Chapter 2
Using Wikis in Educational Research:
A Case Study in Legal Education

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ABSTRACT
A wiki is a user-created website that can be accessed and modified by multiple users. As a Web 2.0 technology, wikis can be used to produce collaborative, co-created information and knowledge. The use of wikis can harness a group’s collaborative and creative energy and allow the group to produce shared knowledge that benefits all members. Wiki also serves as a powerful tool for educational research. In this chapter, the author discusses the use of wikis in education and presents the results of a case study which explores factors that impact perceptions among faculty and students of the value of wiki technology in legal education, as well as the benefits of using wiki technology in educational research.

INTRODUCTION
In education, teachers and students are living in an exciting and transitional period. The speed at which new technologies are being developed continues to increase (Broussard, 2008). Considering the popularity of technology with 21st century students, it is important and appropriate to continue to consider how technology can be employed to enhance teaching and learning in all areas of instruction. In addition to motivating students, Schrand (2008) suggests that the use of technology in education can facilitate active learning. Furthermore, computer technologies can be used to enhance both learning in the classroom and learning outside of the classroom (Saxer, 2000). Computers and modern computer technologies, including wikis, can also be used to support cooperative and collaborative learning and endeavors. According to Blumen and Stern (2011), collaboration can produce short-term and long-term benefits to retention and recall; which stems from repeated exposure to content and cross-cuing, or additional retrieval opportunities which have been demonstrated to be important for long-term retention. As the benefits of the use of computers and computer technologies by teachers and students at all levels of education and
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in all areas of the curriculum continues to be studied, computer technology has the potential of having an even greater impact on teaching and learning. In this chapter the author discusses the use of wikis in education and presents the results of a case study which explores factors that impact perceptions among faculty and students of the value of wiki technology in legal education, as well as the benefits of using wiki technology in educational research.

BACKGROUND

As with undergraduate institutions, computers and the Internet can play an important and growing role in law schools for promoting learning, both in and outside of the classroom (Hirsh & Miller, 2004). In addition, computers and Internet technologies can provide students, just as it does for legal practitioners, with the ability to actively and collaboratively engage in their chosen avocation from virtually any location and at any time. As such, the development of Internet-based learning tools stands to have a profound impact on legal education and practice (Broussard, 2008). However, while the Internet has the potential to play an integral role in legal education, legal educators have been slow to embrace this technology (Saxer, 2000). As pointed out by Hirsh and Miller (2004), “Notwithstanding the ubiquitous presence of computers and the Internet at most American law schools, little has been done to expose future attorneys to the role that information technology will play in their professional lives” (p. 874). In addition to using technology in law schools to enhance student learning, legal educators must also instruct law students in how to use technology to enhance their future law practice (Saxer, 2000).

Courts and legal practitioners are using a variety of technologies to support themselves in their professional work. A 2014 report by the Supreme Court of Louisiana indicates that key technologies being used in the modern practice of law include case tracking and case management systems, electronic filing, audio and video enhancements in courtrooms, videoconferencing, and information sharing technologies. Furthermore, over two-thirds (69%) of judges recently surveyed indicated that a greater investment in courtroom technology is needed. Additionally, the 2013 New Lawyers Survival Guide by the Young Lawyers Counsel states that, “Lawyers who believe that they don’t need to know much about technology in order to make good decisions are dangerous to their clients” (p. 14).

While technology has transformed the practice of law, legal education has not kept pace (Hirsh & Miller, 2004). As pointed out by Broussard (2008), “The ability to not only write, edit, and produce documents collaboratively, but also to share supporting research, visuals, videos, and related audio will provide a tremendous advantage to a legal team” (p. 910). Using the features of even a basic wiki, users can develop and share these types of multimedia. Saxer (2000) points out that increasingly technology is being used in the legal profession and in legal studies in the form of word processing, databases, computer-assisted legal research, computer-assisted legal instruction, multimedia, the Internet, electronic mail, discussion lists, distance learning, and new developing technologies like artificial intelligence. Despite the fact that the practice of law has been revolutionized by technology, legal education in the United States has been fundamentally unchanged for the past 120 years (Hirsh & Miller, 2004). As pointed out by the New Media Consortium (2017), authentic learning experiences and digital media literacy are increasingly important as a key skill in every discipline and profession, and this is especially true in teaching. Because technology has been and will become an even greater part of the structure of our learning institutions, the use of technology in modern legal education must be increased (Saxer, 1999). The use of technology will also better prepare law students for their future practice of law.