

# CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW

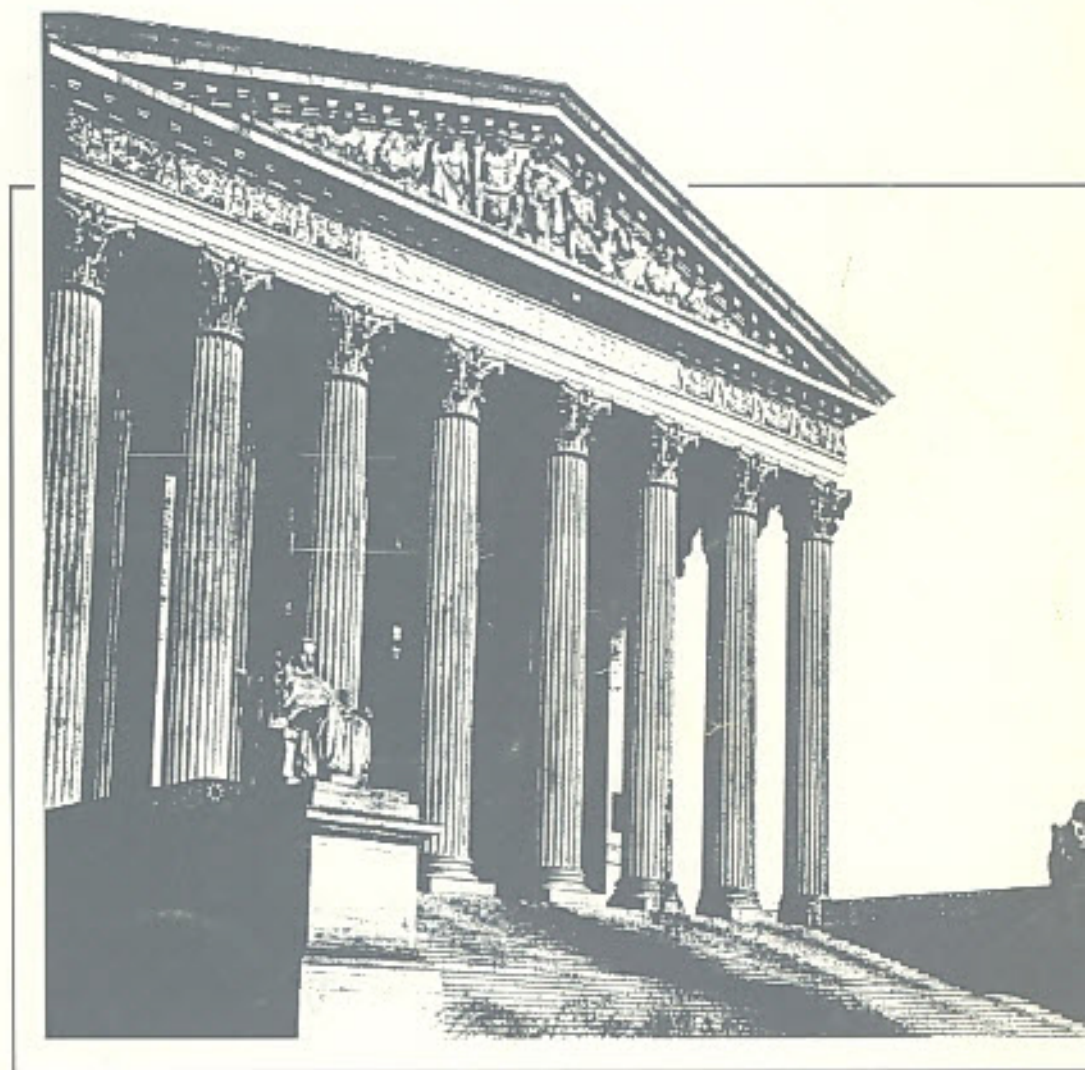
JOURNAL OF POVERTY LAW

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# Hieros Gamos Harmonizes Law-Related Sites on the Internet

by Susan Sebok

*Hieros gamos* (Greek): harmonization of seeming opposites, e.g. sun and moon, earth and sky, mercury and sulfur and, in the case of the Internet, electronic and written information.

Legal researchers use the Internet and electronic data bases to retrieve essential information and to supplement written material. However, they often find searching for this information a painstaking process. In an effort to organize legal information on the Internet, Lex Mundi, a worldwide organization of 131 independent law firms, established Hieros Gamos (<http://www.hg.org>) in 1995.

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Billed as "the comprehensive legal site," Hieros Gamos contains more than 12,000 original pages and 10,000 links that allow researchers to retrieve virtually all on-line and published legal information. Hieros Gamos is organized in three areas. HG I contains 12 directories of more than 6,000 legal organizations.

HG II lists 200 legal subjects, 400 law-related discussion groups, and 50 business guides for lawyers. HG III features legal news, a library, listings of employment opportunities, a law student forum, meeting notices, and on-line journals and offers search capabilities.

## **HG I: Legal Organizations**

The directories in HG I organize legal organizations, law schools, vendors, and consultants for more than 6,000 organizations. Over 5,000 links are organized in 12 categories. For example, the Bar Associations category lists national, state, provincial, and local bar associations. Within the Bar Associations category, the American Bar Association (ABA) listing gives details on the ABA's main office, law divisions such as Government and Public Sector Lawyers, forums such as Affordable Housing and Health Law, and ABA sections such as Family Law, Natural Resources, Energy, and Environmental Law, Public Utility Law, Communications Law, and Transportation Law.

Another directory in HG I, Legal Education, lists accredited law schools in North America and those offering postgraduate legal programs. The Legal Associations directory gives the name, address, telephone, fax, and contact for various groups

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such as the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, National Health Lawyers Association, and the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

The Government Sites directory links users to governmental legal news through West Publishing's Legal News Online, the *Congressional Quarterly*, the *U.S. Code*, the *Congressional Record*, the U.S. House and Senate, federal agencies and programs, several states' legislatures, Thomas (a federal legislative information service),<sup>1</sup> and the U.S. Government Printing Office.

HG I also contains links to many popular Internet search engines, such as Alta Vista, WebCrawler, Lycos, and Yahoo. In addition, it features links to Lexis and Westlaw for users with accounts on those services and Telnet access.

## HG II: Practice Areas and Discussion Groups

HG II contains links to legal information in more than 70 primary practice areas that are subdivided into 130 topics. For example, the Welfare practice area contains links to the full text of laws in such practice areas as social security, food stamps, Indian child welfare, child custody, protection and advocacy for mentally ill individuals, and civil rights.

HG II also lists recent food stamp, social security, and welfare law decisions. For example, the social security area contains the full text (in WordPerfect or ASCII format) of *Shalala v. Schaefer*,<sup>2</sup> *Pauley v. Bethenenergy Mines*,<sup>3</sup> *United States v. Winstar Corp.*,<sup>4</sup> and *United States v. Gaubert*.<sup>5</sup>

Agencies listed in this section of Hieros Gamos include the Administration on Aging, Social Security Administration, and Department of Health and Human Services. This section also includes a searchable version of the Code of Federal Regulations; commentary on child custody, social security, disability legislation, and Medicaid; publications by the ABA Commissions on Domestic Violence and Legal Problems of the Elderly and the ABA Steering Committee on the Unmet Legal Needs of Children; and a summary of state laws on access to adoption records.

*Hieros Gamos users can choose to be notified personally by E-mail of meetings, publications, employment opportunities, law firms, and experts in particular practice areas.*

A second component of HG II allows legal advocates with similar legal interests worldwide to participate in over 400 discussion groups. The Law Lists search page compiles mailing lists and Usenet news groups and offers news of legal issues.

The 50 Guides to Doing Business are the third area found in HG II. Lex Mundi members wrote the guides to assist legal advocates in conducting legal activities in specific states and countries. They are updated periodically in both Macintosh and PC formats and can be downloaded directly to the user's hard drive. More than 30 country guides are available, including ones for Mexico, Canada, Japan, and Vietnam. State guides are published for Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Virginia, and West Virginia.

## HG III: User-Modifiable Data Bases

Internet users can retrieve information specific to their areas of practice through HG III's self listing, user modifiable data bases. Through HG III, a user can choose to be

<sup>1</sup> For more information on Thomas, see Susan Sebok, *Surf's Up—And Lawyers Are Riding on the Wave*, 29 CLEARINGHOUSE REV. 972 (Feb. 1996).

<sup>2</sup> *Shalala v. Schaefer*, 509 U.S. 292 (1993).

<sup>3</sup> *Pauley v. Bethenenergy Mines*, 498 U.S. 937 (1991).

<sup>4</sup> *United States v. Winstar Corp.*, 116 S. Ct. 2432 (1996).

<sup>5</sup> *United States v. Gaubert*, 499 U.S. 315 (1991).

## Government Benefits Information Available to the Public Through Computerized Kiosks

The public can access information on government benefits at multimedia kiosks, as part of the first phase of WINGS, the Web Interactive Network of Government Services.

As described in the April 1996 CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW, WINGS is the product of the Interagency Kiosk Committee, an alliance of federal agencies working to bring government closer to the people. Participating agencies are the Postal Service, Social Security Administration, Department of Labor, Department of Health and Human Services, and Department of the Interior. This group joined forces with the U.S. Postal System, which established partnerships with a variety of federal, state, and local agencies.

*Government Computer News* (July 15, 1996) reports that 14 kiosks have been installed at various locations in Mecklenburg County in Charlotte, North Carolina, as part of a six-month pilot project. The sites include the government center, libraries, a hospital, shopping malls, and post offices. After 100 additional units are installed, researchers will evaluate users' reactions.

Some 10,000 additional kiosks will be in place by 1998 at an estimated cost ranging from \$60 million to \$140 million. Prototype systems are being developed by Cordant, Digital Equipment Corp., IBM Corp., and North Communications Inc.

Information on the kiosks is retrieved via touch screens and Intel Pentium 100 processors running under Microsoft Windows NT. They are linked via the Internet to a server in San Mateo, California.

Ultimately the kiosks will be interactive, allowing consumers to apply for such government services as social security and veterans' benefits.

notified personally by E mail of meetings, publications, employment opportunities, law firms, and experts in particular practice areas.

Other extensive resources are found in HG III. The Internet Newsstand contains links to the current issue of the *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, the daily contents of the *Federal Register*, *Law Journal EXTRA! Headlines*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, and *Wired*.

The Internet Law Library offers direct access to the top 20 legal research sites, as determined in a survey of more than 2,500 law librarians and paralegals. It also includes links to library catalogues, publications in print, more than 180 on-line legal journals, and legal dictionaries.

The HG Legal Employment Classified area allows users to search for jobs in particular types of law and geographical regions. Organizations can create free advertisements and link them to their home pages. In addition, job hunters can be notified personally when a new job listing in their desired employment field is posted.

The HG Legal Publications Database is a searchable area containing numerous legal journals, newsletters, and bulletins in print, CD-ROM, video, and audio formats. Among the hundreds listed are the *Congressional*

*Record*, *Immigration Law Weekly*, *Youth Justice Education Project Newsletter* and CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEW.

### Future Development

Hieros Gamos already organizes a vast amount of legal resources available worldwide. Lex Mundi's plans include development of Project Argonaut (<http://rampages.onramp.net/~smcgarry/argonaut/argo.htm>), a uniform, national data base of federal and state case law and statutes that will permit virtually automated legal research. Through Project Argonaut, predicted to be on-line by January 1998, users will be able to search primary and secondary sources in all jurisdictions. For more information on the project, contact Steve McGarry at [smcgarry@onramp.net](mailto:smcgarry@onramp.net).