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Family Law Lawyers the Latest Fraud Victims

The blogosphere is full of reports of a new fraud scam being perpetrated against family law lawyers. This one involves a client seeking help collecting outstanding support arrears. Several lawyers have made the mistake of forwarding the outstanding funds to the "client" without waiting for the agreed to Fed Ex cheque to clear the bank. This recent [Slaw posting](#) by Dan Pinnington describes the scam in more detail and links to various fraud prevention resources available online.

Google News

Google [announced](#) its latest innovation, [Google Scholar](#), providing free full text, searchable access to U.S. case law and law journals, on November 17, 2009 and legal bloggers were quick to react. Some of the more thoughtful responses include the following:

[Bridging the DiGital Divide: A New Vendor in Town? Google Scholar Now Includes Case Law](#) by library manager and lawyer John J. DiGilio, published November 18, 2009 on [LLRX](#);

[Google embarks on legal publishing](#) by Simon Chester, posted November 17, 2009 on Slaw;

[Google wades into free legal research \(for Texas, too!\)](#) by Don Cruse, The Supreme Court of Texas blog;

[Google Makes Free Caselaw Search Available in Scholar](#) on Internet for Lawyers.

In addition, Simon Fodden's article, [Google Roundup](#), reviews other recent applications developed by Google that may interest lawyers.

Other Legal Research Highlights

Google isn't the only innovator in the free online legal information world. See the following articles/sites which describe and aggregate some of the ever-expanding online resources:

[*Competitive Intelligence - A Selective Resource Guide - Updated and Revised October 2009*](#) by Sabrina I. Pacifici, which is a comprehensive listing of the best sources for web, blog, and news searches and other free online resources.

[*Custom Google Search of Canadian Law Firms*](#) by Ted Tjaden, which describes an ad-free [site](#) he has created to do custom searches of Canadian law firm websites.

[*Free Full-text Online Law Review/Law Journal Search Engine*](#), describing a custom [search engine](#) developed by the American Bar Association Legal Technology Resource Center.

The [*Third Annual ABA Journal Blawg 100*](#), is the cover article of the December 2009 *ABA Law Journal*, which selects the best 100 legal blogs and catalogues more than 2500 other law blogs.

More on the Future of Law

Those who would like to read more on this year's Pitblado Lectures topic, The Future of Law, may be interested in these recent articles by Jordan Furlong, Pitblado speaker, and others, which cover new business models for law firms and alternative fee arrangements:

[*The Obsolescence Audit*](#) and [*Beyond billing*](#), by Jordan Furlong;

[*Fixed fees needn't mean working more for less \(or for free\)*](#) by Jim Calloway;

[*The Bell Is Tolling for the Billable Hour: 'Change Is Here to Stay'*](#) by Amy Miller.

Social Media Primer

The [December 2009 LawPRO magazine](#) focuses on social media and its implications for lawyers. In addition to the [feature article](#) on how social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter are changing the legal landscape, the issue also addresses such topics as [networking and marketing](#) using social media, [social media tools](#) and how some lawyers use them, and the [pitfalls](#) to avoid in using social media.

EI Special Benefits for the Self-employed

[Bill C-56](#), *Fairness for the Self-Employed Act*, introduced November 3, 2009, proposes to extend employment insurance special benefits (including maternity and parental leave) to the self-employed, provided they opt into the program at least one year before making a claim. Those who opt in would not have to pay the employer portion of the premium, since they would be limited to special benefits only. The legislative summary explains the intent of the bill and the *Lawyers Weekly* article [Self-employed lawyers may get Employment Insurance](#) canvasses the reaction of the Bar.

Winter CPD: LSM

[Trust Accounting: What's New, What's Old, and What do You Want to Know?](#) - a free program to update Brandon area lawyers and support staff on the trust accounting rules, new and old. Presented by Colleen Halpenny, a Law Society auditor, the program will take place at 12 noon on December 9, 2009 at Boardroom B8, 340-9th

Street, Brandon.

[Annual Solo and Small Firm Forum](#) - This practical half-day session looks at topics of interest to practitioners in small firms who are just starting out or are keen to re-invent. It's scheduled for January 8, 2010 from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Law Society classroom.

Register your articling students or junior lawyers in one or all of our new [Bench & Beer Series](#) programs, where judges, masters and senior practitioners share their insights in an informal, after work setting complete with beer and pizza. Upcoming programs include Preparing for Criminal Trials on March 18, 2010 and Small Claims: From Hearing Officer to the Court of Appeal on May 27, 2010.

Mid-Winter 2010

The Manitoba Bar Association's [2010 Mid-Winter Meeting](#) takes place January 21-23 at the Fort Garry Hotel. For details on the full-day continuing legal education programming on January 22nd or to register see the brochure or contact the Manitoba Bar Association.

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