The ROTTEN Side of Legal Scholarship

Adopting Perma.cc to combat link rot and convincing others to go along for the ride

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What is it?

Link rot:
a problem where material cited on the Internet vanishes

Reference rot:
a problem where material cited on the Internet has been altered such that it is virtually unrecognizable
Why do these problems occur?

- Website reorganization
- Website is taken down
- Migration of website from one server host to another
- Control or ownership of website switches hands
Link rot in legal scholarship

70% of links in Harvard law journals suffered link rot

50% of links in Supreme Court opinions suffered reference rot


- Harvard Law Journal
- Harvard Journal of Law & Technology
- Harvard Human Rights Journal

Examining all US Supreme Court opinions containing citations to open web content; earliest case was in 1996
Solution: Perma.cc

A preservation tool created by the Harvard Library Innovation Lab.

Designed for use in legal scholarship to prevent link rot by capturing the essence of the cited web content at the moment of citation.

Intended not just for journal articles, but for any legal publishing, including books and court opinions.

Bluebook Rule 18.2.1(d)

Who uses Perma?

Journals - create Perma links for the articles they are publishing

Authors - can create Perma links for their own particles prior to submitting for publication

Courts - several courts have begun adopting Perma for use in their case opinions

Law Libraries - work with journals and authors to utilize Perma in scholarship
Maurer Law Link Rot Study

Extent of Study

- Indiana Law Journal: 6 issues examined
- IP Theory, full run, 2010-2015
Maurer Law Link Rot Study

- ILJ
- IJGLS
- IJLSE
- IP Theory

[Link icon] = 10%
Results and Moving Forward

Reception:
Journals < Faculty
What are your thoughts?

Experiences with Perma?
Successes?

We'd love it if you'd share!