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On the Iuridicum Database

The Iuridicum*¹ database was first presented for introduction and testing on 1 November 2001.*² This also finalised the process that began with changes in the design of the printed version of Juridica*³ and in its content in 2000: an electronic version in a modern format was made available to users for assessment.

1. Background

During the last decade*⁴ the Law Faculty of the University of Tartu and the Juridica editorial office have compiled and built up a law database whose availability is important to the Estonian legal profession, law students, in-service trainees and others interested in law. The data particularly include:

- the materials published in the printed version of Juridica (more than a thousand titles of articles, commentaries, reviews and legal information), including summaries of articles;
- the special English edition of Juridica — Juridica International (the annual compilation has been published since 1996);
- information on lecturers and researchers, the authors of Juridica, in the form of CVs;
- research and doctorate theses and other publications.

2. Objective, principles and execution

The objective was to create an interactive database with components such as the digital journals Juridica, Juridica Abstract and Juridica International, a users' database, CVs of lecturers and researchers, research papers and publications. It was considered important to create an up-to-date, flexible and developable, yet stable database. High priority was given to the further development prospects of the system. It should also be stressed that the up-to-date user interface and design are not merely details. These and other circumstances served as the grounds for developing the database on an outsourcing basis.

¹ Detailed information on Iuridicum is available at http://www.juridica.ee/introduction_en.php?intro=overview

² P. Pruks. Austatud lugeja! (Dear Reader) – Juridica, 2001, 8, p. 517 (in Estonian).

³ See a detailed introduction to Juridica at http://www.juridica.ee/introduction_en_jur.php?intro=times.

⁴ On 7 June 2002 Juridica celebrated its tenth anniversary — the 90th issue of the journal appeared on 5 June 2002. Juridica has by now developed into a law journal for the entire Estonian community of lawyers and jurists.

The principles of the database were finalised in the course of several debates held in spring 2001. Presuming that users would be interested in a digital *Juridica* (*Juridica Abstracts*) and *Juridica International*, the first basic problem arose. What purpose should digital journals serve? Should they introduce the journals, replace the printed version, or only allow to search for titles of articles?

Naturally, the Internet version of the journal is a complementary method for the editorial office to communicate with its readers. It was and is important that the Internet version should not completely replace or duplicate the printed version, but introduce the legal issues addressed in the articles to as wide a circle of users as possible, to intermediate analyses and information about the authors. The database itself has to be user-friendly and well structured. Special attention was paid to different search options and the list of keywords to make the finding of material as convenient and simple as possible. It was an absolute precondition that the database should be in two languages, Estonian and English, with a possibility of adding more languages.⁵ The option of adding a comments feature to the articles of the database was discussed, but it was found to be unfeasible at the time.

Considering the scope of the work that had to be undertaken, it was important to define the sequence of the execution stages. The digital journals *Juridica* (including *Juridica Abstract*) and *Juridica International* were set as priorities, followed by the CVs and publications database.

The database was created and implemented in mutually independent stages during 2001–2002. MicroLink Systems Ltd. developed the software and provided the technical solution.⁶ The Law Faculty of the University of Tartu supported the database creation efforts of the Iuridicum Foundation financially.

3. Target groups

As regards the journals, the target groups of the printed and Internet versions naturally overlap. So far, we have largely aimed at academic circles (lecturers, researchers and students). Students can certainly use *Juridica* articles in their research work. Many original articles of recent years have been built on doctorate theses and reflect the results of the Estonian Science Foundation grants and other research projects. However, members of the Bar Association, judges, attorneys-at-law, prosecutors, state and local government officials, lawyers, notaries, police officers and others who need legal analyses and systematised legal information in their work certainly constitute the largest group of readers. The database could presumably be useful to those more deeply interested in law. One should not forget that the users of the Internet version by far outnumber the subscribers to the printed version. Users of the Internet version certainly include our colleagues from foreign countries who can acquaint themselves with Estonian legal issues through the digital *Juridica International* and *Juridica Abstract*.

4. Digital *Juridica*, *Juridica Abstract* and *Juridica International*

Juridica first reached the Internet in the autumn of 1999.⁷ Through the older issues of the journal, readers can follow the formation of legal thought in independent Estonia and the arguments that were used in handling different problems. *Juridica Abstract*, which systematises the English summaries of *Juridica* articles, is freely accessible to everyone.

The English *Juridica International. Law Review. University of Tartu*, which presently assembles more than a hundred legal articles, is aimed at foreign readers. The last years' issues are centred on specific topics⁸ and as such, have certainly contributed to the intermediation of research information and strengthening of foreign contacts. The topics of the journals are planned by the editorial board that has involved twelve

⁵ The language can be toggled in the database by clicking the flag icon in the header. When languages are toggled in *Juridica*, the system attempts to find the same issue and volume of the journal. If it is missing, an error message is displayed.

⁶ The operating system is Red Hat Linux 6.2, kernel 2.2.14-5.0; database MySQL-Ver 9.38 *Distrib 3.22.32, for pc-linux-gnu (i686)*; WWW server Apache; PHP scripts 4.0.4p11.

⁷ P. Pruks, A. Raidaru. *Ajakiri Juridica on võrgus! (Juridica Journal is on the Internet!)* – Õigus Teada. *Ajaleht juristidele*, 2 (32), October 1999, pp. 5–6 (in Estonian). Available at: <http://www.lc.ee/foorum/lc/template.pl?show=txt/6t/6t>.

⁸ For example, the latest, sixth issue entitled *Estonian Civil Code in European Private Law Context* was dedicated to the international conference “Estonian Civil Code in European Private Law Context”, held in Tartu on 27–28 September 2001. Available at: http://www.konverents.ee/tsiviilseadustik/index_eng.php

Estonian jurists over ten years. From 2002 the foreign members are: Professor *dr. h.c.* P. Schlechtriem, one of Europe's most highly acclaimed professors in civil law, an author of the new German law of obligations, an author of the UN Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods, a leading figure at the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law, and Honorary Doctor of the University of Tartu (2002); Professor Th. Wilhelmsson, Vice Rector of the University of Helsinki, a member of the European Commission on Contract Law. He led the development of systematic cooperation between the private law institutes of the University of Tartu and the University of Helsinki. Th. Wilhelmsson has been Honorary Doctor of the University of Tartu since 2002. The other foreign members of the editorial board are Professor E. Nerep, Stockholm School of Economics, and Professor *dr. h.c.* W. Krawietz, Professor Emeritus of the University of Münster and publisher of the journal *Rechtstheorie*.

Juridica International has established grounds for contacts with internationally acclaimed journals. *Rechtstheorie* published an Estonian special edition that was presented in Tallinn on 25 March 2002. The special edition featured articles published in the framework of the international symposium Legislation and Legal Policy (Tartu, 2000).

4.1. Users, registration and statistics

Users of the database certainly include those who are used to working with databases and search systems in their everyday work. The database is therefore structured so as to avoid burdening the reader with instructions. Primary advice is, however, available in help files; search examples offer additional information. The fact that the final result of the database can be considered a success is shown by the completed feedback forms. For example, 31% of respondents thought that the convenience of use was very good, 66% found it met their expectations and only 3% of respondents stated that their expectations were greater.

A fee is charged for registration as a user of the Estonian version and a special registration form has to be filled in. Subscribers to the Internet version have access to the full texts of the Juridica articles contained in the database, including *pdf* format texts of 2000–2002 and Juridica covers of the years 1996–1999. A user who wants to read articles has to log into the database by entering the user name and password.

4.2. Display of data⁹, file formats and printouts

The digital Juridica displays the newest published issue to the user. The current year's issues can be selected from the header, earlier volumes from the archive. When a year is selected, all issues of that year are displayed. The author or authors are indicated next to the title of the article; their CVs open by clicking on the names. When clicking on the title of the article, a summary and a link to the full text of the article are displayed. Documents accessible without a password (public documents) are displayed at once in full. An error message is displayed to unauthorised users who try to access a password-protected document.

A system was added in May 2002 that copies the references of articles to a supplementary table and, upon copying to a disk, replaces references (*1, *2, ...) in the reading files with links to a file that opens a separate references window. This makes reading of the electronic articles more convenient. Users do not need to scroll to the end of the page for endnotes or remarks while reading.

In data display, the part of text that fits onto the screen at any one time is automatically taken into account. A picture of a green or red lock is displayed in front of the article link. Green signifies materials not protected by a password, *i.e.* they are accessible to all users; documents with a red lock can be viewed only by subscribers to the electronic version (they cannot be read before logging in).

The texts of articles are displayed to users in *html* format. Naturally, the texts are of primary importance and users can copy the Juridica texts or any parts thereof to their own documents. Some of the files in the database are accessible or duplicated in *pdf* file format:

- Juridica articles from 2000–2002 together with the editorials of the issues;
- Juridica Abstract — summaries of articles since 2000;
- articles of Juridica International since 1999;
- Juridica cover pages in the design concept of 1996–1999 and cover pages of Juridica International from 1996–1998.

⁹ The database is accessible by the following browsers: Internet Explorer (version 4.0 or newer) and Netscape Communicator (version 4.5 or newer). The browser must be cookie and JavaScript enabled to use the system. The cookie used in the system expires within 30 minutes after the user's last click on the page and the user is automatically logged off the system.

The data download speed depends on the overall network speed. In this respect, the possibilities are improving and in forthcoming years, network speed will surely not disturb those working with the database. The peculiarity of Juridica Abstract is that only summaries of articles are displayed. The summaries of issues are also available in *pdf* format as from the 2000 volume.

The link stating “whole article in one page“ displays the full article in a new window without the earlier menu and with a simpler header. The printout header contains information about the volume, issue, author, title and pages of the article.

4.3. Search function

The Iuridicum database has a single comprehensive search engine. The search engine enables full text or keyword search.^{*10} The user can choose between simple and advanced search. Search can be performed by author, among publicly available materials and password protected materials, and all materials. The search function is language specific: when the user is on the Estonian page, only Estonian materials are sought. Advanced search allows the user to search from texts and keywords attached to the text. Another option enables search by exact phrases and full word search.

When using search by author, the result contains the following data: the number of articles published by the author (listed as full entries in a descending order), and the CV and the articles published by the author as hypertext. The article entry contains the details of publication: the volume, issue, and pages. This is a very convenient function for finding article references, as the user does not need to look for the page numbers in the printed version. Full information on what and when an author has published is available in a matter of moments. Besides the article containing the search word, the part of the sentence is also displayed to open the context for the user.

The keyword list allows the entering of keywords that can later be selected in the search engine. Sub-keywords can be added to existing keywords when the master keyword is selected. An indices system was introduced in April 2002 to simplify search.^{*11} The user can sort articles by different parameters. Search results can also be saved in the user’s own computer in the form of a text file.

The available search options thus allow users to easily find what they need. Naturally, the search function can be used free of charge. It is then up to the user whether they want to receive the article at once for a small fee and use this possibility throughout the year, or whether they prefer the traditional printed version.

5. CVs and publications

There is no journal without authors and any journal has a purpose only when it has something important to say to the readers. Readers are surely interested in who have been the main authors of the journal throughout its ten years of existence. The database gives an overview of the authors through their CVs^{*12}. These are useful for introducing our jurists and have also facilitated international contacts and information exchange. A user can learn in minutes what a researcher or lecturer has written/published during the last ten years. What’s even more important is that we have an overview of the problems tackled by the Estonian law, and we can compare ourselves to the European legal area.

The “Publications” part of the database will be supplemented by research papers and doctorate theses in the future. The system is essentially the same as the digital journals system. The user can choose the year of entry of the publications and find the needed text in the list of contents. Newer materials are displayed first. Publications can be saved on the computer hard disk as *pdf* or *doc* files.

¹⁰ Only Estonian keywords are available at present.

¹¹ Available at: http://www.juridica.ee/gen_index_en.php?search_lang=2.

¹² The database contains 390 authors. English data are currently available on 63 authors; work with translating these data is still to continue. On the Internet: http://www.juridica.ee/cv_en.php.

6. On financing and sponsors

It is clear that the publication of law journals in Estonia will not become a profit-making enterprise in the forthcoming years (if ever). It is no secret that many institutions have attempted to launch special journals, such as constitutional law and copyright law publications. Unfortunately, no stable capacity has been found on the part of writers or finances. Juridica has needed and will need support and sponsors in the near future. The fact that the journal has had thirty-two supporters throughout its ten years of existence is a sign of trust in the venture. Supporters who have not doubted the usefulness and necessity of the expenses deserve the gratitude of all of us, and their names are made known to the public through the database.^{*13}

7. What about future?

A wide scope of work needs yet to be done toward the content building and development of the database. Special editions can be compiled of the existing materials by assembling articles of certain topics into a single whole. Users have made proposals to that end and it is not impossible that the proposals will be responded to after some time. As already mentioned, the CV database needs to be supplemented. These and other tasks await fulfilment. The success of the activities so far gives us motivation for this. The overall opinion of the users of our joint work illustrates it well: 33% of respondents thought of the database as excellent, 64% as meeting expectations, and only 3% had greater expectations.

¹³ On the Internet: http://www.juridica.ee/introduction_en_jur.php?intro=sponsors.