

# Law Reports

## 1. Law Reports

Case law is a major source of legal rules in the United Kingdom and other 'common law' jurisdictions. Law reports are "reports of decisions of the superior courts on disputed points of law, published for the information of the profession" (Oxford Companion to Law, Oxford, 1980). Not all cases are reported and the decision about what is reported rests with the editors of each individual set of law reports. It has been estimated that only 1.25% of cases heard in England and Wales are reported (Clinch, P. Using a law library, London, 1992, p.89). The rest remain as unpublished transcripts.

## 2. Finding Cases

### Abbreviations or citations

The majority of cases that are included on reading lists or referred to in books can be found simply by knowing what a particular abbreviation (or "citation") means. However, it must be noted that citations are not standardised in the United Kingdom, and so, for example, All E.R. and AER can both legitimately mean the All England Law Reports, although the former is more common.

A number of sources can be used to discover what the various citations mean. The most comprehensive printed source is:

Raistrick, D. Index to legal citations and abbreviations (3rd ed.), London, 2008. (LAW REF 340.03 RAI)

Other sources to try include:

Current Law (LAW REF 349.42 CUR), and the first volume of The Digest (LAW REF 349.4 DIG)

Electronic Sources include:

Cardiff Index to Abbreviations: [www.legalabbrevs.cardiff.ac.uk](http://www.legalabbrevs.cardiff.ac.uk).

### Finding UK cases

The two main printed sources for tracing cases by name in UK law are:

Current Law (Case Citator) 1946 – LAW REF 349.42 SCO

The Digest (Table of Cumulative Cases) LAW REF 349.4 DIG

Cases which were reported before the Incorporated Council of Law Reporting was established in 1865, are known as 'Nominate Reports' and the majority of these are reprinted in the English Reports (LR/1), which has its own case index volumes at the end of its sequence. The most noteworthy cases are also included in The Digest.

Electronic sources can also be used to trace cases and are increasingly the preferred method. To see the most appropriate databases and websites, access the My Subject pages for Law from the Library website.

A list of the law reports series held by the University of Leicester Library, complete with standard abbreviations and shelf marks can be found at

<http://www2.le.ac.uk/library/downloads/library-guides/lawreportslist>

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