

The following update was originally written for a recent issue of the Newsletter of the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians (BIALL).



BAILII Update for BIALL, May 2020

This year the British and Irish Legal Information Institute, BAILII <https://www.bailii.org>, is celebrating its **20th anniversary** as a freely available public service which supports access to justice, fairness and inclusion. Since its formation as a charity in December 2000 after a successful campaign to 'Free the Law', BAILII has continued to provide 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 use cookies or require registration or login. It is immensely grateful to law librarians and to BIALL itself and to all its other donors for all the support shown to it over these years.

The Trustees and staff of BAILII wish all users and supporters well during this difficult time. During the Covid-19 pandemic the BAILII team are working from their homes to maintain the service and are continuing to upload judgments as they come in; additionally, courts and tribunals are sending some older materials which they have not sent to BAILII before. BAILII is also taking the opportunity for project work; for example, several thousand **Employment Tribunal (UKET) decisions** have recently been uploaded. A new database on BAILII contains a collection of **decisions from the Parole Board of England & Wales** reconsideration mechanism which started work on 22 July 2019, <https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/PBRA/>.

During 2019 BAILII **usage statistics** showed over 12 million visits, totalling 75.2 million page views and 36,921 documents were added. There has been no significant drop-off in use during the pandemic and there were 2.4 million page views in a recent week. In September 2019, which seems long ago now, BAILII received praise for the availability of historic constitutional judgments during discussions about the prorogation of Parliament. BAILII now holds about 407,800 searchable cases and 147,500 searchable legislation items; staff now number 3.85 fte and the current year's budget is £220,000.

BAILII has reached sustainability, assuming **fundraising** continues at least at the same level. If fundraising continues to be successful, thanks to the efforts of Yvette Rathbone, the Fundraising Officer working for BAILII, it may be possible to extend services. However, all charities are aware that fundraising may become more challenging over a considerable period after the pandemic. BAILII thanks all its supporters including the Legal Education Foundation which made a grant to BAILII for 2019 and 2020.

BAILII has convened a group to advise on strategy and support it in promoting the BAILII service and contribute to BAILII activities. The **Advisory Council** is drawn from a range of stakeholders including users, content specialists, supporters, and donors. It met on the 12th November 2019 and law librarians are well represented on it.

On that same 12th November the BAILII **Sir Henry Brooke Lecture** was given by Lord Philip Sales on 'Algorithms, AI and the Law'. Freshfields kindly hosted the event which was attended by about 190 people. The text of the lecture is available at <https://www.bailii.org/bailii/lecture/06.pdf>.

Dr Ann Hale, a former US attorney, editor and publisher, is now in post half-time as **Executive Officer** working with Joe Ury, Executive Director. She has a particular interest in BAILII's social media presence with the assistance of Emily Allbon who recently joined the BAILII Trustees. The addition of this post to its staff adds resilience as well as capacity to BAILII.

BAILII is working on a **redesign** which is essentially a refresh of the home page rather than implementing new software. It should be released fairly soon but the 'classic' BAILII will still be available.

The '**Law via the Internet: Legal Information and Access to Justice**' conference <https://ials.sas.ac.uk/law-internet>, organised by BAILII and the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (IALS) for September 2020, has with much regret been postponed until 2021. The Call for Papers has been suspended for the moment but BAILII members are encouraged to consider contributing a paper in due course.

BAILII has received a number of requests for bulk **data sharing** to facilitate data analysis and AI projects; this is not currently allowed under its terms of use. BAILII would like to align any policy it adopts with policy being developed by the Ministry of Justice, HMCTS, and the judiciary and is engaging in discussions with them. There is a need to consider the ethical dimension to policy and to establish procedures to assess requests. BAILII is discussing the implications of data sharing which could inform policy and be a basis for negotiating formal agreements for data sharing.

IRLII, the Irish Legal Information Initiative <https://irlii.org/> run by the School of Law, University College Cork, was relaunched in October 2019 with significant enhancements. There is a long-term collaboration with BAILII and BAILII was represented at the event. Dr Patrick O'Callaghan, one of the Directors of IRLII is a member of BAILII's Board of Trustees.