



# **Secondary and Supplemental Sources in DIALOG on WESTLAW for University of Michigan Law Students**

Law students working on seminar papers, writing notes for publication in one of the journals, or conducting research for faculty members will find valuable secondary and supplemental materials in the Dialog on Westlaw databases.

## **I. What are Dialog databases?**

Dialog databases are a source of news, business and industry, environmental, medical, insurance, social sciences and humanities information.

There are four basic types of Dialog databases: bibliographic, full-text, numeric, and directory. Bibliographic databases are indexes to journal articles; these indexes contain citations to and sometimes abstracts of journal articles. Most of the full text Dialog databases contain secondary sources (e.g., journal articles). Directory databases are collections of factual information such as names, addresses, and company information or finances, arranged into fields. Finally, numeric databases are collections of statistics, tables and/or other numeric data.

While there are four basic types of Dialog databases, most are bibliographic. There are also many databases that are a combination of these four formats; for example, many directory databases have numeric figures; directories of company information frequently contain tables or statistics of financial figures. Some bibliographic databases also contain the full text of some of the indexed articles. Researchers need to be aware of these different types of databases and plan their searches accordingly. See Section IV—Searching Dialog databases on Westlaw.

## **II. Why use Dialog databases?**

Law students use Dialog to find citations to supplementary, secondary and other non-legal information relating to their research. For example, a student writing a seminar paper on the use of fetal tissue in medical research may search in Philosopher's Index (PHIL-IND) to find articles on ethical issues relating to the use of fetal tissue. The researcher might next search in Religion Index (REL-IND) or in insurance databases like Health News Daily (HND) or Health Planning and Administration (HPA) for a range of multidisciplinary materials.

News databases are a source of current and timely information about a variety of topics because they are often updated several times daily. Researchers use news databases to find articles describing how a particular city or state dealt with an issue like gun control, mandatory seat belt laws, or

bans on smoking in public buildings. In addition, a researcher might find stories reporting on out-of-court settlements, describing trial proceedings, or providing information about expert witnesses, judges, prominent members of the bar, pending legislation, and general background information.

### III. How to choose a database.

**Log onto Westlaw.** At the Westlaw Directory, choose how you would like to view the Dialog database lists in the directory. There are four basic choices:

- A. To view lists of all Dialog databases grouped together:
  1. Type the page number to the right of the menu listing Dialog, **<P212>**<sup>1</sup> and press **<Enter>** to get to a screen titled "Index to Dialog on Westlaw Databases."
  2. At this menu select the rough subject area of your research interest, e.g., Social Sciences and Humanities.
  3. Type the page number to the right of your subject interest **<P263>**<sup>1</sup> and press **<Enter>**. Westlaw will display a directory screen listing social science and humanities databases in alphabetical order with their database identifiers. You may page through this directory to see additional databases by typing **<P>** and pressing **<Enter>**.
  4. When you have selected a database, type its identifier and press **<Enter>**. For example, to select Academic Index, type **<ACADEM-IND>** and press **<Enter>**.
  5. Enter your search.
- B. To view Dialog databases available in Westlaw's topical files:
  1. Choose a topic from the Topical Material area of the main Westlaw Directory, e.g., Environmental,
  2. Type the number to the right of your subject interest **<P329>**<sup>1</sup> and press **<Enter>** to see a directory screen titled "Index to Environmental Law Databases."
  3. To view a list of Dialog databases containing environmental materials, along with their database identifiers type the number to the right **<P336>**<sup>1</sup> and **<Enter>**. You may page through this list of databases by typing **<P>** and pressing **<Enter>**.

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<sup>1</sup>Note these page numbers may change as Westlaw updates and expands its directories. Be sure to check the current directory screen when choosing.

4. When you have selected a database for your search, type its identifier and press **<Enter>**. For example, if you select Occupational Safety and Health, type **<OSH>** and press **<Enter>**.

- C. Use the print guides, *Westlaw Database List* and *Databasics*, to help you select the databases relevant to your research.
1. *Westlaw Database List* is divided into the following four general categories: General Materials, Topical Materials, Texts and Periodicals, and Other Databases and Services. There is a fairly comprehensive index of journal titles and database identifiers at the end. The section on Topical Materials is arranged alphabetically by subject area and divided further within subject areas. Database lists include database identifiers and beginning dates of coverage in the database.
  2. *Databasics* is arranged alphabetically by title of database and contains much of the material available in scope notes, such as subject area, content, dates of coverage, update frequency and searchable fields. Entries also include search tips. Note that these print guides will go out of date more quickly than the online guides such as database lists and scope notes.
- D. Information is also available online using the IDEN database, a searchable list of Westlaw databases.
1. IDEN may be used to determine which databases contain materials on a subject interest. Subject searches in IDEN should be broad, for example, <sports!>
  2. Or, if you are looking for a particular periodical and are not sure which database it is in or where it is indexed, search for the journal title in the IDEN database. E.g., <"law office technology review">. The results of this search will be a list of databases containing the search terms.

**When selecting a Dialog database, you may want to try more than one approach, as each of the above strategies will not retrieve all relevant databases.**

Once you have identified prospective databases for your search, use **Scope** to obtain additional information about each database you are considering searching. Scope notes provide valuable information about each database, such as information about the subject area, content, dates of coverage, database producer, update frequency, and searchable fields. Dialog databases vary considerably, and the scope notes for each database will indicate special factors, such as phrase indexing, fields that have to be searched separately, and tips to successful searching in that database.

To use **Scope**, type <scope> and the database identifier at the Westlaw directory or while in the directory pages, e.g., <scope **POLLUTION**>. Browse the scope notes for information and

special features of the database.<sup>2</sup> To search the database, type the database identifier and press **<Enter>**, e.g., **<ACADEM-IND>**. There may be a longer time delay in accessing Dialog databases than you are used to with Westlaw databases.

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<sup>2</sup>To page through the scope note you must type **<P>** or **<P->** to move from page to page. Pressing **<Enter>** will return you to the query screen.

#### IV. Searching Dialog databases on Westlaw.

Subject searching in Dialog databases generally is easy and straightforward. You may search Dialog databases using many familiar Westlaw search commands in terms and connectors mode.

Database: ACADEM-IND  
Search: ethic! & fet\*\* /2 tissue

Database: OSH  
Search: noise /20 abat! limit! reduc! /20 work-place office

Note that Westlaw's natural language search engine (WIN) is not available in the Dialog databases and there are other important differences between Westlaw databases and Dialog databases that you must consider in searching Dialog. While Dialog databases, like Westlaw databases, are comprised of searchable fields, free-text searches in most Dialog databases will NOT search all fields as occurs in a free-text Westlaw search. To determine which fields will be searched in a free-text search, or to limit your search to specific fields, tab to the **Field** jump marker at the bottom of the screen and press <Enter>. Read the notations on that screen, e.g.

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Fields for: OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH, A DIALOG DATABASE (OSH)
A complete list of fields is available in SCOPE.

AB Abstract*                DE Descriptor*
TI Title*                   AU Author (phrase indexed)
JN Journal Name (phrase indexed) LA Language (phrase indexed)
PD Publication Date**        PY Publication Year (phrase indexed)

* If no field restriction is used, only the data in this field is searched.
** This field must be searched in Date Restriction format (e.g., PD(>1990)).

If you wish to:
    Limit your search to a specific field or fields, use a field restriction
    in your query, e.g., TI(MIRANDA & ARIZONA).
    Return to the Enter Query screen, press ENTER.
```

Note that using the **Field** command does not give a full list of searchable fields. For a complete list of fields available in the database, you must check the scope note by typing <scope> to see if there are additional fields that might be of use in your search.

As you can see on this sample screen, many fields in Dialog databases are phrase indexed, meaning the entire phrase is recognized by Dialog as a single term. These fields must be searched using the exact format found in the field or your search will not retrieve relevant documents. Dialog databases vary significantly in format and the format of phrase indexed fields varies from one database to another. For example,

Database: SOCSCSRCH

Search: au("mackinnon c!")

Database: SOC-ABS

Search: au("mackinnon, catharine!")

The two examples above illustrate different phrase indexing formats for the author field in two different Dialog databases. To determine the correct phrase indexing format for your database, run preliminary, broad searches limited to your field. As illustrated above, the format of author names vary from database to database in Dialog. A useful way to determine the form used in your database is to type the following:

1. Type <**PHIL-IND**> to search Philosopher's Index.
2. Enter the search <au("kamisar!")> and press <**Enter**>.

View the first five retrieved documents to see the form used for author fields in that database, then modify your query accordingly, e.g., au("kamisar, yale!"). Some databases, like Sociology Abstracts, use commas between the last and first names, some do not. Some databases, like Social Science Citation Index, use only first and middle initials. Use a search such as the one illustrated above to determine how author names are formatted in your database.

You may also use **Field**, **Scope**, or the print guides to try to locate examples of phrase indexing formats. However, since examples of formats for all fields are not available, a preliminary search is often the only way to determine the correct format.

Tips to remember include the following:

1. Check the scope note to determine proper format. Use the same punctuation and spacing found in the phrase indexed field. Note whether or not a comma is used between the first and last name of an author.
2. Use quotation marks when you are searching for more than one term in the phrase field.
3. Use root expanders (!) if you are unsure of an author's complete name or journal title. Using root expanders will retrieve different forms of the name or title.