous benefits of JustCite, with key themes cropping up again and again – time-saving, ease of use, accessibility, the immediacy of the service, its comprehensiveness. Great news for the JustCite marketing team. But what's in it for you? Well, read on and you might surprise yourself with how closely their experiences would likely mirror yours, had you access to JustCite – both now and in your career as you rise up the professional ranks.

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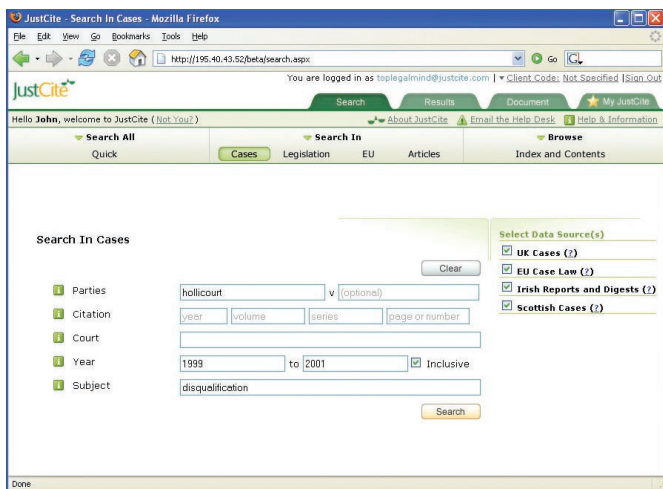
JustCite Quick Search screen

## Accessible, first port-of-call for all levels

Helen Watson is the information services manager at Ashfords, a full-service law firm in Exeter. A happy customer since the original version was first rolled out, she explains that JustCite is very popular with litigators at the company. But she notes that others also fare well. "I recommend it as a first port-of-call if people are infrequent users of our services," she says. Alluding to the mire of electronic libraries and databases out there, she adds that "it's difficult to know which service to use in the first place and how to use that service. JustCite overcomes both those issues."

According to Watson, people at all levels in the firm use the service, from paralegals, through trainee solicitors and qualified solicitors, right up to partner level. "It's a very user-friendly one-stop shop for all our fee-earners," she says.

Our friendly barrister Don Ramble agrees that JustCite is a "single port of call" and "one-stop-shop to other services". Putting things in context, he says: "We're a common law set but the emphasis of our chambers is on criminal law. One of my colleagues presents arguments in the Court of Appeal, for which JustCite is very useful. But pupils use it too, so it's used



JustCite Case Search screen

from the bottom to the top.” Of its accessibility, he adds that “in the old days we had to go to the library. But now, as long as you’re near an internet connection, you can access it anywhere.”

University of Hertfordshire student Peter Giles is new to the law. A former Royal Navy officer, with an academic background in biochemistry, he’s a few months into his CPE graduate diploma. But he already recognises the benefits of JustCite. Introduced to it in a library induction session, he comments that many of his peers use JustCite and that in the future as a practising lawyer, “it would be my first port of call.”

## Save time – your most precious commodity

“JustCite has saved us time,” says Angela Carritt, unequivocally, “and it saves novices a lot of time.” Carritt is the electronic resources librarian at Oxford University’s Bodleian Library, so her dealings with students are extensive. For busy budding lawyers, time is in short supply, so the weight of this statement should not be underestimated.

And it’s no different for qualified old hands. Lamenting that people expect answers very quickly, Don Ramble expands on how JustCite eases the burden of case preparation when specific citations are needed: “Most relevant entries pop up quickly. So for people who aren’t used to this sort of thing, it causes some surprise that you can bat back within minutes, when they’d have expected it to take a couple of hours. This makes you look good!”

**“Its data is up-to-date, I can rely on it and it takes the worry away.”**

## Neutrality and customisation

As a search engine JustCite stands alone in its impartiality. Its competitors’ equivalents, as noted by Angela Carritt, “only link to their own stuff but don’t give links to any other

databases – unlike JustCite, which is the beauty of the service.” Like Peter Giles and the CPE intake at Hertfordshire, students at Oxford are introduced to JustCite in their inductions. Carritt appreciates being able to access Justis and its key rivals through the JustCite information pages. “You no longer need to remember where to go,” she says. “It’s really good when you don’t know where each law report is – and some people never remember.”

Don Ramble agrees that one of the best things is linking up to other search facilities, a sentiment echoed by Grace Cullen. Several years Ramble’s junior, Cullen is on a similar career path as a pupil in another chambers. With access from the Inns libraries, she says that if you know a particular case, JustCite provides a good way of establishing under which authority to find it.

But that’s not all. Frequently relevant texts are offered through a variety of publishers. Retaining neutrality in its search results, JustCite often affords users a choice based on which publisher’s law reports they prefer. “We have JustCite on reading lists for that reason,” says Carritt, “so students can make a decision themselves [on whose database to use].”

However, not all users have access to all available databases, which is where customising your results to include only the services to which your organisation subscribes comes in. “That’s a really good development,” says Carritt.

Cutting out extraneous information is a central tenet of JustCite.

## Intuitive and flexible

Which leads onto the ways in which sources are found...

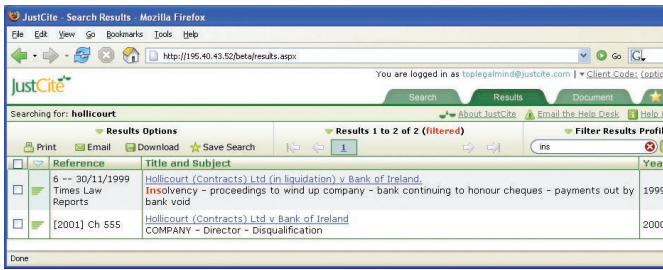
Both quick and detailed searches are possible with JustCite, the choice of which being dependent on how much information you have. “I use both,” says Don Ramble. “Sometimes I use a case reference; sometimes I search by topic. It has to be intuitive – and it is. If you had hundreds or thousands of search results it wouldn’t be so useful, so its prioritisation is good – and so far I’ve managed without the instruction manual!” He adds

that with JustCite you get peace of mind: “Its data is up-to-date, I can rely on it and it takes the worry away.”

Peter Giles also has “an intuitive feel” for the application. “Once you’re into it, it’s pretty easy,” he adds, and “if it shows up more results than I’m expecting, it shows them in a logical order so it’s easy to work through.”

Flexibility is key, as highlighted by Helen Watson. “It’s a very forgiving search engine,” she says. “A lot of other services require Boolean search operators.” That it’s not needed on JustCite is a “big plus” for Watson.

So do you usually find what you’re looking for? Carritt: “On balance, yes”; Watson: “Yes”; Giles: “Yes, I usually do”;



JustCite Results screen

Ramble: "Nine times out of 10 you need go no further. But if you have to, it's unfair on you guys as it might be for a very obscure reference!"

### Standing up to the competition

All of the above may be true. But can anything else do what JustCite does?

"JustCite is the only product on the market that does what it says it does. The format is easy to understand and simple, and not many others are like that," says Grace Gullen.

**"JustCite is the only product on the market that does what it says it does."**

Helen Watson agrees: "We don't have anything else like it." If JustCite didn't exist, her colleagues would have to use other services, "but they wouldn't always be as successful in finding what they need," she says, adding: "Sometimes they'd have to ask elsewhere. But sometimes if they failed, they'd give up on that line of enquiry."

Supporting her case, she mentions JustCite's value-added information: "It has amendments, validations and more. If someone's not that knowledgeable about how the system [in general] works, they can see what else they should consider."

Peter Giles agrees: "You get much more with JustCite."

He's right. You do.

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