

# THE U.S. NEWS SCHOLARLY IMPACT PROJECT

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

In February of 2019, *U.S. News and World Report* announced an expansion to its “Best Law Schools” data collection—a new ranking which will evaluate each law school’s scholarly impact. *U.S. News* further stated that it would be collaborating with the Hein Company as its source for this analysis.

The purpose of the project is to analyze the scholarly impact of each U.S. law school based on the impact and productivity of its faculty members. *U.S. News* will be using several accepted indicators to measure scholarly impact, including citations, publications, and other bibliometric measures.

## JULY 2019 UPDATE

So far, *U.S. News* has sent out a survey to each law school requesting the names and other details of its full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty for fall of 2018. The results of these surveys have been passed to HeinOnline.

## HOW IS HEIN INVOLVED?

HeinOnline’s dedicated data team will link the names of individual faculty members in each survey to their respective author profile pages in HeinOnline. After linking the authors to their profile pages, HeinOnline will return the survey to its original submitter as well as the library director for another round of review in case of any author name variations.

In the end, each law school’s survey results will list that school’s faculty members, linking each to their respective author profile pages in HeinOnline. The information provided by HeinOnline’s author profile pages will include measures such as mean citations, median citations, and total number of publications. *U.S. News* will then use these indicators to create a comprehensive scholarly impact ranking of law schools according to their own ranking methodology.

Hein’s role in this project is simply to provide the source citation metrics for the *U.S. News* analysis. HeinOnline is **not involved** in developing the methodology for the ranking. Furthermore, the Hein Company has not—and will not—receive any type of compensation for its work on this project.

## WHY HEIN?

HeinOnline was chosen for the *U.S. News* project based on the following qualifications:

- The Hein Company is the world’s largest distributor of legal periodicals.
- HeinOnline’s Law Journal Library contains comprehensive coverage of more than 2,700 legal periodicals.
- HeinOnline has already created its own tools for citation analysis within ScholarCheck.
- HeinOnline has already begun performing citation analyses of faculty publications using these tools.
- HeinOnline’s citations offer many advantages over those of its competitors, including indexing multiple authors per article, many more foreign law journals, correcting for name misspellings, and several others.

The most common myths about HeinOnline’s involvement in this project (and the realities of the situation) are outlined on the flip side of this page.

# MYTHS AND REALITIES

**MYTH #1:** HeinOnline does not count citations from courts.

**REALITY:** HeinOnline includes Fastcase, a comprehensive database of court decisions, and includes citations from judicial opinions to law journal articles in its citation metrics.

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**MYTH #2:** HeinOnline can be “gamed by self-citations and other mechanisms.

**REALITY:** Some are concerned that our citation metrics can be “gamed” by authors who cite themselves or increase citations to the work of their colleagues. Self-citations are a non-factor because *U.S. News* will be developing its own methodology for the ranking and are considering removing self-citations. As for other mechanisms, HeinOnline and *U.S. News* will actively analyze any attempts to “game” the system using successful methods found in other disciplines.

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**MYTH #3:** HeinOnline’s use of the Bluebook format to identify citations is incomplete.

**REALITY:** HeinOnline is aware of the limitation of using Bluebook formats and variants (rather than author name) to identify citations, as well as the limitation of using OCR to identify citation formats. To correct this, HeinOnline will conduct searches by author name (and its variants), as well as article title (and variants) to ensure completeness. Furthermore, all citation formats will be carefully checked and all potential variants added before making a final count.

## ENSURING ACCURACY IN THE ANALYSIS

Since embarking on this project, HeinOnline and its ScholarCheck metrics have been put under a microscope for the very first time. After thorough review of the ScholarCheck feature, the Hein Company has uncovered two concerns to resolve before the project is complete—**rightful author attribution** and **proper citation matching**. To ensure the utmost accuracy in this project, HeinOnline has formulated a plan for moving forward in addressing each of these concerns.

### RIGHTFUL AUTHOR ATTRIBUTION

In order for citations to be properly attributed to the rightful author, the author must have consistently published each of his or her articles with the same author name. If not, separate profile pages are automatically created for each variations. Duplicates can occur, for example, if there is a legal name change, a typo, an inconsistent middle initial, or any other spelling variation. Our first goal is to use the comprehensive list of faculty members from each law school in the U.S. by means of the *U.S. News* survey. HeinOnline will then associate each faculty name and its variations with our author index. We have assembled a data team to develop tools for identifying proper name variations and cleaning up any indexing errors.

### PROPER CITATION MATCHING

For ScholarCheck to find citation matches, articles must have been cited properly within a variety of citation standards. Errors occur when citation rules are not followed precisely, if proper abbreviations and punctuation are not used, or if there is an error in our Optical Character Recognition (OCR). To address the citation match issue, HeinOnline has been thoroughly evaluating its ScholarCheck citation analysis. Currently, an algorithm derives citation counts by an algorithm which looks for official citation patterns based on standard citations. Our development team is now working on alternate methods of locating citations within the text of the database, as well.