



What's On-Line?

It might not be what it seems to be.

By Daniel P. Bestul

Trust, But Verify. *Traditional Russian Proverb*

To the casual observer, the Internet seems to be a gold mine of legal information. In a matter of seconds, anyone with Internet access can find court cases or statutes, and can participate in discussions or get information on topics like divorce law, criminal law and landlord-tenant law. There are dozens of pages on the Internet dedicated to lawyer jokes, if your tastes run in that direction.

While the quantity of information available through the Internet is high, the same can't always be said about the quality.

There's nothing to keep people from getting bad advice or incorrect information, and because laws vary from state to state a seemingly reliable source can steer you in the wrong direction.

At DV&B, we have access to all statutes and caselaws in the United States.. As a result, we're able to get information quickly and put it in context. If you read about a United States or Wisconsin Supreme Court decision in the morning paper, we can get you the full written opinion the same morning. We've used the Internet to track legislation pending before the Wisconsin Legislature, to obtain information from state and Federal agencies, and to exchange information with colleagues, friends and family throughout the United States and around the world.

On several occasions, we have identified information that has been erroneously included in electronic databases. Using the incorrect information could have lead to disastrous results. By double checking against our other resources, we were able to confirm that we had been provided bad information and find the correct data.

