

Legal Transform

A Framework for making legal
documents accessible to humans

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In this day and age, we are
required to understand legal
documents.

Credit card agreements, local, state, and federal laws, mortgage agreements, child custody contracts, divorce papers, tax documents, privacy agreements, software end-user license agreements, mattress tags, car leases, etc...

A diverse group...

But what makes them common is
that there is one way to
understand them – black and
white.

Ways to Understand A Legal Document:

RIGHTS

For thousands of years, legal documents have essentially been viewed on scrolls. Even as legal documents are written, stored, exchanged, and verified on the digital medium, they continue to be viewed as a flat length of text. The problem lies with two conflicting requirements that legal documents must fulfill:

1. Legal documents must be complete. In order for legal documents to define rules and regulations, they must not contain loopholes or ambiguities.
2. Legal documents must be understandable. For legal documents to be enforced, they must be understandable.

Frequently, the latter is sacrificed in favor of the former. We believe that providing multiple perspectives of legal documents can enhance understanding while maintaining completeness. These perspectives include:

- A visual navigation between different documents, enabling the user to see where she has been in a more natural way.
- A translation between commonly used "legalese" phrases to common English phrases.
- A view representing parts of a document that only apply to a certain party.

We feel these perspectives can provide richer understanding of legal documents for the average citizen. Moreover, companies can use these perspectives to

Full Text Description

One other cultural artifact
shares this phenomenon...

Bulk Cereal!

Ways to Understand Bulk Cereal:

BIN 1243

Ingredients:

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- A transition between commonly used

Full Text Description

But bulk cereal isn't very
popular...

But boxes of cereal are by far
one of the most successful
products in the supermarket.

But not because of the cereal...
because of the box.

That's because you can look at
cereal in many different ways.

Ways to Understand Cereal:



Nutrition

Mascot

Tagline

Brand

The Point:

Cereal boxes allow you to make informed choices because they present multiple *perspectives* on an otherwise boring product

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Better Understanding →



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Better Understanding →





The problem: Expensive.

What we need:

Human-readable legal documents,
without the expense of going to
a lawyer.

Computers are good at this...

The Internet... a wealth of
information!

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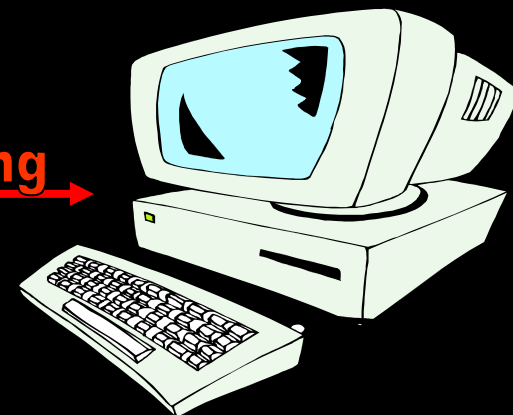
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Fantastic!

Many legal documents are
online...

So let the increased
understanding begin!

SEC. 210. SCOPE OF SUBPOENAS FOR RECORDS OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS.

Section 2703(c)(2) of title 18, United States Code, as redesignated by section 212, is amended--

(1) by striking 'entity the name, address, local and long distance telephone toll billing records, telephone number or other subscriber number or identity, and length of service of a subscriber' and inserting the following: 'entity the--

'(A) name;

'(B) address;

'(C) local and long distance telephone connection records, or records of session times and durations;

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Nordstrom Credit Card Initial Disclosure of Terms & Conditions

Summary of Retail Credit Terms	
ANNUAL FEE	None
ANNUAL PERCENTAGE RATE FOR PURCHASES	21.00%
OTHER APRS	Cash Advance APR 21.00%. Late Payer APR* 24.00%. Adjusted Late Payer APR* 21.00%.
GRACE PERIOD FOR REPAYMENT OF BALANCES FOR PURCHASES	25 Days
METHOD OF COMPUTING THE BALANCE FOR PURCHASES	Average Daily Balance (including new purchases)
MINIMUM FINANCE CHARGE	\$1.00
	\$5 if your Current Balance is \$200 or less and the Due Date is not paid within 10 days after scheduled payment date. \$20 if your Current Balance is greater than \$200.



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BROWSE PRODUCTS

Hmm...

Well that wasn't fruitful.

The problem doesn't seem to be
access to documents...

They're still the same!

Even in this day and age, with
our fancy computers, we still
look at legal documents the
same way...

Why?

They've been like that for
thousands of years...

But mostly...

They fulfill their purpose...

Just the plain-text legal
document is enough to specify
proper conduct.

Fine, but we needn't live with
the bare minimum.

We don't need to continue
looking at legal documents as
plain text.

The point:

Although legal documents have been viewed as plain text on scrolls for thousands of years, it doesn't mean we have to keep doing it.

So how are we going to
understand legal documents
better?

Like cereal! With Perspectives!

But unlike cereal, the providers
(government, corporations)
aren't going to package legal
documents for us.

So we'll change the documents
ourselves

So what kind of changes can we
make?

Replace



Find what:

henceforth

Find Next

Replace with:

from this point on

Close

Replace

Match case

Replace All

Find whole words only

SECTION 12 SPECIAL PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES PROHIBITED.

No law shall be passed granting to any citizen, class of citizens, or corporation other than municipal, privileges or immunities which upon the same terms shall not equally belong to all citizens, or corporations.



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SECTION 12 SPECIAL PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES PROHIBITED.

No law shall be passed granting to anyone¹ privileges or immunities which shall² not equally belong to everyone³.

¹citizen, class of citizens, or corporation other than municipal

²upon the same terms

³all citizens, or corporations

guaranteed.

SECTION 23 BILL OF ATTAINDER, EX POST FACTO LAW, ETC.

No bill of attainder, ex **post facto law**, or law impairing the obligations of contracts shall ever be passed.

SECTION 24 RIGHT TO BE

The right of the individual

A law that makes illegal an act that was legal when committed, increases the penalties for an infraction after it has been committed, or changes the rules of evidence to make conviction easier. The Constitution prohibits the making of ex post facto law.

impaired, but

The point:

We can take the legal documents as they are given to us...

But we use home computers help us transform the documents to something more human readable...

Thereby helping us understand them more thoroughly.

That's what LegalTransform does...

... provides the tools to help
regular people understand the
law.

The audience is NOT:

Lawyers

Congresspersons

Judges

The audience IS:

People with home computer skills
who don't usually read legal
documents but want to
understand their rights

(see
program)

What LegalTransform does now:

- Includes 4 Tools
- Saves what you have done to pages automatically
- Saves browser history (where you've been) automatically

What LegalTransform will do
within 4 months:

- Include more tools (eg...)
- Be able to share *perspectives*
with associates
- Be more reliable!

What would be great if
LegalTransform could do:

- Be smarter
- Integrate with corporate www
- A library of perspectives

Vision:

Millions of Instant Legal
Experts

So:

Take a CD

Or download the newest version

Check out the webpage at

<http://scidb.evergreen.edu/LegalTransform>



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The problem: Expensive.

Total Carbohydrate 26g

Dietary Fiber 8g

Sugars 0g

Other Carbohydrate 18g

"This
almos
fiber
day."



So what is going to be done...

...and who's going to do it?

It's already done.

Somewhat.