

Digital Commons delivers Georgia Law to the world



BY FACULTY SERVICES LIBRARIAN THOMAS "T.J." STRIEPE

Whether you are looking for historical Georgia statutes, law review articles on a specific legal topic or a photo from your 1L year, the Georgia Law Digital Commons electronic database can assist you.

What is Digital Commons?

Digital Commons is a digital repository of scholarship and law school history implemented by the law school on a platform created by Berkeley Electronic Press (Bepress).

The staff of the Alexander Campbell King Law Library manages Digital Commons, and members of the law school community upload electronic documents, videos and other records into this database so that these items are accessible free of charge to the entire world.

The items within Georgia Law's Digital Commons have been downloaded more than 600,000 times by individuals worldwide.

History

Digital Commons was initiated by the law library in 2008 – led by the efforts of our current law library director, Carol A. Watson (J.D.'87), and then-Faculty and Access Services Librarian James M. Donovan.

Georgia Law was an early initiator in creating a repository for a law school institution, and the early adoption of this technology has allowed the school to be a pioneer in this practice and to assist other law schools in developing their own electronic databases.

Purpose

Digital Commons was created to capture the intellectual output of the Georgia Law community and to preserve its institutional history.

This repository allows the law school to promote its faculty scholarship by providing access to their articles to anyone on the Internet.

Bepress has designed this platform to take advantage of using Internet searches through Google to locate articles within Digital Commons, and more than 75 percent of the traffic on Digital Commons arises from individuals performing Google searches.

This open access to faculty scholarship in turn enhances Georgia Law's reputation by increasing the awareness, exposure and usage of the scholarship produced here.

More than 900 faculty articles have been uploaded into Digital Commons, and the number of citations to law school faculty publications has increased due to the accessibility created through Digital Commons.

Researchers no longer have to rely on finding an article through the paper version of an academic journal or by using expensive databases like Westlaw or LexisNexis.

Lawyers, scholars and other individuals now can download the full text of Georgia Law faculty members' articles at no cost.

Additionally, an archive of the law school as an institution has been established by documenting the various lectures, symposiums, colloquia and other events that occur at the school each year.

The law school has also uploaded documents from various student organizations, newsletters, class directories, *Advocates* and *Dean's Reports* to capture the rich history of the school in an easily accessible permanent format.

This information will permit future members of the law school community, as well as the public at large, to learn more about the law school's distinguished past.

Content

Today, there are more than 4,700 documents within Digital Commons.

Contents of the school's collection include the digital archives of the digests and compilations of Georgia statutes dating back to 1799, the *Official Code of Georgia* from 1860 to 1933, a majority of the legal scholarship of the Georgia Law faculty from 1959 to the present as well as numerous other items encompassing the history and scholarship of the University of Georgia School of Law.

Documents are not the only things that have been uploaded into Digital Commons. The collection also includes numerous videos of the different events that have occurred at the law school. These videos include Sibley Lectures, graduation ceremonies and Edith House Lectures as well as conference keynote addresses.

A unique item in the repository includes documents from the Nuremberg Trials. Within this collection, individuals can access photographs of the trials, filings and other documents used by the attorneys during the prosecution of World War II criminals. These documents include original copies of the opening and closing statements, indictments and judgments from these cases.

The law school continues to populate this database on a daily basis so the amount of resources in this repository will continue to increase exponentially.

Searching

Bepress has designed Digital Commons to make it easily searchable so that individuals can find the items for which they are looking.

Visitors to Digital Commons can either browse the materials within any collection by year or perform a search to find a specific item.

Last month, Digital Commons had visitors from 106 different countries, which illustrates how this database assists in expanding the global exposure of Georgia Law.

The search feature allows users to perform full text searching of all of the items in the database or they can limit their discovery to a particular category or series. After a search has been completed, individuals are then able to utilize additional functions by limiting the results based on discipline, keyword or year.

A new component in Digital Commons allows users to access the Bepress Digital Commons Network (*www.network.bepress.com*). This network is an open access conglomeration of all universities' and colleges' institutional repositories.

Once a search is conducted within Georgia Law's Digital Commons database and the applicable resource is selected, the database will provide a link to other items on the same topic(s) within the Digital Commons Network. This brings individuals to a multitude of other articles and resources on the topic they are researching at no extra cost.

Future

The law library staff will continue to expand the holdings within Digital Commons by making portions of its unique collection available in this database. They are also continuing to develop different mediums to incorporate into this repository.

The ultimate goal is to have every article published by Georgia Law faculty available on this database.

Currently, the law library is digitizing its original copies of the judgments from the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, which are not currently available online.

The staff is also working to increase the availability of law school event videos on the site, uploading historical photographs of the law school and adding additional images of law school events.

Additionally, the Bepress platform allows law schools to publish their various law reviews online in connection with their print version.

Currently more than 100 law journals have taken advantage of this feature and, later this year, the *Georgia Journal of International and Comparative Law* will be joining these other law reviews by making all of its current and past articles fully accessible through Digital Commons.

Conclusion

It is impossible to describe all of the resources available in

Digital Commons in this article, so go ahead and browse this database yourself. You can use this resource to conduct legal research, browse historical law school documents or even look at some old class photos.

While Georgia Law's Digital Commons site will be marking only its fifth anniversary this year, this repository has already proved to be an invaluable resource to researchers, the law school as an institution as well as the law school community.

The law library staff looks forward to expanding the resources available in this database and to making the scholarship and history of Georgia Law more accessible to everyone.



This database can be accessed from Georgia Law's website or directly at <http://digitalcommons.law.uga.edu>.