The Roadmap to Legal Searching

Step-By-Step Guidance Gives Users Efficient, Effective Software Assistance

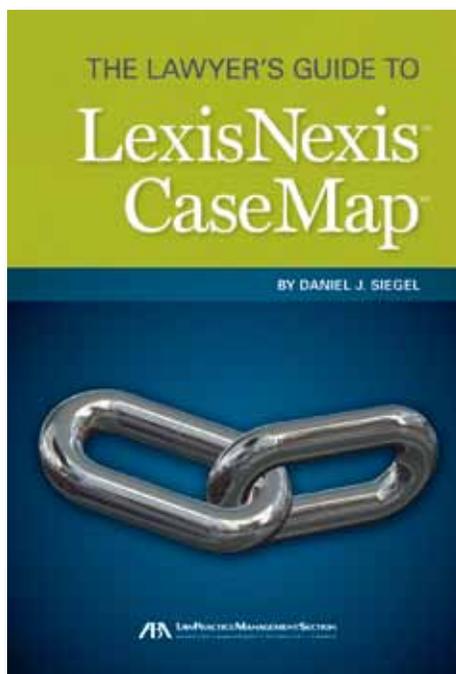**A Database on Steroids, The Lawyer's Guide to LexisNexis® CaseMap®**
Written by Daniel J. Siegel
ABA Law Practice Management
Section, 219 pages, $79.95

An irritating fact of the computer age is that even the most promising software often is unaccompanied by readable, practical user guidance. CaseMap, a spreadsheet-based program I have used in one form or another for 14 years, is acknowledged as one of the most powerful ways to organize evidence. It also is among the more user-friendly of the choices available. But even a regular user is liable to use or even appreciate but a portion of its features. In a slim, well-illustrated volume, Dan Siegel comes to the rescue.

Employing three principal spreadsheets called Reports and numerous links within them, CaseMap enables the lawyer to methodically develop a story of the case by inputting a cast of characters, documents, events and even issues a single time, so this data can be linked simultaneously to an authoritative fact spreadsheet and to issues the lawyer selects as important to the case. A program that mechanizes and correlates the many lists lawyers make to marshal evidence would be and is remarkable. But CaseMap also incorporates direct connections with Adobe PDFs and popular word processing programs to convert evidence into motions and other documents most useful in the pre-trial and trial processes. The program even contains a feature to Bates-number documents and links them simultaneously to pertinent facts and issues.

Dan Siegel's relatively short (219 pages, including index), handy and well-illustrated paperback initiates the beginner in CaseMap's most salient features through a series of descriptions of what is on the screen and concise explanations of various "wizards." He explains how each wizard automates the tedious process of converting facts and supporting evidence into narrative reports and even motions for summary judgment.

True to a promise in the opening pages, Siegel banishes technical terms and computer jargon. In straightforward language he lures the lawyer and legal assistant away from holographic lists and tables to a powerful analytical tool. Using abundant illustrations, Siegel guides the reader through preparing fact and "object" spreadsheets that organize the case story in manageable timelines, down to the minute (and even second). Among the advantages he highlights is CaseMap's facility for enabling the lawyer to build the case story from a single document, personality or event and to use evaluation columns to assess each building block as material, disputed or connected to an actual issue in the case. Facts and other objects, including source documents to which they are linked, can be extracted for closer scrutiny or export into a written report or even a portion of a brief created in Microsoft® Office Word or Corel WordPerfect®.

While CaseMap comes with both online and printed "help," Siegel's book is a more readable companion. As in most truly helpful guides, his best advice is conveyed in periodic bullets that either guide the user in maximizing CaseMap's organizational features or warn against changing default settings in ways that may defeat the purposes of this most useful tool.

It is possible to appreciate CaseMap, as I have, without Dan Siegel's step-by-step guidance. Experienced users may be tempted to skim early chapters for this reason. But among the most important things he does is show the reader multiple routes, key strokes, in CaseMap to do the same things, whether it is linking facts to issues or connecting spreadsheets to actual documents (in PDF form).
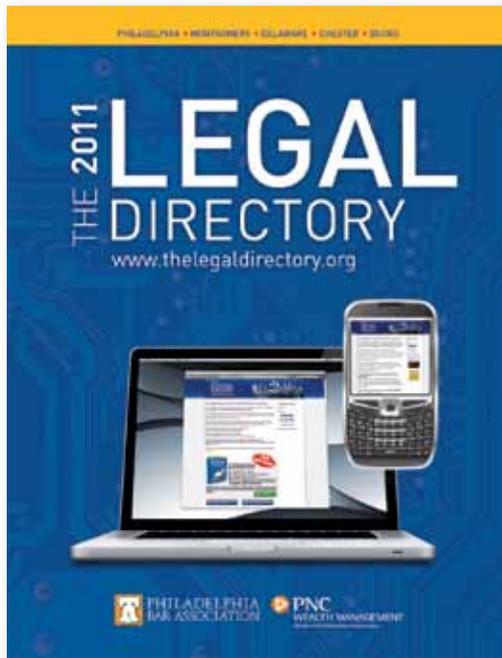
Competing relational software packages offer some of CaseMap's utility in organizing proof for case evaluation and trial. Since 1991, I have been on the quest for the best method. While I settled on CaseMap some time ago and use it virtually every day, Siegel's little book opened a new chapter for me. What this volume lacks in plot and romance, it makes up in guiding the lawyer to a most efficient and effective way to tell his or her client's own story. ■

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