



Tracking Technology and Innovation for the Legal Profession

## 1.8M Pages of Federal Case Law to Go Public

By **Robert Ambrogi** on November 14, 2007



Carl Malamud's nonprofit organization **Public.Resource.Org** and the legal research company **Fastcase** today **announced** an agreement that will allow Public.Resource.Org to publish 1.8 million pages of federal case law in the public domain. The archive, which will become available sometime in 2008, will include all U.S. courts of appeals decisions since 1950 and all Supreme Court decisions since 1754. I wrote in August about Malamud's charge to **crash the Wexis gate** with his plan to create a public-domain repository of all case law, federal and state, and I first wrote about him a decade ago in recognition of his work to bring the SEC's EDGAR database to the public. In today's statement, he said:

"The U.S. judiciary has allowed their entire work product to be locked up behind a cash register. Law is the operating system of our society and today's agreement means anybody can read the source for a substantial amount of case law that was previously unavailable."

Notably, this public-domain database will come about with the cooperation of a for-profit legal research company. Fastcase has agreed to sell this case law in a one-time transaction that will allow Public.Resource.Org to use it. The cases will be marked with a new **Creative Commons** mark — CC-Ø — that signals that there are no copyrights or other related rights attached to the content.

Once it receives the cases, Public.Resource.Org will format them using open source "star" mapping software, which will allow the insertion of markers that will approximate page breaks based on user-furnished parameters such as page size, margins, and fonts. "Wiki" technology will be used to allow the public to move around these markers, as well as add summaries, classifications, keywords, alternate numbering systems for citation purposes, and ratings or "digs" on opinions.

Going forward, new cases will be added to the database through organizations that already make cases publicly available, such as **AltLaw** and the **Legal Information Institute**.

Today's announcement said that further news "will be forthcoming on the availability of other case law, including Federal District and pre-1949 Appellate decisions."

**Bob Ambrogi**

Bob is a lawyer, veteran legal journalist, and award-winning blogger and podcaster. In 2011, he was named to the inaugural Fastcase 50, honoring “the law’s smartest, most courageous innovators, techies, visionaries and leaders.” Earlier in his career, he was editor-in-chief of several legal publications, including The National Law Journal, and editorial director of ALM’s Litigation Services Division.

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#### ABOUT LAW SITES

LawSites is a blog covering legal technology and innovation. It is written by Robert Ambrogi, a lawyer and journalist who has been writing and speaking about legal technology, legal practice and legal ethics for more than two decades.

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