# theory of craft.

A NEWSLETTER ON MASTERING SKILL

## THE FUTURE OF ONLINE LAW REPORTING IN NIGERIA

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## About Theory of Craft

The *Theory of Craft* is a personal and knowledge development resource newsletter developed by Society for Book and Magazine Editors of Nigeria. The scope of the topics range from enhancing skills, cultivating talent, improving productivity, freelance business management and knowledge resources. The target audience is the editorial professional to assist them in mastering their skills. The newsletter is managed by members of the society who serve as guest editors. The ToC is a continuous professional development project.

## About the Guest Editor

Uju Okere is a practicing lawyer, Senior Research Counsel/Assistant Editor at Nigerian Law Publications Ltd. She also has a passion for creative writing. Uju has facilitated on online law reporting organised by the Editorial Board of Nigerian Weekly Law Reports. She is a member of the Society for Book and Magazine Editors of Nigeria (SBMEN).

## Editor's Note

As the legal landscape continues to evolve, the importance of accurate and accessible law reporting becomes increasingly evident. This edition, which is targeted towards lawyers and editorial professionals in the legal profession explores the future of online law reporting in Nigeria, a subject of growing significance as digital technologies reshape the way legal information is disseminated and utilised.

Our essay looks into the current state of online law reporting, its challenges, and the potential advancements that could enhance transparency, accessibility, and efficiency in Nigeria's legal system. The interview section which will sample the opinion of an expert in law reporting will further buttress this subject of discuss. The how-to section will offer workable guidelines for efficient and reliable legal research.

At the end of this edition, you will gain insight on how emerging technologies can contribute to a more informed and equitable legal environment.

Thank you for your continued support and interest in our publication.

Yours sincerely,

Uju Okere

In Nigeria, legal research and practice has in the recent past experienced a major breakthrough, orchestrated significantly by the rise of online law reporting. This development is transforming how judges, lawyers and law students etc., access, interpret and utilise judicial decisions and legal information.

In the past, law reporting in Nigeria relied heavily on physical books and printed journals, which were both costly and limited in accessibility. Traditional reports such as Supreme Court Reports (SC), Supreme Court of Nigeria Judgements (SCNJ), the All Nigerian Law Reports (ANLR) and most prominently the Nigerian Weekly Law Reports (NWLR) were essential resources but often faced distribution and availability issues.

The emergence of digital technology has become the game changer with online platforms providing easier access to a wide range of legal materials. Websites such as the Nigerian Legal Information Institute (NigerianLII), Law Pavilion, Nigerian Law Publications, nwlronline, and commercial legal databases have made it possible for legal practitioners, scholars and the public to access court decisions, statutes and other legal documents from anywhere at any time. There is no gainsaying the fact that the future is bright as can be foreseen in the following ways:

## 1. Increased Accessibility and Inclusivity

The future of online law reporting in Nigeria will likely see a significant increase in accessibility and inclusivity. As internet penetration and mobile technology continue to expand, more legal resources will become available to a wider audience.

## 2. Integration of Advanced Technologies

Technological advancements will play a crucial role in shaping the future of online law reporting. Key technologies include:

» **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** AI will enhance the efficiency of legal research by automating tasks such as case summarisation, legal research and predictive analytics.

» **Machine Learning:** Machine learning algorithms will improve the accuracy of search functions and content recommendations, helping users find relevant legal information more efficiently.

» **Blockchain:** Blockchain technology may be used to ensure the integrity and immutability of legal documents, providing a secure and transparent way to manage legal records and transactions.

## 3. Enhanced User Experience

Future online law reporting platforms will focus on improving user experience through:

» **Interactive Interfaces:** Platforms will offer more interactive and intuitive interfaces, with features such as advanced search filters, customisable alerts and interactive case summaries.

» **Multimedia Content:** Integration of multimedia elements such as video summaries, infographics and interactive legal analyses will make legal information more engaging and easier to understand.

## 4. Real-Time Updates and Comprehensive Coverage

To address current challenges, online law reporting platforms will need to focus on providing real-time updates and comprehensive coverage. This will involve timely reporting and expanded coverage.

## 5. Collaboration and Community Engagement

The future will see greater collaboration between online reporting platforms and the legal community. This collaboration will involve legal professionals, educational institutions etc.

In conclusion, online law reporting in Nigeria promises a future of increased accessibility and inclusivity, integration of advanced technologies, enhanced user experience, real-time updates and comprehensive coverage, and collaboration or community engagement if well harnessed.

# A CONVERSATION WITH
# OLUWOLE KEHINDE

As a user of online law reports and editor of the biggest law reporting firm in Africa can you describe the current state of online legal reporting in Nigeria?

The current state of online legal reporting in Nigeria is both promising and evolving. Over the past few years, there has been a significant increase in the availability of legal resources online. Platforms are now providing more accessible case law, statutes and legal commentary. That was not the case in the nineties when I was a young law reporter working side-by-side with Late Chief Gani Fawehinmi, the Founder of Nigeria Weekly Reports (NWLR).

What are the key challenges faced by online legal reporting platforms in Nigeria?

One of the primary challenges is the need for consistent and accurate updating of legal information. Many platforms struggle with delays in publishing recent case law or statutory changes. Another challenge is ensuring data security and privacy, especially given the sensitive nature of legal information. Additionally, there's the challenge of reaching a wider audience, including those in rural areas with limited internet access or literacy.

How do you see technology shaping the future of online legal reporting in Nigeria?

Technology is set to revolutionise online legal reporting in Nigeria in several ways. AI and machine learning will play a crucial role in automating the summarisation of cases, predicting legal trends and enhancing search functionalities. Advanced data analytics will help in identifying key patterns and insights from vast amounts of legal data.

*Legal professionals can provide valuable insights, feedback and content that can enhance the quality of legal information available online.*

### What improvements would you like to see in online legal reporting platforms in Nigeria?

I would like to see several improvements in online legal reporting platforms. Firstly, ensuring regular and timely updates of legal materials is essential. Platforms should adopt standardised formats and practices to enhance consistency and reliability. Improving user interfaces to be more intuitive and interactive will also benefit users. Enhanced data security measures are crucial to protect sensitive information.

### How important is collaboration between legal professionals and online reporting platforms in improving the quality of legal information?

Collaboration between legal professionals and online reporting platforms is extremely important. Legal professionals can provide valuable insights, feedback and content that can enhance the quality of legal information available online. Their practical experience and expertise can help in creating more accurate and relevant summaries, analyses and annotations.

### What role do you think online legal reporting will play in the future of legal education and practice in Nigeria?

Online legal reporting will play a transformative role in legal education and practice in Nigeria. For legal education, it will provide students and educators with immediate access to case law, statutes and scholarly articles, fostering a more interactive and research-driven learning environment. For legal practice, it will enhance efficiency by offering up-to-date and easily searchable legal resources, allowing practitioners to stay informed about recent developments and precedents. This accessibility will improve the quality of legal services and support informed decision-making.

### How do you envision the role of online law reports in ensuring legal transparency and accountability in Nigeria?

Online law reports have a critical role in ensuring legal transparency and accountability. By making case law and legal information readily accessible to the public, they promote transparency in the judicial process and enable citizens to stay informed about legal matters. Furthermore, providing a platform for legal discourse and commentary can encourage a more engaged and informed citizenry, which is essential for a robust and transparent legal system.

### How do you foresee the evolution of online legal reporting in Nigeria over the next decade, and how might these impact legal practitioners and the public?

Over the next decade, I anticipate significant evolution in online legal reporting in Nigeria, driven by advancements in technology and shifting needs within the legal community. Some of the key developments we might expect are increased accessibility and inclusivity, integration of artificial intelligence, enhanced interactivity and user experience, greater emphasis on data security, collaboration and community engagement, localisation and contextualisation.

Thank you for your time and sharing your insight towards our publication.

## HOW TO: NAVIGATE THE FUTURE OF ONLINE LAW REPORTING IN NIGERIA

As Nigeria's legal landscape continues to evolve, changes become imminent. Embracing these changes effectively requires understanding emerging trends, tools, and practices. Here is a guide to navigating the future of online law reporting in Nigeria:

### Stay Informed About Technological Advancements

Technology is rapidly changing how legal information is accessed and disseminated.

Familiarise yourself with developments in legal tech.

How to Do It:

» Subscribe to tech-focused legal newsletters and journals.

» Join online forums and professional networks dedicated to legal technology.

» Attend webinars and conferences on legal tech innovations.

### Leverage Digital Databases and Legal Research Tools

Digital databases and online legal research tools are becoming essential for

accessing case law, statutes, and legal opinions efficiently.

How to Do It:

» Utilise platforms like nwlronline etc.

» Use advanced search features and filters to refine your legal research.

» Explore legal research databases that aid your research.

### Ensure Data Privacy and Security

With the increasing volume of sensitive legal data being stored and transmitted online,

ensuring privacy and security is crucial to protect client confidentiality and

maintain the integrity of legal information.

How to Do It:

» Implement strong cyber security measures, such as encryption and secure access controls.

» Familiarise yourself with Nigeria's Data Protection Regulation.

» Regularly update software and systems to guard against vulnerabilities.

### Embrace Digital Reporting Standards

Adopting standardised reporting formats can enhance consistency, accessibility,

and clarity in legal reporting.

How to Do It:

» Follow guidelines set by professional bodies etc.

» Use structured formats for case summaries, legal briefs, etc to ensure ease of use.

» Stay updated on any new standards introduced by legal tech experts.

### Engage with Interactive and Collaborative Platforms

Interactive and collaborative tools can facilitate real-time updates,
peer reviews, and community engagement in legal reporting.

How to Do It:

» Participate in online legal forums to exchange insights and updates.

» Utilise collaborative platforms for joint research and reporting.

» Engage with legal tech communities to stay connected with industry trends.

### Advocate for Legal Tech Integration

Promoting the integration of legal technology in practice can drive improvements
in efficiency and accessibility of legal information.

How to Do It:

» Encourage law firms and legal institutions to adopt innovative technologies.

» Support initiatives that aim to digitise and streamline legal processes and reporting.

» Participate in discussions that support the advancement of legal technology.

### Continuously Upgrade Your Skills

The rapidly evolving nature of legal tech means that staying current with new
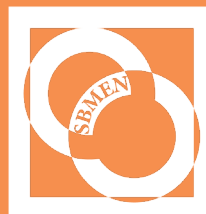tools and methodologies are essential for effective law reporting.

How to Do It:

» Pursue training programs in digital reporting.

» Engage in continuous learning through courses and workshops.

» Network with other legal professionals to exchange insights on emerging trends.

By staying informed, leveraging technology, ensuring data security, and engaging with new tools and standards, legal professionals in Nigeria can effectively navigate and shape the future of online law reporting.

**LAST WORDS**

I hope with this edition, readers will be equipped with a hands-on guide on how to navigate through the emerging territories of online law reporting.

The Society for Book and Magazine Editors is a non-profit organisation that represents editorial professionals with headquarters in Lagos, Nigeria. It was founded in 2017 and registered in 2018 by Anwuli Ojogwu and Enajite Efemuaye. SBMEN offers training, resources and events to editors to enhance their professional development.

www.sbmen.org.ng

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