

CCL-EAR COMMITTEE REVIEW
LexisNexis Academic
Fall 2015

LexisNexis (LN) Academic provides access to a comprehensive spectrum of full-text information from over 17,000 legal, business and news research sources. This database includes, but is not limited to national and international newspapers, wire services, and broadcast transcripts; federal state cases and statutes, as well as U.S. Federal court decisions since 1790; SEC filings and reports; and US and international companies' information.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

- #1 --- Not recommended
- #2 --- Recommended with reservations as noted
- #3 --- Recommended
- #4 --- Outstanding offer

RATINGS for SPECIFIC ASPECTS of the DATABASE

The following features were examined and rated on a four point scale (1=Poor; 2= Needs Improvement; 3=Good; 4=Excellent):

- **DATABASE CONTENT/FORMAT**
Consider functionality, appropriateness of format, database content, adequacy of coverage (retrospective, current), and value to the California Community Colleges as a whole.
- **SEARCH INTERFACE**
Consider the functionality and ease of use of the interface. Is it intuitive or is there an excessive amount of training required? Are any crucial features missing from the search interface?
- **USER SUPPORT SERVICES**
What types of customer and technical support are available for end users and library administrators?
- **COST**
If cost is available, does it seem reasonable in terms of comparable products?
- **AVAILABILITY/ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE:**
Is access/connection to product reliable and stable? Is response time adequate? Is the product accessible to users with disabilities?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT: 2

LexisNexis continues in many ways to be known as the database that has “hidden gems” that are not easy to find. In other words, LN has an impressive array of full-text sources that are difficult to access as compared to other databases and web-based sources. The interface is not inviting to the novice user, and requires the librarian to train the students. The review team would like to recommend the removal of “segment searching” because it is not intuitive at all.

If LN wants to truly be an inviting database to community colleges’ variety of users (most of whom are novices), more has to be done than simply showing “Hot Topics” links on the home page or a feature to search for landmark cases of the U.S. Supreme Court. For its newspaper articles, the U.S. national and regional coverage has continued to shrink while competitors have made exclusive arrangements with many key newspapers. Although California news is stronger in LN than in EBSCOhost’s Newspaper Source Plus, California news coverage is not as robust as before. This is due to exclusive contracts with other vendors. Legal and business information is still strong in LN and community colleges with paralegal or legal track programs may want to consider subscribing to this product. The review team, echoing the previous CCL-EAR reviews, strongly recommends that LexisNexis look more closely competitors on how to improve its database features.

DATABASE CONTENT/FORMAT: 2

LexisNexis Academic houses an impressive collection of full-text news, business, and legal resources. Sources are updated daily. In the area of business resources, LexisNexis provides access to a wide variety of company-specific information. This includes recent SEC filings such as 10-Ks, Hoover’s Company Reports, as well as information on company hierarchies and competitors. The legal resources are similarly wide ranging. LexisNexis includes state codes, federal laws and regulations, state and federal court decisions, as well as access to secondary resources such as legal journals. Another notable area is the full-text access to trade journals in the business and legal arena, as well as other specialized fields such as advertising.

LexisNexis also includes access to over 3,000 national and international newspapers. While there is decent coverage of California newspapers, content has shrunk considerably since Academic’s early days. Titles that have disappeared include the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Media News Group newspapers (with the exception of 2001-2004 issues —papers such as the *Oakland Tribune* and *The Argus*) and *San Diego Tribune*. For over 10 years now, LexisNexis has only a 6-month rolling backfile of the *Los Angeles Times*.

The absence of some U.S. regional newspapers in LexisNexis Academic continues (e.g., Arizona has always been mostly absent), and the gaps in local coverage across the country have grown

significantly due to the “exclusive” contract wars among vendors. Given that, LexisNexis Academic has up to this point kept continual coverage of the *New York Times* (June 1980 - present), the *Washington Post* (January 1977 - present), and the *Christian Science Monitor* (1983 – present). With the exception of indexing, the full text of the *Wall Street Journal* has never been accessible from the LexisNexis Academic database.

To remedy the absence of some major newspapers, LexisNexis provides an index to newspaper articles, that they do not carry in full text, with links to each newspaper’s website. Unlike Google News, LexisNexis provides controlled vocabulary indexing that allows students to click on the Web News tab on the top right. This feature will especially help students find articles on current event topics that may be very region-specific or to find specific articles that they may have come across.

SEARCH INTERFACE: 1

Since the 2007 version, LexisNexis has continued to change its front-end interface. Changes include having links to hot topics on the front page and the bar is no longer a huge box, but a standard one-line bar. Other efforts were also been made to simplify starting points. With the current interface, launched in January 2014 (and slightly revised in August 2014), the interface appears to have a cleaner look comparable to Google. There is a search bar, a “Hot Topics Links,” as well as links on the bottom or via the “Search by Content Type” on the top. Many categories were eliminated or simplified. LexisNexis removed the ability for students to narrow down a search by the headline or by author with the use of a pull-down menu. Instead of an advanced search option, LexisNexis guides the student to do segment searching, a command interface feature in use since the ‘70s. Unfortunately, segment searching is not intuitive, and the review team strongly believes that this feature will not be used by students, faculty, or librarians. The review team wishes LexisNexis would provide a separate advanced guided search screen that had its earlier pull-down menus for limiting. This feature is especially necessary given the various learning styles of community college students.

The browsing feature of Academic (which is the same as LexisNexis’ other products, and includes its corporate clientele) is not user friendly, hardly intuitive, and has not changed since the 2007 review. There is no way to browse by issue of any title. The CCL-EAR review team wishes LexisNexis would make the Academic product more user friendly when students need to browse, especially when certain “sets” of sources, i.e., file numbers given by LexisNexis are not readily recognizable; librarians are still tasked to create API links for certain types of sources. Retrieved Law review articles still shows the source title as a link with the title of the article listed as citation all in caps. This has always been a divergence from standard practices of citations from all other databases, including in other variations in LexisNexis itself. The review team wishes LexisNexis would show the title of the article as a link, instead.

Persistent links to articles have become available, and saving options should not only include downloading to a physical computer or disk, but to the cloud as well.

LexisNexis’ administrative interface only leads to statistical information and by searches (full text retrieved is not an option). Lexis-Nexis still allows downloading, emailing and printing,

with Word files set as default (though PDF, .txt, HTML and other formats are available). For printing, LexisNexis still has by default all articles in a list to be printed in full text, a feature that CCL-EAR has insisted be remedied in earlier reviews. Because articles appear as scrollable list on one page, the student MUST select the print icon from the LexisNexis interface itself, otherwise the print result will end where the scrolling ends.

Basic Search

Use of this service is subject to [Terms and Conditions](#) Source Directory: [Find or Browse](#) | [Create Permanent Link](#) | [Help](#)

LexisNexis® Academic

What's New

[Video Tutorials](#)

[Research Guides](#)

[Download Content List](#)

[Academic Knowledge Center](#)

Academic Search Search By Content Type ▾

Search

Advanced Options ▾

Training for Academic is available. To sign up for a webinar, visit our [training resources page](#).
We offer classes for students, faculty, and librarians.

Hot Topics Links Today's Front Page News

Fraternities & Sororities	President Obama	Presidential Election
Boko Haram	Ukraine	ISIS
Human Trafficking	Technology Trends	NFL Draft

Search the News ▾
U.S. and World News.

Look up a Legal Case ▾
Federal and state cases.

Get Company Info ▾
Over 80 million companies.

Advanced Search

Advanced Options ▶

Date

From

to

Or Select All Available Dates ▾

Build Your Own Segment Search ?

Select a Segment ▾
And
Or
And Not
w/5
w/p

Useful when you need to narrow your search to something specific, like a legal citation, an author's name, or a word in the headline. For example: HEADLINE(Congress w/5 budget)

Source

Select Source by Type (below) or Enter Source Name Here

Index Terms

[Look up Index Terms](#)

Content Type

Select All

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspapers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Law Reviews
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State and Federal Cases	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Company Profiles

Apply
Cancel

Since the late '00s, LexisNexis has provided a wiki as a support for students, faculty, and librarians. The wiki had dated information, but it looks like a good clean-up and update has been made for the wiki more recently. Unfortunately, it's more static than context sensitive; however, students can click on links on the left or enter search terms after clicking on "Help." LexisNexis also provides a YouTube page with instructional videos that are often brief and focus on specific tasks. There are only four tutorials currently, and the review team strongly recommends the vendor create more tutorials and seek feedback from librarians

LexisNexis announces training sessions regularly via its listserv and the sessions are usually available with a trainer and live screencast (which can later be viewed as a recording) for which the librarians, faculty and students can simply register.

COST: 3

Although much news content has disappeared from the Academic version of LexisNexis, the cost is still a good bargain to colleges that have paralegal programs or a pathway to law school. With the addition of the company information (especially with its stronger-than-ever international resources), this database is a key, vital resource and overall a good bargain. It still has a strong newspaper presence and the Academic interface has made an effort to invite students looking for current events information with its hot topic list. However, it is still a bit cumbersome as a newspaper database. The CCL-EAR review team would advise that a community college considering newspaper content alone should take a good look at LN's competitors especially with regard to user interface, browsability, and key content, including news needed for its local areas.

AVAILABILITY/ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE: 2

According to the company site, Lexis Nexis is compatible with Windows and Mac OSX and major web browsers (Internet Explorer, Chrome, Firefox, Safari). It offers IP authentication, "support for secure remote and mobile access methods, and unlimited simultaneous access." A mobile friendly version of Academic is available, but in the devices tested by the reviewer (iPhone and iPad Mini), the full-web version of the site was the one that appeared when accessing through these devices. It is unclear how compliant Lexis Nexis is in terms of accessibility and the language on the corporate site in regards to section 508 is vague. On their "Commitment to Accessibility" page, they state that several of their products, including Academic: "...have had testing for accessibility issues, and many of the issues identified in those tests have been fixed. Further, LexisNexis product support documentation is made available to customers in alternate formats, upon request." Submission of initial "Hot Topics" search page and a sample full-text document page to a web accessibility checker resulted in no major accessibility issue. One of the reviewers consulted with staff in the Disabilities Programs and Services at their site and that DPS staff member contacted Lexis Nexis for more detailed information on 508 compliance, particularly as to how well the resource interacted with screen readers. As of the writing of this review, there has not been a response to that query.

OTHER REVIEWS OF THIS PRODUCT

CCL-EAR Committee (2007). LexisNexis Academic. Retrieved from www.cclibraries.org.

Markgren, S. (2008). LexisNexis Academic. *Choice Reviews Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.cro3.org>