

Letters to the Editor

Legal Informatics

Sir:

In the introduction to the special *JASIS* issue on medical informatics, the editors state, "There are not, to our knowledge, fields of legal informatics . . ." (Hersh & Lunin, 1995). In fact, there is a field of legal informatics; indeed, the related areas of legal informatics and informatics law may well be better known (and they are almost certainly growing more rapidly) than is information science itself. The John Marshall Law School established its Center for Informatics Law over ten years ago, and *The John Marshall Journal of Computer & Information Law* is one of several scholarly journals that address these fields.

Legal informatics, or the study of legal information systems and their use, is the concern of a number of research centers and programs at law schools and other institutions throughout the world. Cornell Law School's Legal Information Institute is perhaps the best known of these; other programs in the field include the Center for Law and Computers at Chicago-Kent College of Law; the Center for Electronic Text in the Law at the University of Cincinnati College of Law; the University of Warwick CTI Law Technology Centre; the Centre for Law and Computing at the University of Durham; the Centre for Law, Computers and Technology at the University of Strathclyde; the Section on Law and Informatics at the University of Limburg in the Netherlands; the Norwegian Research Center for Computers and Law at the University of Oslo; and the Australasian Legal Information Institute. *The John Marshall Journal of Computer & Information Law* frequently discusses subjects related to legal informatics; other journals in the field include *The International Journal of Law and Information Technology*; *the Journal of Law and Information Science: Law Technology Journal*; and the forthcoming *Journal of Legal Informatics*.

Informatics law, or the study of legal and policy issues relating to information technology and privacy, is also a well-recognized field. John Marshall's Center for Informatics Law was established in 1983 to engage in legal research and policy analyses regarding newly developing information and communications technology. Its activities include research and publication, legal and public education, interdisciplinary dialogues, conferences, advocacy, and legislative awareness programs. Since its inception the Center has sponsored a national moot court competition in information technology and privacy law. Other programs related to informatics law include the Center for Information Law and Policy at Villanova University School of Law; the Law and Technology Policy Center at Stanford Law School; and the Information Technology Law Unit at the Centre for Commercial Law Studies in London. Journals in the area of informatics law include *The John Marshall Journal of Computer & Information Law*; the *Harvard Journal of Law &*

Technology; the *High Technology Law Journal*; the *Journal of Online Law*; *Jurimetrics Journal*; the *Richmond Journal of Law & Technology*; and the *Villanova Information Law Chronicle*.

The World Wide Web is an abundant source of information about legal informatics and informatics law; a simple search of any major web index (InfoSeek, Lycos, OpenText, WebCrawler, or Yahoo) would have returned several relevant documents.

Furthermore, *JASIS* itself publishes articles on legal informatics and informatics law from time to time; indeed, the same issue that denied the very existence of legal informatics contained a review of a major new book on the law of cyberspace (Crews, 1995). *JASIS's* neglect of legal informatics is therefore surprising as well as disappointing.

David E. Sorkin

Assistant Professor of Law

Associate Director, Center for Informatics Law

The John Marshall Law School

315 South Plymouth Court

Chicago, IL 60604

E-mail: 7sorkin@jmls.edu

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