

Review of “Virtual Legal Help Services” by the Justice Education Society on the BC Small Claims Court and Supreme Court Websites

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March 2014

Introduction

In January and February 2013, the Justice Education Society introduced “Virtual Legal Help” on two of its self-help court websites, www.SmallClaimsBC.ca and www.SupremeCourtBC.ca. The current websites are substantially modified from earlier versions. The Small Claims Court website was first implemented in January 2008 and the Supreme Court website in June 2010. These websites were originally developed as online help guides for British Columbians with civil matters under \$25,000 (the Small Claims Court – SCC - division of BC Provincial Court) and legal matters (civil, family or criminal cases) for the BC Supreme Court (BCSC).

Both websites present information about making a claim or responding to one, steps on the process, forms that need to be completed and guidance about how to complete and submit the forms. Both sites include a range of helpful text and videos. Importantly, the sites inform users about settling out-of-court as an option. However, the presentation of the material has changed completely making the websites significantly more effective tools for users.

Early in 2013, a Virtual Assistant was added to both websites. This represented triage level 1 of Virtual Legal Help. The Virtual Assistant is both dynamic and interactive. Users are systematically guided through information on each website by a Virtual Assistant, a female character named JES who appears in videos anchored to the bottom right corner of the web browser. JES asks questions of the user intended to guide her/him in making choices about how they want to deal with their problem and directs the user to different pages on the site, according to the need expressed by the user.

To accomplish this, the websites have been organized into guided pathways, based on common information requests for each court. To accomplish this, the Society worked with committees of experts to develop a series of process pathways based on common information requests for each court. Then a series of videos were scripted to direct website users along this series of guided pathways. The user’s guided journey through the websites starts from the perspective of the user dealing with a problem, asking questions such as: How do I sue someone? What happens before the trial? What documents need to be submitted? What steps are involved in the court process? What are the timelines and costs? How to I prepare for Trial? Scripts were created for the Virtual Assistant to be able to ask users questions about their legal issue and then guide them along the information pathway that suits their specific needs. This is a central and defining feature of the two websites. The sites are designed to allow users to engage the assistance provided on their own terms, grounding the information they receive in terms of the way they are experiencing the problem that has brought them there.

The Virtual Assistance approach applies technology to personalize the search for legal information. This dynamic navigation tool helps users find the right information, and on other levels, it may also help users feel more confident in their ability to address their legal issue. But the Virtual Assistance represents just the first level of triage. There are two additional levels of triage that provide more personalized legal help.

Weekdays, during the busiest times on the website (from 11am to 2pm) live online chat is available. Users can click a button to “Ask JES” a question regarding their problem. In addition, during offline hours, users can click a button to type their question and receive an email response. Triage level 2 provides online chat and email support. This level of service is provided on SmallClaimsBC.ca and for civil matters on SupremeCourtBC.ca.

Triage level 2 provides expert answers to specific questions about everyday legal problems and court processes. To accomplish this service, the Society worked with court registry staff and representatives from Vancouver’s Justice Access Centre, in order to develop a knowledge base of questions and answers. The collection of frequently asked questions was vetted by a lawyer. In addition, the Society partnered with students from UBC’s Law Students Legal Assistance Program (LSLAP) to deliver the service. The student responders use *LivePerson* software, email and the knowledge base to interact with inquiring website users.

When problems are too lengthy to be typed into an online chat box, or when the questions are too complex to be addressed by the more than 300 answers in the knowledge base, triage level 3 is available. In these cases, LSLAP students request chat inquiries to provide their email address or a phone number, in order for a more qualified person to be able to answer their question. Triage level 3 employs a lawyer who provides legal help by email and phone. This level of support is only available through inquiries escalated by LSLAP students. The lawyer provides legal information and referrals – not legal advice.

Together, these three levels of triage constitute the Society’s Virtual Legal Help services. The virtual services attempt to achieve relevance for the user. The services recognize the need to provide information and assistance from the point of view of the person experiencing the problem.

The overall goal is to minimize the disconnect and the potential confusion that may result between users who will tend to view a problem as a personal issue in all its uniqueness and, on the other hand, the large amount of information representing different options and courses of action, whether these result from choices by the person seeking a resolution or by the structure of the dispute resolution process. As well, by allowing the user to approach the problem on the “familiar ground” of their own problem, virtual legal help attempts to make the technical detail of procedures and forms less daunting.

Virtual Assistants are used on a range of commercial websites. For example, VA’s provide answers to technical questions and help people book travel. They assist with various sales and customer service functions. Ontario and some American states use A2J software that includes a static, two-dimensional picture of a person to guide users through court forms completion. The Society is the first organization

in the world, so far as we are aware, - to introduce an animated human image Virtual Assistant to provide guided navigation support to people with legal problems.

Online chat, email and phone support are used by a number of agencies across North America. Most commonly, these technologies are used for legal aid intake applications. There are very few examples of agencies using chat, email and phone services as tools to provide information and referral services to people with everyday legal problems.

Currently, the SCC website has about 5700 visits per month¹, including about 4100 unique visitors. New visits account for 62% of all visits to the website, with 38% being return visits. The average duration of a visit in the period was 4.03 minutes. Visitors viewed an average of 2.7 pages per visit.

The BCSC website has about 2300 visits per month, 1700 being unique visitors. On the BCSC website 30.5% of users are return visitors. The number of pages per visit is 2.17. The average duration of visits was 3.38 minutes.

Research Questions and Methodology

This review attempts to address three main questions.

- 1) How effective is the visual assistant in helping users navigate the websites?
- 2) How practical and relevant is the information and assistance provided by the chat and email assistance in helping users with their legal problem?
- 3) How satisfied were users with the website?

Information from two sources is used in this review. The web analysis tool, Google Analytics, was used to gain insight into the ease with which users were able to navigate the sites. This tool tracks the user activity on websites. The data does not address usability directly but provides some basis for drawing inferences. People using the chat and email functions of both the SCC and the BCSC websites were asked to complete online exit surveys asking them to rate their perceptions of the usefulness and level of satisfaction with the sites.² Data from Google Analytics gathered during a one-month period between January 30 and February 28, 2014 were used for part of the analysis. The exit questionnaires were completed between January and March of 2014.

Data on age and gender of users, generated by an algorithm in Google Analytics, plus limited demographic information from the user exit surveys are used to describe the profile of users. This is of interest in terms of accessibility and issues relating to the digital divide. However, the data are not sufficiently robust to examine the accessibility of the two websites.

¹ Based on the period January 28 to February 28, 2014. Google Analytics provides continuously updated data, changing on a daily basis, for the most recent one-month period. This period was chosen to allow report writing to be completed on a timely basis.

² See Appendix One

The Websites in the Existing Service Delivery Context

The SCC and the BCSC websites have two principal defining features, the virtual assistant and the related chat and email functions. The virtual assistant is a unique feature distinguishing the two websites from all other sources of legal information available to British Columbians. Guided by the virtual assistant, the chat and email functions allow users to obtain information specific to their particular problem. This meets two important criteria for any form of assistance intended an alternative to in-person service. The service must be relevant and practical to the problem being experienced by the user. The virtual assistant function addresses these two criteria as well by leading the user through choices about dealing with the problem. Each of the JES websites appears to occupy a unique niche in the overall service delivery landscape. The strength of both of the websites lies in their complementarity with other services, in their being a component of an overall network of access to justice services.

The SCC and BCSC websites occupy an important place in the service delivery environment. Although other service providers exist, some other sources of information and assistance do not provide it on small claims matters. Others provide assistance to a limited income-tested clientele. To a degree, the websites are providing a service not otherwise available. However, in another way the SCC and BCSC websites are unique elements within the overall service delivery environment. The virtual assistant (level one triage), chat and email (level two triage) and level three email or telephone assistance provide a unique problem-solving approach for people experiencing legal problems.

While having a unique character and function, the websites are, on the other hand, functionally integrated into the network of access to justice services. Importantly, in this regard, they are integrated without duplicating. Rather than duplicating court forms, the two websites provide links to court forms available on other websites, in particular, the Ministry of Justice and the Supreme Court sites.

Virtual Legal Help Services on SmallClaimsBC.ca

The virtual legal help function of the SCC website provides service in an area that the major access to justice services do not. The B.C. Legal Services Society (LSS) provides a telephone service called LawLine, but it is only for family law matters. LSS has strong web resources, but they focus on legal aid and on family law. The Justice Access Centres provide in-person assistance to people with family law and some other civil law problems but not in small claims matters. The Community Legal Assistance Society provides legal assistance in mental health law, disability law and human rights; again, not in small claims matters.

However, legal problems research carried out nationally and in British Columbia indicates that consumer and debt problems are the most prevalent types of legal problems experienced by the public. Personal injury matters are also relatively high prevalence legal problems.³ The monetary value of many of the problems experienced by members of the public are too low to make litigation a sensible option from a cost-benefit perspective. Therefore, the small claims option is ideal.

³ Ab Currie, *The Legal Problems of Everyday Life*, Department of Justice, Ottawa, 2009 also in Rebecca Sandefur (ed.), *Access to Justice: The Sociology of Law Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 12, Emerald, 2009 and *Legal Problems Faced in the Everyday Lives of British Columbians*, B.C. Legal Services Society Survey, 2008

The same body of legal problems research also indicates that most people take some action to deal with these problems. Among the largest group, self-helpers, a large percentage of people who say the problem has been resolved also say that, in retrospect, they wish they had obtained some assistance. The majority say, having experienced the problem, better information and some assistance completing forms would have been helpful and, they think, would have resulted in a better outcome. However, some people take no action to deal with their problem. When asked why they take no action, common responses among the “lumpers” are that they didn’t know anything could be done, they didn’t know their legal right or they did not know where to go for help. Clearly, assistance in small claims matters is an important part of meeting the legal needs of the public and JES Virtual Legal Help services on SmallClaimsBC website addresses that need in the landscape of access to justice services in B.C.

Several services in B.C. do provide assistance with small claims matters. The University of Victoria Law Centre provides in-person student assistance with small claims matters to low income people. Similarly, the University of British Columbia Law Student’s Legal Assistance Program provides in-person advice and, on a case-by-case basis, representation in small claims court. Both services are provided to low income people who meet financial eligibility guidelines. The number of people receiving service is limited. By contrast, more than 40,000 unique visitors access SmallClaimsBC each year.

In addition to the Justice Education Society virtual help website, several other PLEI services, provide information about small claims matters. The Dial-a-Law service provided by the Canadian Bar Association (CBA) provides scripts available by phone and online text and video on the following topics: what is small claims court, suing someone, being sued, going to court getting a judgment paid and appearing in small claims court. The B.C. Ministry of Justice publishes small claims forms with some text assistance, 8 self-help booklets and other information on their website. Clicklaw is a searchable directory offering a wide range of materials assembled from other sources. These include a video from the Justice Education Society, small claims forms and a filing assistant program from the B.C. Ministry of Justice, getting your judgment paid and making a small claim from Dial-a-Law, a series of fact sheets from the University of Victoria Law Centre, and a general presentation on ‘our system of justice’ from the Dial-a-law site. The B.C. Court House Libraries site provides information about small claims through a Clicklaw Wiki book on consumer and debt problems.

None of these legal assistance and PLEI services provides the amount and type of assistance available from the JES small claims assistance website, which is universal, non-means tested, interactive and provides assistance specific to individual problems through the chat and email components of the website. Based on an overall comparison with other services, the JES small claims website provides a type of service not available from other sources. It is a web-based service and therefore probably would be low cost compared with comparable in-person services. However, the student services are not comparable on a number of criteria. A comparative study of usability and user satisfaction with the other services would be complex and well beyond the capacity of this review.

Virtual Legal Help Services on SupremeCourtBC.ca

Virtual Legal Help services were launched on the JES BC Supreme Court website (BCSC) in February 2013. This site is more general in nature than the SCC website. The BCSC site provides information about filing

or defending a civil or family action or defending against a criminal charge. The BCSC website includes the same three levels of triage as the SCC site: information via the virtual assistant, level 2 chat or email assistance and level three email or telephone assistance. By means of questions and answers triggered by choices made by users the virtual assistant guides the user to various items of information.

The family law section of the BCSC site presents information on a number of family law topics: divorce and separation, parenting after separation, child support, family violence, adoption and other subjects. The website refers users to other family law services such as court forms available on the B.C. Ministry of Justice website and to the family justice counseling service available through the Justice Access Centre's and the Family Law Centres. There are extensive family law services available from the Legal Services Society, the JAC's and the Family Justice Centres. The Supreme Court website acts as a gateway to external resources and services for family law and criminal matters. In this way it acts as a starting point and an accessible entry point for people with a legal problem at the stage that has brought them into contact with the Supreme Court. For civil matters the site has the most extensive information available online, including 24 guidebooks for self-representation in the B.C. Supreme Court. The site is, in that sense, also a destination site for users.

The criminal law section of the website provides general information for accused, witnesses and victims and information about how a criminal trial works. The site also contains useful information for self-representing accused, including how and when to ask a judge to appoint counsel and a reference to the UBC law Student's Legal Aid Program criminal procedure and case management manual. Advice and assistance in criminal matters is available from the two student legal aid services, the Salvation Army *pro bono* service and from the Access *Pro Bono* Society of B.C. Dial-a-law, Clicklaw, and the B.C. Ministry of Justice websites contain guidebook information related to criminal matters.

The Supreme Court website, on which assistance with civil, family and criminal matters is available, begins with the virtual assistant briefly explaining the basic purpose of the civil court system. The use is presented with options from a process oriented menu including general overview, getting started, before trial, trial and after trial. This process, in which the user is guided by the virtual assistant, is intended to provide the information that best matches where the user is in the Supreme Court process. As well, the website provides links to court forms and court rules. Importantly, the JAC's in Vancouver and Nanaimo provide service in non-family civil matters that may be similar with the legal problems being experienced by users of the JES BCSC website. The Civil Guidebooks on SupremeCourtBC were developed as primary tools to help JAC staff provide assistance to their clients. However, the JAC does not presently record data on specific problem types. Therefore, an examination on the comparability of service is not possible.

It can be said with confidence, based on an overall assessment of the services provided by the JES websites compared with the other major access to justice services in the lower mainland of British Columbia that each of the SCC and the BCSC websites occupy a unique niche in the service delivery environment. First, and most important, compared with the more conventional PLEI sources both websites offer users the opportunity through the chat and email functions to personalize the assistance. The virtual assistant persona who guides users beginning with the initial contact represents the first

step, by questioning the user about the problem, to help people navigate the information with reference to the problem they are attempting to deal with. The chat and email functions are an integral part of the virtual assistance model, refining the approach by allowing the user to ask clarify information and to ask questions even more specific to their problem.

Second, compared with the student legal services, the SCC and the BCSC websites are universal. They are not means tested as is the case for the two student legal services. Inherent in a web-based vehicle, these sites are open to everyone experiencing a problem. Third, the websites address some of the fundamental elements of legal need. They are open to the many people experiencing problems not understanding the legal aspects of the problem, are not sure know where to go for help and are not sure if anything can be done. The universality inherent in a web-based application is uniquely able to address these aspects of need by being open to anyone able to access the websites.

The SCC and BCSC website are inherently less expensive than in-person approaches. In-person services using student assistance as part of clinical education are artificially low cost and thus not open to fair cost-benefit comparison. Comparative analysis of the more conventional PLEI services and the guided and interactive PLEI service provided by the JES SCC and BCSC web-based assistance are not possible because of lack of sufficient data. The most appropriate comparison would be between the non-family civil in-person service provided by the JAC's and the interactive web-based service provided by the JES BCSC website. However, this is also limited by a lack of data. It can be concluded, however, that the two JES sites are complementary to other programs offering services that reach different segments of the population, address different aspects of legal need or provide an enhanced service (through personalized chat and email communication) than available elsewhere.

Usability of the Websites

In their review of digital alternatives to traditional in-person legal services of legal assistance, Smith and Paterson⁴ identify several ideal criteria for a good website. They stress that websites should be appealing to users, they should provide individualized assistance that is practical and relevant the user's problem and they should be dynamic, guiding the user through a process rather than presenting material in a static manner in response to a question. A mentioned earlier, two sources of data are used to assess these features of the usability of the SCC and BCSC websites. One source is Google analytics data on user traffic on the websites. These data are not designed to address the specific questions on usability although some insights are from the Google data. Second, several questions from the user exit survey ask specific information about the utility of the chat and email functions. The data from the user surveys are more specific to the issues.

The Small Claims Website

The user traffic data provide inferences rather than direct evidence about relevance and practicality because much of the data on number of visitors, average length of visits, pages viewed per visitor and so on can represent non-purposive web surfing. Three general indicators of the degree to which users find

⁴ Roger Smith and Alan Paterson, *Face to Face Legal services and their Alternatives: Global Lessons from the Digital Revolution*, 2014

the website interesting or relevant to their needs or interests are the “bounce rate”, “drop-off rates” at different stages of the user’s web activity and, possibly, the percentage of returning visitors. The bounce rate is the percentage of users who exit the site after viewing the first page. A low bounce rate is obviously good. The bounce rate for the SCC website for the period of January 28 to February 28, 2014 was 35.0%. Judged against industry standards, this is a very favourable indicator that users find the site interesting and/or valuable. Generally, a bounce rate of 35% is considered low and bounce rates of 50% are common.

The drop-off rate is the percentage of users who exit the site after any particular interaction as they navigate through the website. Drop-off rates can be calculated for second and subsequent pages on which users land as they navigate the website. One would expect that drop-off rates for pages visited after the starting page would be lower than for the initial page on which people land on the website.

Table I shows the drop-off rates for the starting pages and for the pages representing subsequent interactions for those users who do not drop off after the starting page.

	Number of Visits	Drop-off Rate	Flow Through Percentage
Starting Pages	5720	52.6%	48.4%
First Interaction	2720	31.6%	68.4%
Second Interaction	1860	35.6%	64.4%
Third Interaction	1200	31.8%	68.2%

The table shows that slightly over half of all people who visited the Small Claims website during the one-month period used for this analysis dropped off immediately, leaving the site after the first landing page. For the users who remained in the site (the 48.4% flow through), the drop-off rates for the first to third interactions was about 31% to 35%. These data suggest that once users identify the site as potentially useful or interesting they stay on the website. We do not know if that represents interest in the website or usefulness of the information provided. It is probably notable that about half of all users stay on the website after the first landing page. From the start page bounce rates decline to relatively low levels suggesting that the information users are finding meets their interests, needs and expectations.

The number of returning visitors also provides some indication that users found the site valuable. For the same January/February time period the percentage of return users was 37.9%.

The length of time spent on the website provides a possible indication of the degree to which people are actually using the site purposively or casually surfing. It was mentioned above the average time spent on the site was about 4 minutes. The table below shows the distribution of time in seconds spent on the site. In total about 59% of all users spend less than one minute on the site, 14% spend between one and three minutes, about 15% between three and ten, about 10% spend between 10 and 30 minutes and almost 3% spend more than half an hour.

Table II: Time Spent on the Small Claims Court Website			
Time Spent on Site	Number of Visitors	Percent of Visitors	Page Views per Visit
10 seconds or less	2446	41.0%	1.03
30 seconds or less	617	10.4%	1.85
31 seconds to 1 minute	450	7.5%	1.25
61 to 3 minutes	846	14.2%	3.13
181 to 10 minutes	867	14.5%	4.40
601 to 30 minutes	572	9.8%	5.71
More than 30 minutes	158	2.7%	11.88

Also, it of particular interest that 26.7% of all users accessed small claims forms. A major purpose of the website is to inform users about how the small claims process works and how to access it. The user traffic data do not indicate how many people actually completed and initiated small claims actions. However, given the inherent casual nature with which people access websites generally, a large number of people accessing the forms pages on the site is an interesting outcome.

Flow Analysis

This section uses Google Analytics data to analyze user traffic through the SCC website. This tool tracks the pages on which people land as they move through the website. Again, similar to the ‘dashboard’ data presented above, the data are highly inferential rather than definitive. However, the data provide somewhat more useful insights on how people use the website.

The analysis is based on approximately 3500 users. Users can enter the website on different start pages so it is useful to identify them. The start pages identified by the analytics package are presented in Table III. Out of the approximately 3500 page landings in the one month period being used for this analysis 68.1% was through traffic, representing users who went on to visit other pages on the website. The drop-off rate was a very favourable 31.9% (100-68.1). This is consistent with the bounce rate of 35% reported above.

Table III: Starting Page Visits; Small Claims Website			
Page on the Website	% of Traffic	Drop-off Rate	Number
Home Page	46.0%	31.9%	1770
Other Unspecified*	31.4%	67.1%	623
Court Forms	8.8%	77.5%	471
Court Locations (Vancouver)	6.5%	72.5%	316
Court Locations (Other)	3.7%	60.5%	157
Court Decisions	3.6%	93.1%	160

*83% of this category consisted of court forms and court locations pages. It is unclear why the Google Analytics software recorded them in a general category.

The notable observations about the start pages are, first, that the dropout rate for users starting at the home page is low. The dropout rates for other landing pages are much higher. However, these pages represent objectives, finding small claims court locations and forms, for which users were searching. It would be expected that dropout rates would be higher.

Beginning with a start page, users move to other pages. These are termed interactions with the website. In the 1st interaction following the first page landing to which the majority of users went was the “getting started” page. (n = 790) 77.1% of users flowed through the site to another page while 22.9% dropped out. Table IV shows the other recorded page landings for the 1st interaction.

Table IV: First Interaction Page Visits; Small Claims Website			
Page on the Website	Flow Through	Drop-off Rate	Number
Getting Started	77.1%	22.9%	790
Court Forms	46.0%	54.0%	437
Court Decisions	88.3%	11.7%	171
Court Locations	66.7%	33.3%	120
Other Pages	66.7%	33.3%	975

The most important observation is that wherever people go in their first interaction after the initial landing page, most people stay on the website. The drop-off rates range from low to very low. The highest dropout rate is for the court forms page (54%), where people probably exit the SCC website via the link allowing them to access the forms. Tables V and VII show the main 2nd and 3rd interactions.

Table V: Second Interaction Page Visits; Small Claims Website			
Page on the Website	Flow Through	Drop-off Rate	Number
Getting Started – Notice of Claim	70.1%	29.9%	274
Other Pages	67.3%	32.7%	929
Court Forms	38.3%	61.7%	120
Court Decisions	51.9%	40.9%	88
Getting Started - Overview	69.8%	30.2%	86

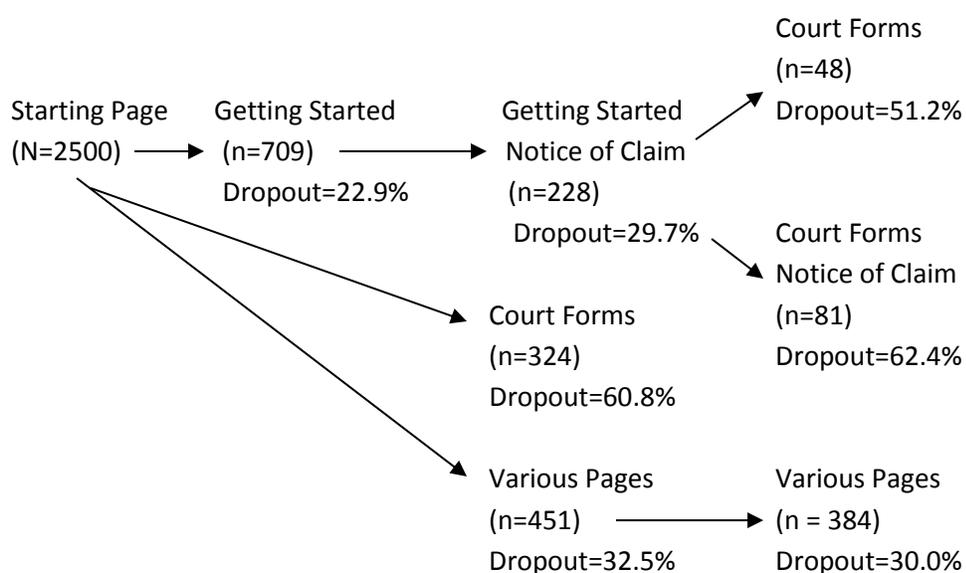
Table VI: Third Interaction Page Visits; Small Claims Website			
Page on the Website	Flow Through	Drop-off Rate	Number
Getting Started – Overview	85.0%	15.0%	140
Other Forms	48.6%	54.2%	154
Court Forms – Notice of Claim	37.0%	63.0%	71
Court Decisions	88.7%	11.3%	71

In both the second and third interactions with the website, some users return to the “getting started” pages, presumably making further attempts to absorb unfamiliar material. This can be taken as a good sign that people are not dropping out of the website in frustration. Otherwise, the data representing interactions two and three show the same important pattern as interaction one. Drop-off rates are low except for the court forms pages. The low drop-off rates for pages other than court forms and locations are an indicator that the website is effective in holding users’ attention. It is assumed that holding the attention of the users reflects meeting their information needs.

It is also useful to look the flow of user activity dynamically rather than in a cross-sectional manner in steps. The diagram below represents the major⁵ activity flows for 2500 users beginning at a start page. Figure I shows that from a start page 709 users went to the getting started home page. The dropout rate from this group of users on the getting started page was a very low 22.9%. A further 415 users went to a variety of other pages from which the dropout rate was, on average, 32.5%. Finally, among the three main first stage locations 324 users visited the court forms page. The dropout rate was 60.8%. The three main locations selected by users represent 60% of all users on the start page for purposes of this analysis.

Among the 709 users who went to the getting started page, 228 went on to getting started – notice of claim and 224 went to a variety of other pages. The drop-off rates were 29.7% for the getting started – notice of claim page and 32.5% from the other pages. From the getting started – notice of claim page, users mainly went to two court forms pages. 48 users went to the court forms page, from which the dropout rate was 51.2% and 81 users went on to court forms – notice of claim from which the dropout rate was 62.4%.

Figure I: Major User Pathways through the Small Claims Court Assistance Website



⁵ There are a very large number of possible pathways or flows taken by users as they “click” their way around the website.

One path leads directly from a start page to court forms, for which the drop-off rate is 60.8%. A second path leads from a start page to a category including a number of other pages leading, in turn, to another grouping of web pages. In both cases the overall drop-off rates are 32.5% and 30.0%, respectively. The low dropout rates mean that users are remaining in the website.

The user pattern represented in the diagram remains consistent with the data presented earlier. Dropout rates from specific pages generally tend to be very low, lower than the overall bounce rate of 35%. The dropout rates from court forms pages are two to three times higher, suggesting that users are meeting immediate objectives and finding the information they feel they need. Otherwise, users remain in the website searching for information.

The Supreme Court Website

The bounce rate for the BCSC website for the period was 36.2%. Again, as was observed in connection in relation to the small claims website, judged against industry standards, this is a very favourable indicator that users find the site interesting and/or valuable. To repeat an earlier observation, generally, a bounce rate of 35% is considered low and bounce rates of 50% are common.

As explained previously, the drop-off rate is the percentage of users who exit the site at any interaction as they navigate through the website. Drop-off rates can be calculated for second and subsequent pages on which users land as they navigate the website. One would expect that drop-off rates for pages visited after the starting page would be lower than for the initial page on which people land on the website.

Table VII shows the drop-off rates for the starting pages and for the pages representing subsequent interactions for those users who do not drop off after the starting page.

	Number of Visits	Drop-off Rate	Flow Through Percentage
Starting Pages	2120	65.6%	34.4%
First Interaction	728	35.4%	64.6%
Second Interaction	470	38.7%	61.3%
Third Interaction	288	34.0%	66.0%

The table shows that slightly over half of all people who visited the Supreme Court website during the one-month period used for this analysis dropped off. They left the site after the first landing page. For the users who remained in the site (the 34.4% flow through), the drop-off rates for the first to third interactions was about 34% to 39%. These data indicate only that people tend to stay on the website. We do not know if that represents interest in the website or usefulness of the information provided.

The number of returning visitors also provides some indication that users found the site valuable. For the same one-month time period from the end of January to the end of February the percentage of return uses was 37.9%.

Also, it of particular interest that 26.7% of all users accessed small claims forms. A major purpose of the website is to inform users about how the small claims process works and how to access it. The user traffic data do not indicate how many people actually completed and initiated small claims actions. However, given the inherent casual nature with which people access websites generally, a large number of people accessing the forms pages on the site is an interesting outcome.

The length of time spent on the website provides a possible indication of the degree to which people are actually using the site purposively or casually surfing. The average time spent on the site was about 3.4 minutes. The table below shows the distribution of time in seconds spent on the site. In total 63% of all user spend less than one minute on the site, 14% spend between one and three minutes, 12% between three and ten, 8% spend between 10 and 30 minutes and 3% spend more than half an hour.

Time Spent on Site	Number of Visitors	Percent of Visitors	Page Views per Visit
10 seconds or less	1004	43.8%	1.03
30 seconds or less	245	10.7%	1.48
31 seconds to 1 minute	199	8.7%	1.93
61 seconds to 3 minutes	323	14.1%	2.67
181 seconds to 10 minutes	274	12.0%	3.60
601 seconds to 30 minutes	192	8.4%	4.30
More than 30 minutes	53	2.3%	8.43

It is important to keep in mind that the BCSC website is both a source of information and assistance in its own right and a gateway to information on family law, criminal law and civil law court forms that reside on another website. Users may find what they need quickly on the BCSC website then move on to the more time consuming tasks of completing forms on other websites. Once users have exited the BCSC website data on their subsequent activity is unavailable.

The Google Analytics data also provide visitor flow information. This tracks the pages on which people land as they move through the website. Again, similar to the ‘dashboard’ data presented above, the data are highly inferential rather than definitive. However, the data provide somewhat more useful insights on how people use the website.

Flow Analysis

This section uses Google Analytics data to analyze user traffic through the SCC website. This tool tracks the pages on which people land as they move through the website. The start pages identified by the analytics package are presented in Table IX. Out of the approximately 2300 page landings in the one month period being used for this analysis, 58.2% was through traffic, representing users who went on to visit other pages on the website. The drop-off rate was a reasonably favourable 41.8% (100-58.2). This is consistent with the bounce rate of 36% reported above.

Page on the Website	% of Traffic	Drop-off Rate	Number
Home Page	31.0%	41.8%	669
Other Unspecified*	24.2%	70.6%	524
Civil Court Forms	17.8%	87.0%	384
Family Court Forms	10.3%	90.1%	222
Civil General	11.1%	55.0%	240
Family and Parenting	5.6%	76.6%	120

*63.3% of this category consisted of family law (20.2%), criminal law (15.3%), how a criminal trial works (14.9%) and the glossary (14.9%).

The notable observations about the start pages are, first, that the drop-off rate for users starting at the home page is low. The dropout rates for other landing pages are much higher. However, these pages represent objectives, general civil and family law court forms, for which users were searching. It would be expected that dropout rates would be higher.

Beginning with a start page, users move to other pages. These are known as interactions with the website. In the 1st interaction following the first page landing to which the majority of users went was the “getting started” page. (n = 790) 64.9% of users flowed through the site to another page while 34.1% dropped off. Table X shows the other recorded page landings for the 1st interaction.

Page on the Website	Flow Through	Drop-off Rate	Number
Getting Started	64.9%	34.1%	58
General Information	82.1%	17.9%	201
Other Pages	56.2%	43.8%	299
Family Law	58.5%	41.5%	118
Criminal Law	73.5%	26.5%	34
Glossary	40.5%	59.5%	37

The most important observation is that wherever people go in their first interaction after the initial landing page, with the exception of the glossary most people stay on the website. The dropout rates range from low to very low. The highest dropout rate is for the glossary page (59.5%), where people have possibly found a specific item of information for which they were searching. The area with the next highest drop-off rate is a general category consisting of 30 separate landing pages, the largest numbers of which are court civil forms (9.7%), family court forms (9.4%), divorce and separation (6.7%), civil matters: getting started (6.4%) and civil matters: general (6.4%).

Tables XI and XII show the main 2nd and 3rd interactions.

Page on the Website	Flow Through	Drop-off Rate	Number
Home Page	66.0%	34.0%	100
Family Law General	61.1%	38.9%	36
Family Law Divorce and Separation	34.4%	65.6%	50
Civil General	87.6%	22.4%	58
Civil: Getting Started	48.0%	52.0%	50
Other Pages	61.6%	38.4%	197*

*The five most frequently occurring pages were glossary (16.7%), court forms (9.8%), Criminal (8.8%), civil before trial (8.3%) and divorce and separation (8.3%).

Page on the Website	Flow Through	Drop-off Rate	Number
Civil Pages: General*	83.0%	17.0%	47
Other Civil Pages: General*	67.6%	32.4%	34
Civil Court Forms	45.7%	54.3%	35
Civil: Before Trial	74.7%	26.3%	19
Family Law	69.7%	30.3%	33
Other Pages**	62.6%	37.4%	120

*The Google Analytics algorithm does not always distinguish landing pages precisely

**The category consists of 24 pages, the most frequently occurring were reported as Introduction (15.3%), glossary (10.5%), civil: getting started (10.5%), family: divorce and separation (9.7%), civil overview (8.1%), an civil trials (8.1%).

In both the second and third interactions with the website, some users return to the getting started pages, presumably making further attempts to absorb unfamiliar material. This can be taken as a good sign that people are not dropping out of the website in frustration. Otherwise, the data representing interactions two and three show the same important pattern as interaction one. Dropout rates are low except for the court forms pages. The low dropout rates for pages other than court forms and locations are an indicator that the website is effective in holding users' attention. It is assumed that holding the attention of the users reflects meeting their information needs.

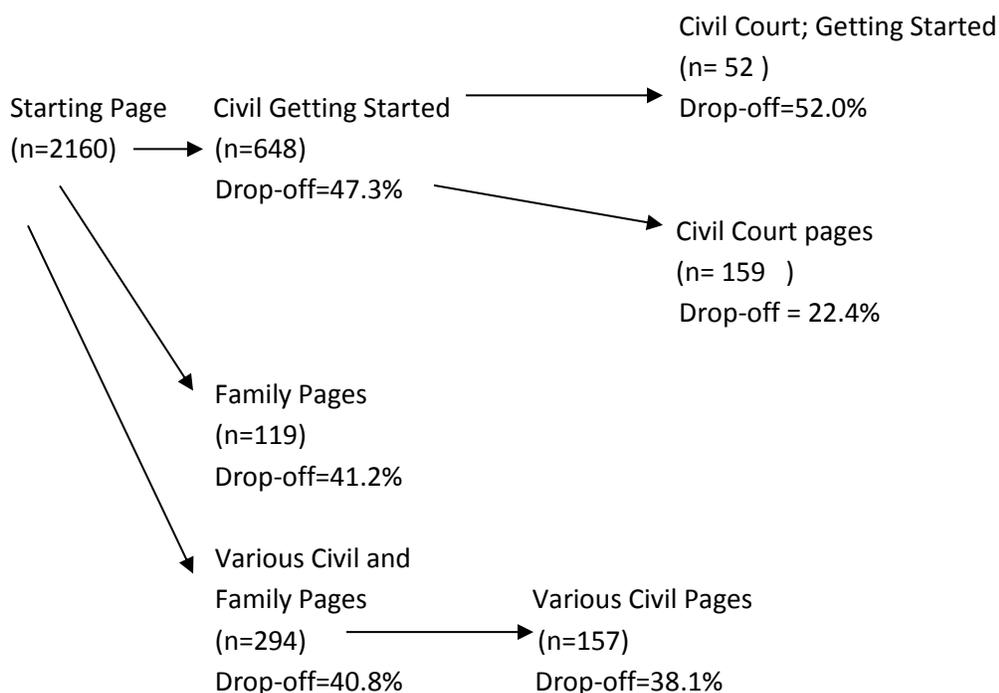
Figure II represents the major activity flows for 2160 users beginning at a start page. The activity flows reported for Supreme Court website activity are less precisely defined than those for the small claims website discussed in the previous section. Nonetheless, they do serve the purpose of depicting the extent of drop-offs as users click their way through the website. Figure II shows that from a number of different start pages 648 users went to the getting started page. The drop-off rate from this group of users on the getting started page was a reasonably low 42.3%. From there, users followed four major paths.

From the Getting Started page, one path was to two frequently accessed civil law pages taken by 159 users. The drop-off rate from those pages was 17.7%. From there users then made their way to the Civil: Getting Started page. The drop-off rate from that page was 52%. Alternatively, another cluster of 97

users moved to a grouping of several non-family civil law pages from which the drop-off rate was 22.4%. A path from the 648 users on the start pages leading to two family law pages was followed by 119 users. The drop-off rate from these pages was 22.4%. Third, a large cluster of 294 users accessed a large grouping of 31 pages that, the largest single components of which were the glossary (17.4%) civil court forms (9.5%) and family court forms (9.2%). The drop-off rate from this node was 40.8%. From this node in the path 197 users access another grouping of 25 pages. The most frequently accessed pages within this eclectic grouping were civil courts: overview (12.2%), the glossary (16.1%), civil court forms (10.2%) and civil court: before trial (8.6%). The drop-off rate was 38.1%.

The groupings generated by the Google Analytics program are mixed. The degree to which users were following purposive pathways leading to greater clarity about what to do about the problem or toward a resolution is not known. Again, there are a great many pathways. The ones described here are for illustrative purposes. They are, however, major ones showing that patterns definite patterns do emerge in user traffic. Second, and more important, the drop-off rates are generally low showing that the website is holding the interest of users. We do not know why, or that it is leading to a resolution of their problem. A reasonable inference, however, it that it is helping people find what they are looking for, otherwise the drop-rates would be higher.

Figure II: Major User Pathways through the Supreme Court Assistance Website



The user pattern represented in the diagram remains consistent with the data presented earlier. Dropout rates from specific pages generally tend to be very low, lower than the overall bounce rate of 35%. The dropout rates from court forms pages are two to three times higher, suggesting that users are meeting immediate objectives and finding the information they feel they need. Otherwise, users remain in the website searching for information.

Questionnaire Data relating to Usability and User Satisfaction

Users who went on to the chat and email stages of assistance were asked to complete brief exit surveys. With the exception of one question, the questionnaire items focus specifically on those levels of service, rather than the level I virtual assistance. Thirty-two users completed surveys during January and February 2014. During that period 202 people used the live chat, email or phone support services of Small Claims website and 104 used these virtual services on the Supreme Court site. See Appendix Two for detailed usage statistics during the first nine months virtual legal help services were available.

The results from the questionnaires for chat and email users for both websites are combined because of the small numbers. The majority of people completing the questionnaires indicated that they used the live chat service on the Small Claims website, 27 in all. Questionnaires were completed by 4 people using the email function on the Small Claims website and one person using the email function of the Supreme Court website completed a questionnaire.

Length of Time Using the Virtual Assistant

Users were asked how long they had remained on the website before moving to chat or email. In response, 68.8% said they remained on the virtual assistant level of the website for more than 5 minutes before engaging the next level of triage: live chat or email support. It would be expected, of course, that people who go on to the chat or email levels would find the sites useful or interesting enough to stay on for longer lengths of time. However, more people go to the chat or email levels via the virtual assistant than going there directly, providing some indication that the virtual assistant is useful as a navigating tool leading users to the more focused information.

Table XIII: Time Using the Virtual Assistant

Amount of Time	
More Than 5 Minutes	68.8%
Less Than 5 Minutes	15.6%
Went Directly to Chat	15.6%

N = 32

Most users went to chat or email to accomplish something specific or purposive. About 40% (40.6%) said they went on to chat or email to “move on to the next step”. This suggests they are moving in some sequence through a specific legal process. A further 15.6% used the chat service to “deal with the problem” and 12.5% said they used to get specific help with court forms. Overall, about one fifth used the chat an email service to clarify or to get basic information. This includes 15.6% clarifying information and 6.3% obtaining basic information. This suggests that the virtual assistant is providing most users with the information they need. Most are using chat and email to move forward dealing with their problem.

Table XIV: Reasons Why Chat/Email Was Used

Reasons	
Move on to the Next Step	40.6%
Deal With the Problem	15.6%
Information on Court Forms	12.5%
Clarify Information	15.5%
Obtain basic information	6.3%
Other	9.4%

N = 32

The majority of users said they found information provided by live chat or email to be specific and relevant to their needs. This is an extremely important indicator that the virtual legal services are a helpful resource for the user and might be considered an effective alternative to in-person assistance. Overall, 87.5% said the information and assistance they received was somewhat or very relevant and specific to their problem.

Table XV: Chat/Email Assistance Specific and Relevant to the Problem

Degree of Specificity and Relevance	
Very	65.6%
Somewhat	21.9%
Not Very	--
Not at All	6.3%
Not Sure	6.2%

N = 32

In virtually the same proportions, respondents to the user exit survey found the information and assistance they received from the chat or email service helpful. More than 90% of respondents indicated that the virtual legal services were somewhat or very helpful.

Table XVI: Chat/Email Assistance Helpful in Relation to the Problem

Degree of Helpfulness	
Very	68.7%
Somewhat	21.9%
Not Very	--
Not at All	3.1%
Not Sure	6.3%

N = 32

Respondents were asked if the assistance they received gave them greater confidence in dealing with their problem. Dealing with legal problems is often a daunting experience. Effectiveness in empowering or enabling people to manage their legal problem is an extremely important feature of a self-help tool. Overwhelmingly, respondents to the user survey said that the help they received increased their level of confidence to deal with the problem. Indeed, fully 84.4% indicated that the assistance they received

from virtual legal help services on the Small Claims and Supreme Court websites increased their confidence to deal with the problem.

Table XVII: Chat/Email Increased Level of Confidence to Deal with the Problem	
Increase in Confidence	
Much Greater	59.4%
Somewhat Greater	25.0%
No Greater	6.2%
Not Sure	9.4%

N = 32

One would expect that if users feel that the assistance received was helpful, specific and relevant to the problem and that it increased their level of confidence in dealing with the problem they would be satisfied with the service. The results presented in Table XVII indicate that the overwhelming majority of the user sample (over 90%) is satisfied with the service. Indeed, the largest majority are very satisfied.

Table XVIII: Satisfaction with Chat/Email Services on Small Claims BC and Supreme Court BC websites	
Degree of Satisfaction	
Very	75.0%
Somewhat	15.7%
Not Very	3.1%
Not at All	3.1%
Not Sure	3.1%

N = 32

User Demographics, Utilization and Accessibility⁶

There is much discussion about the existence of a digital divide and what groups within the population make use of digital approaches to the provision of information and assistance. A large percentage of the population has access to a computer and use email or text messaging regularly. A large percentage of the population accesses information on line using various search engines. Many people make purchases and pay bills online. Certainly, electronic banking is becoming common but, as is often remarked, the frequency, familiarity, and the routine nature, of using an ATM is much greater than experiencing legal problems and doing something about them. This accessibility of web-based approaches to providing legal information and assistance remains an issue.

⁶ The user demographics are presented together in one section. This is not for comparative purposes but because the data are limited and easily presented together and the issue of accessibility can be addressed in a very limited manner.

Age

Respondents to the user exit surveys were asked their age. Table XIX shows the age distribution reported by users of the chat and email levels of the two websites.

Age Groups	
18-24	9.4%
25-44	53.1%
45-64	37.5%
65+	--

The web analytic tool also provides estimates of the age of users. Google Analytics includes an algorithm that generates an estimate of the age distribution and gender of users. These data are presented below. These data apply to the virtual assistant level of assistance as well as chat and email levels.

	Small Claims Website	Supreme Court Website
Age Category	Percent	Percent
18 – 24	27.5%	27.5%
25 - 34	33.5%	33.5%
35 - 44	15.5%	15.5%
45 - 54	12.5%	12.5%
55 - 64	5.5%	5.5%
65 and older	5.5%	5.5%

*The analytics algorithm has estimated identical age distributions for users of both websites.

Based on the questionnaire data, the concentration of users is between 25 and 44. These may be the people who are most likely to experience small claims problems, the main body of respondents to the user exit surveys. The percentage of 18 to 24 year olds is low. This may reflect the same patterns as reported in recent research in the U.K. that younger people, while habitual users of the internet for multiple purposes, are not skilled and effective users of the web for addressing their legal problems.⁷

⁷ Catrina Denvir and Nigel Balmer, Digitally (De)Faulted? How do young people use the Internet to acquire knowledge of their rights?, Law for Life, 2013 (www.lawforlife.org.uk)

Gender

Table XXI shows that slightly more women completed the questionnaire than men, while Table XXII illustrates Google's estimation of the gender usage of the websites.

Table XXI: Gender of Small Claims and Supreme Court Questionnaire Respondents	
Gender	
Female	56.3%
Male	40.6%

N = 32

Table XXII: Google Generated Gender Distributions of Users		
	Small Claims Website	Supreme Court Website
Gender	Percent	Percent
Male	54.2%	54.2%
Female	45.9%	45.9%

Income

Users who completed the exit surveys were also asked about their income. Table XXIII shows a widely distributed pattern of reported incomes, concentrated in the lower and higher levels.

Table XXIII: Incomes of Small Claims and Supreme Court Assistance Website Users	
Income Levels	
Under \$25,000	17.2%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	20.7%
\$35,000 to \$44,999	6.9%
\$45,000 to \$54,999	6.9%
\$55,000 to \$64,999	--
\$65,000 to \$74,999	13.8%
\$75,000 and over	34.5%

Valid responses = 29; No Answer = 3; percentages are based on valid responses.

The largest percentage of respondents reported annual incomes of over \$75,000. It is not uncommon for people to exaggerate income in surveys.

Education

It appears on the basis of the information reported on the exit surveys that users tend to be more highly educated. Almost 60% of people completing the survey report having a completed college diploma or university degree.

Table XXIV: Incomes of Small Claims and Supreme Court Assistance Website Users	
Level of Education	
Less than High School	--
High School Graduate	9.4%
Some College or University	31.3%
Diploma or Degree from a College or University	59.3%

N = 32

Location of Users

Postal codes reported by respondents to the user surveys indicated that 81.2% of chat and email users reside in the Vancouver area.

Discussion and Conclusions

The Small Claims and Supreme Court websites represent an important effort to develop an Early Resolution Services Sector (ERSS) recommended in the final report of the Action Committee on Access to Justice on Family and Civil Matters⁸, although the websites were first put in place five years ago and modified early in 2013. The need for an ERSS reflects a number of aspects of legal need; the large number of problems experienced by the public, the fact that people often do not know what to do, are not aware of to go for help and, as a consequence, do not access the services that are available. Web-based services providing legal information and assistance are widely recognized as an important response to the need for expanding access to justice. Web-based services offer an element of universality because they are potentially available to anyone who has access to the internet. Further, in an era of decreasing or, at least, limited availability of funding web-based services are, all other things being equal, likely to be less expensive than in-person advice services. As well, web-based advice services provide assistance to the large number of people experiencing legal problems who, for a variety of reasons use self-help strategies to resolve their problems. The information available for this review suggests that the websites are highly effective tools for providing greater access to justice.

Presentation is important. In an online environment in which widely available web design technologies make sophisticated and attractive websites very common, it is probably essential that a successful legal assistance website meet the common standards of attractiveness and technical sophistication that people encounter in their normal internet use. It is more a matter of judgment than empirical assessment, but both the SCC and BCSC websites met that standard. The virtual assistant is a well-designed, visually attractive and sophisticated web tool.

A website offering assistance with legal problems should be dynamic and not simply an e-version of hard copy booklets and information pages. The two websites reviewed in this report meet this requirement. The virtual assistant helps users navigate through the website by asking questions that allow them to

⁸ Access to Civil and Family Justice: A Roadmap for Change, Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters, Ottawa, 2013

move to parts of the website that represent the problem they are attempting to resolve, or at least find information about, guiding users to information presented in video formats and to the court forms required to proceed with, or to defend, a claim.

Information and assistance are provided from the point of view of the person experiencing the problem. Users are asked at the outset about the stage of the court process they are at and are advised about out-of-court settlement. They are invited to click on an appropriate pathway and are then directed by the virtual assistant to information. This is an attempt to provide information and assistance that is consistent with the way in which the user is thinking about his or her problem. The intent is that the user experiences the website as a process in which s/he moves logically and systematically to a resolution of the problem.

The chat and email levels of the websites are important features assisting users to obtain more specific information in their journey toward a resolution of the problem. Users responding to the exit survey are asked why they used chat or email.

The largest percentage of users said they used chat or email to move on to the next step in resolving the problem and two thirds responded: to take the next step, to deal with the problem or to get more information about the court form required to move ahead. This suggests that users move through a process on the website toward resolving the problem. About one fifth of respondents said they went to chat to clarify or to obtain basic information. This is not, in itself, an undesirable use of the chat and email functions. It does suggest, however, that most uses appear to be getting the basic information they need by navigating the website with help from the virtual assistant, moving on to triage levels 2 and 3 to obtain more specific information.

The information and advice should be specific, relevant to the problem and practical. The evidence provided by the web analytic data and the user questionnaire data support the conclusion that the JES Supreme Court Assistance and the Small Claims Assistance websites meet that standard. The low bounce rates and, in particular, low drop-off rates as users move through both websites suggest that users are finding information that is useful. As well, the overwhelming proportion of users responding to the exit questionnaires indicated that the help they received was relevant and practical in relation to their problem.

Consistent with the data on relevance of the information and assistance provided on the two websites users also said, overwhelmingly, that the assistance was helpful in resolving the problem. As one might expect, a similarly large percentage of respondents to the exit survey said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the help they had received.

These are self-help websites and it is important that the assistance people receive should provide them with greater confidence to deal with the problem than they had before engaging the sites. An important result of the exit survey was that about 60% of respondents said that the help they had received provided them with much greater confidence to tackle the problem and a further 25% said it had given them somewhat greater confidence – about 85% in all.

Accessibility is an issue with web-based legal information and assistance. The available data do not provide a solid basis for assessing accessibility. However, one year after the addition of the virtual assistant and the chat and email functions the Small Claims website has achieved approximately 5000 visits per month and the Supreme Court site about 2000 visits per month. The demographic data from the user survey do not contain anything that would raise questions about accessibility. The results show that females are the majority of users but the gender balance not so far from the population norm as to raise questions. The data also show a wide distribution of reported age, education and income levels. None of the respondents reported less than high school education and none reported an age of over 65 years. However, the number of complete questionnaires is small and can only be said to describe the sample itself, rather than having any inferential value.

The web analytics data and the user surveys are consistent in supporting the conclusion that the Virtual Legal Help services available on the Small Claims and the Supreme Court websites are effective in providing users with relevant, specific and useful information and assistance with their legal problems. Although the data are limited, the strength of this conclusion lies in the consistence of the two sources of data pointing strongly in the same direction.

Appendix One: Questionnaires, User Feedback

Chat Questionnaire – Small Claims and Supreme Court

Top of Form

1. Before you asked a question on the Ask JES chat service, did you spend time searching or reading information on this website?
 - Yes, for more than 5 minutes
 - Yes, for less than 5 minutes
 - No. I just used CHAT.

2. Why did you use the Ask JES chat service:
 - To get basic information about a lawsuit
 - To learn how to take the next step in the process
 - To get help completing a court form
 - To clarify your understanding of information provided on the website or by court staff
 - To help you decide how to deal with the problem
 - Other/None of the above

3. Was the information you were given on chat specific and relevant to your problem?
 - Yes, very much
 - Yes, somewhat
 - Not sure
 - No, not very much
 - No, not at all

4. Did the chat service provide information that helped you deal with your legal problem?
 - Yes. It was very helpful
 - Yes. It was somewhat helpful
 - Not sure
 - I was told to get legal advice
 - No. It was not helpful

5. Overall, how satisfied were you with the Ask JES CHAT service?
 - Very satisfied
 - Somewhat satisfied
 - Not sure
 - Not very satisfied
 - Not satisfied at all

6. This website includes information about BC's Small Claims Court/Supreme Court, as well as a virtual assistant and a chat service. Overall, did this website help you feel more confident about your ability to deal with your legal problem?
- Yes, much more confident
 - Somewhat more confident
 - Not sure
 - No, the website did not give me greater confidence

Your Information

7. What stage of the court process are you at?
- Trying to settle out of court.
 - Thinking about a lawsuit. No claim filed.
 - Claim filed. In the court process.
 - Court judgment made. Considering next steps.
 - Not sure
8. What is your age?
- Under 18
 - 18 to 24
 - 25 to 44
 - 45 to 64
 - 65 or older
9. What is your highest level of education?
- Less High School
 - High School Graduate
 - Some College or University
 - College or University Degree/Diploma
10. Gender?
- Male
 - Female
 - Transgender, Bisexual, Queer

11. What is your approximate income (individual if you live alone or total household if you live with a spouse or partner)?

- Less Than \$25,000
- \$25,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$44,999
- \$45,000 to \$55,999
- \$60,000 to \$64,999
- \$65,000 to \$69,999
- \$70,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 or more

12. What are the first three letters of your postal code?

— — —

Email Questionnaire - Small Claims and Supreme Court

Top of Form

1. Before you used the Ask JES service to ask a question, did you spend time searching or reading information on this website?
 - Yes, for more than 5 minutes
 - Yes, for less than 5 minutes
 - No. I just used CHAT.

2. Why did you use the Ask JES email service:
 - To get basic information about a lawsuit
 - To learn how to take the next step in the process
 - To get help completing a court form
 - To clarify your understanding of information provided on the website or by court staff
 - To help you decide how to deal with the problem
 - None of the above

3. Was the information you were given via email specific and relevant to your problem?
 - Yes, very much
 - Yes, somewhat
 - Not sure
 - No, not very much
 - No, not at all

4. Did the email service provide information that helped you deal with your legal problem?
- Yes. It was very helpful
 - Yes. It was somewhat helpful
 - Not sure.
 - No. It was not helpful
5. Overall, how satisfied were you with the Ask JES email service?
- Very satisfied
 - Somewhat satisfied
 - Not sure
 - Not very satisfied
 - Not satisfied at all
6. This website includes information about BC's Small Claims Court/Supreme Court, as well as a virtual assistant, a chat service and email service. Overall, did this website help you feel more confident about your ability to deal with your legal problem?
- Yes, much more confident
 - Somewhat more confident
 - Not sure
 - No, the website did not give me greater confidence

Your Information

7. What stage of the court process are you at?
- Trying to settle out of court.
 - Thinking about a lawsuit. No claim filed.
 - Claim filed. In the court process.
 - Court judgment made. Considering next steps.
 - Not sure
8. What is your age?
- Under 18
 - 18 to 24
 - 25 to 44
 - 45 to 64
 - 65 or older

9. What is your highest level of education?

- Less High School
- High School Graduate
- Some College or University
- College or University Degree/Diploma

10. Gender?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender, Bisexual, Queer

11. What is your approximate income (individual if you live alone or total household if you live with a spouse or partner)?

- Less Than \$25,000
- \$25,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$44,999
- \$45,000 to \$55,999
- \$60,000 to \$64,999
- \$65,000 to \$69,999
- \$70,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 or more

12. What are the first three letters of your postal code?

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Appendix Two: Virtual Legal Help Services Usage Statistics

Website Usage by Court SmallClaimsBC.ca & SupremeCourtBC.ca April 1, 2013 – March 31, 2014

Website Usage	Total Visits	Unique Visitors	Total Page Views	Ave. Time on Site
Small Claims Court	57,507	40,384	156,846	4:28
Supreme Court	23,306	18,038	51,200	4:40
TOTAL	80,813	58,422	208,046	

Ask JES, the Virtual Assistant – a video-based, expert system of guided pathways – was introduced on SmallClaimsBC.ca and SupremeCourtBC.ca in early 2013. During the first fiscal year, the Virtual Assistant provided personalized guidance to over 50,000 unique visitors to the two websites. This represented triage level 1, with triage levels 2 and 3 following in June of 2013.

Virtual Legal Help Services Triage Levels 2 & 3: June 2013 – February 2014 Usage Statistics by Service Type and Court

Virtual Services	Triage 2		Triage 3	
	Chat	Email	Email	Phone
Small Claims Court	568	279	119	5
Supreme Court	222	29	20	2
TOTAL	790	308	139	7
CLIENTS	1098		146	

Usage Statistics by Court Clients and Court

Virtual Services	Triage 2		Triage 3	
	Clients	%	Clients	%
Small Claims Court	847	77%	124	85%
Supreme Court	251	23%	22	15%
CLIENTS	1098		146	

During the first nine months, the virtual legal services of live chat and email support (triage level 2) helped 1098 clients. During this same time, 146 of these clients received expert assistance from a lawyer by email or phone (triage level 3). Interestingly, the vast majority of users (95%) prefer expert assistance by email, rather than by phone.