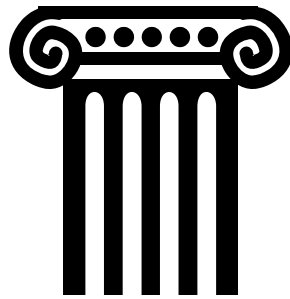


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## Beyond Black's and Webster's Persuasive Value of Thesauri

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# BEYOND BLACK'S AND WEBSTER'S: PERSUASIVE VALUE OF THESAURI

Brian Craig<sup>au</sup>

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## I. Introduction

The U.S. Supreme Court has increasingly relied on dictionaries<sup>1</sup> and numerous articles have discussed the persuasive value of dictionaries to construe statutes, contracts, and patent claims.<sup>2</sup> Despite this extensive theoretical literature, a dearth of scholarly literature remains on the efficacy of thesauri in the legal framework. This article

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<sup>1</sup> Note, *Looking It Up: Dictionaries and Statutory Interpretation*, 107 HARV. L. REV. 1437, 1440 (1994). For example, the 1992 Term had a fourteen-fold increase in citations to dictionary definitions over the 1981 Term.

<sup>2</sup> See Jason Weinstein, *Against Dictionaries: Using Analogical Reasoning To Achieve A More Restrained Textualism*, 38 U. MICH. J.L. REFORM 649 (2005); Rickie Sonpal, *Old Dictionaries And New Textualists*, 71 FORDHAM L. REV. 2177 (2003); Scott A. Turk, *The Proper Method Of Using Dictionaries To Construe Patent Claims*, 6 CHI.-KENT J. INTELL. PROP. 43 (2006); Frederick W. Claybrook, Jr.; Samuel A. Thumma & Jeffrey L. Kirchmeier, *The Lexicon Has Become a Fortress: The United States Supreme Court's Use of Dictionaries*, 47 BUFF. L. REV. 227 (1999); Ellen P. Aprill, *The Law of the Word: Dictionary Shopping in the Supreme Court*, 30 ARIZ. ST. L.J. 275, 334 (1998).

discusses the value of thesauri, in conjunction with dictionaries, as persuasive secondary sources to ascertain the plain and ordinary meaning of words and phrases. Based on empirical research, this article examines the frequency of opinions that cite to thesauri from 1990 to 2006. The article also provides a review of opinions where courts found thesauri persuasive and unpersuasive in construing statutes, regulations, and contracts. A comparative law analysis on the use of thesauri in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia is also provided. Finally, the article discusses the benefits of using thesauri in legal research.

Peter Mark Roget created and published the first modern day thesaurus in 1852 with the *Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases*.<sup>3</sup> The word thesaurus comes from the word “treasure” in Latin.<sup>4</sup> *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary* defines a thesaurus as “a book of words or of information about a particular field or set of concepts; especially: a book of words and their synonyms.”<sup>5</sup> Many modern day thesauri bear Peter Roget’s name, including *Roget’s International Thesaurus*, *Roget’s II: The New Thesaurus*, *Roget’s New Millennium Thesaurus*, and *Roget’s 21st Century Thesaurus*. Other popular general thesauri include *Webster’s Collegiate Thesaurus*, *Webster’s New World Thesaurus*, *Webster’s New Dictionary of Synonyms*, the *Random House Thesaurus*, and *Rodale: The Synonym Finder*. *Burton’s Legal Thesaurus* and *West’s Legal Thesaurus/Dictionary* are the two leading legal thesauri.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Bryon Cahill, “The Perfect Word—It’s Out There.” 29 WRITING! 22, Feb. 1, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> MERRIAM-WEBSTER ONLINE DICTIONARY, <http://mw1.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/thesaurus> (last visited Aug. 31, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> BALLENTINE’S LEGAL DICTIONARY AND THESAURUS AND BALLENTINE’S THESAURUS FOR LEGAL RESEARCH AND WRITING are the only other known legal thesauri. Only one unreported case has cited BALLENTINE’S LEGAL DICTIONARY AND THESAURUS. See *Smith v. City of Hartford*, 2000 WL 1058877, at \*15 (Conn. Super. Ct. 2000). No reported opinions have cited *BALLENTINE’S THESAURUS FOR LEGAL RESEARCH AND WRITING*.

Since the English language has a wealth of synonyms<sup>7</sup>, a thesaurus can help to identify synonyms for certain terms. One source identified 223 different terms for the word marijuana.<sup>8</sup> Eskimos reputedly also have 22 different words for snow.<sup>9</sup>

Judges in the American legal system have cited to thesauri in judicial opinions for many years. The earliest known reference to *Roget's Thesaurus* in a reported case occurred in 1857 in Maryland.<sup>10</sup> A mere five years after the first printing of *Roget's Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases* in 1852, the Court of Appeals of Maryland cited to Roget's groundbreaking thesaurus in conjunction with other dictionaries to decide whether iron coal cars qualified as "machines" under a Maryland statute.<sup>11</sup> The California Supreme Court also cited to *Roget's Thesaurus of English Words* in a 1862 opinion.<sup>12</sup> To arrive at the meaning of the word "debt" the California Supreme Court cited dictionaries and *Roget's Thesaurus*.<sup>13</sup> Early American courts consulted thesauri along with dictionaries to find the plain meaning of words. This form of analysis whereby courts consult thesauri in conjunction with dictionaries continues in modern jurisprudence.

Courts and judges have addressed the benefits of using thesauri in legal analysis. In the foreword to *Burton's Legal Thesaurus*, U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas observed:

In the English language, each word may have several meanings. Often, it is the use of a specific word or term upon which a case or controversy may hinge. Only by using precise language can the waters remain clear and unclouded allowing justice to take its course

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<sup>7</sup> See *Public Serv. Co. v. Nexus Energy Software, Inc.*, 36 F. Supp. 2d 436, 438 (D. Mass. 1999).

<sup>8</sup> *U.S. v. Griffith*, 118 F.3d 318, 321 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1997) (citing ESTHER LEWIN & ALBERT E. LEWIN, *THE THESAURUS OF SLANG* 243 (1994)).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *New England Car Spring Co. v. Baltimore & O.R.R. Co.*, 11 Md. 81 (1857).

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Perry v. Washburn*, 20 Cal. 318, 326 (Cal. 1862).

<sup>13</sup> See *id.*

unfettered by those who would mislead or misrepresent. It is through the use of such a tool as the *Legal Thesaurus* that one may find the precise term to fit the nuances of a particular situation.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, one New Jersey court held that “[a] thesaurus can be an appropriate source to ascertain the ‘ordinary, plain and usual meaning’ of terms when they are undefined in a policy.”<sup>15</sup> Since words are the tools of the lawyer’s craft<sup>16</sup>, legal writers should employ all resources to find the meaning of terms in the English language, including synonyms found in thesauri.

## II. Methodology And Results

### A. Methodology

The empirical study included in this article consists of comprehensive data derived from U.S. federal and state court reported opinions from 1990 through 2006 that explicitly cite to thesauri. To determine the frequency of judicial opinions that cite thesauri, searches were conducted in Westlaw’s All Federal and State Cases (ALLCASES) database. Prior empirical research has previously been conducted using Westlaw.<sup>17</sup> Similar searches were also conducted on Lexis-Nexis to confirm the results. Specific references to thesauri were identified to determine the number of cases that cite to each thesaurus in the study corresponding to calendar years from 1990 to 2006.

Thesauri with fewer than three references were excluded from the study. All unpublished cases were also excluded from the analysis. Furthermore, the study excludes

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<sup>14</sup> William O. Douglas, Foreword to WILLIAM C. BURTON, *LEGAL THESAURUS*, vii (1980).

<sup>15</sup> *Boddy v. Cigna Prop. & Cas. Cos.*, 334 N.J.Super. 649, 760 A.2d 823, 827 (N.J. Super. App. Div. 2000).

<sup>16</sup> *Hollcroft v. Department of Treasury, I.R.S.*, 687 F.Supp. 510, 517 (E.D. Cal. 1988).

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Howard M. Erichson, *Interjurisdictional Preclusion*, 96 MICH. L. REV. 945, 1008-13 & n.316 (1998); David Sherwyn et al., *Don’t Train Your Employees and Cancel Your “1-800” Harassment Hotline: An Empirical Examination and Correction of the Flaws in the Affirmative Defense to Sexual Harassment Charges*, 69 FORDHAM L. REV. 1265, 1275-76 (2001); Michael E. Solimine, *The Quiet Revolution in Personal Jurisdiction*, 73 TUL. L. REV. 1, 24 & n.139 (1998); Ian Ayres & Peter Siegelman, *The Q-Word as Red Herring: Why Disparate Impact Liability Does Not Induce Hiring Quotas*, 74 TEX. L. REV. 1487, 1494 n.27 (1996).

those opinions that merely mention the word “thesaurus” or an unspecified version of “*Roget’s Thesaurus*” without reference to one of the specific thesauri in the study. The results in Table 1 do not distinguish between the different editions of a thesaurus with the same name. For example, the column for *Roget’s International Thesaurus* in Table 1 includes references to the third, fourth, and fifth editions. Likewise, references to *Burton’s Legal Thesaurus* also include citations to any edition, including the 1980, 1992, and 1998 editions. Any references to the *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Thesaurus* are included with citations to *Webster’s Collegiate Thesaurus*. In Table 2, results show the frequency of citations to legal thesauri, including specific citations for all three editions of *Burton’s Legal Thesaurus*. Where a single opinion cites to the same thesaurus more than once, only one reference is included. The citations include references to thesauri in any portion of the opinion, including concurring and dissenting opinions. The references include instances where courts found thesauri both persuasive and unpersuasive. Further analysis of specific cases where courts found thesauri persuasive and unpersuasive is provided below. The Westlaw queries, conducted on August 31, 2007, are on file with the author.

## B. Results of Empirical Study

The results of the empirical study demonstrate that courts have increasingly relied on thesauri since 1990. Other studies have noted the increased reliance on dictionaries by the U.S. Supreme Court.<sup>18</sup> It seems a logical extension that courts have also increasingly relied on thesauri since dictionaries and thesauri are both common reference books for the English language. From 1991 to 1996, the mean annual number of reported cases that cited to any of the thesauri in the study was 16. From 2001 to 2006, the mean annual

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<sup>18</sup> See 47 Buff. L. Rev. 227.

number of reported cases that cited to any of the thesauri in the study was 22. Although this upward trend is not large, the results show that judges increasingly rely on thesauri.

The empirical study also analyzes which specific thesauri courts cite most frequently. One measure of a source's impact and influence is the frequency with which courts cite that source.<sup>19</sup> Table 1 shows that courts cited to *Roget's International Thesaurus* more than any other thesaurus between 1990 to 2006 with 52 total references. *Roget's II: The New Thesaurus* was the second most popular non-legal thesaurus with 38 total citations. *Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus* (including references to the *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Thesaurus*) and *Rodale: The Synonym Finder* tied for third among the most popular general thesauri over the past 16 years.

As shown in Table 2 which shows explicit citations to legal thesauri from 1990 to 2006, courts cited to *Burton's Legal Thesaurus* more frequently than *West's Legal Thesaurus/Dictionary*. Fifty reported opinions cited to *Burton's Legal Thesaurus* while courts cited to *West's Legal Thesaurus/Dictionary* in 30 separate opinions. Since 2001, courts have particularly favored *Burton's Legal Thesaurus*. From 2001 to 2006, courts cited to *Burton's Legal Thesaurus* in 23 opinions compared to eight references to *West's Legal Thesaurus/Dictionary*. Based on the frequency of citations, this nearly three-fold disparity in the frequency of reported cases between *Burton's Legal Thesaurus* and *West's Legal Thesaurus/Dictionary* over the past five years affirms *Burton's Legal Thesaurus* as the leading legal thesaurus.

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<sup>19</sup> See Michael E. Solimine, *Judicial Stratification and the Reputations of the United States Courts of Appeals*, 32 FLA. ST. U. L. REV. 1331, 1332 n.7 (2005) (noting that “[v]arious types of citation analysis have been used for decades in the legal community to gauge the impact of books, law review articles, court decisions, or judges, among other things”).

Courts have also increasingly relied on *Burton's Legal Thesaurus*. Between 1991 to 1996, courts cited to *Burton's Legal Thesaurus* in 12 separate opinions. From 2001 to 2006, courts cited to *Burton's Legal Thesaurus* in 23 opinions or nearly double the amount compared to a five-year period from the earlier decade from 1991 to 1996. In fact, *Burton's Legal Thesaurus* leads all thesauri, including general thesauri, in the total number of citations over the past five years.

The empirical data demonstrates that courts have increasingly relied legal and non-legal thesauri as persuasive secondary sources. Although court have cited *Burton's Legal Thesaurus* and *Roget's International Thesaurus* most frequently over the past 15 years, legal writers should also consider the benefits of consulting other thesauri including *Roget's II: The New Thesaurus*, *Roget's New Millennium Thesaurus*, *Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus*, *Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus*, *Webster's New World Thesaurus*, *Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms*, *Merriam-Webster's Thesaurus Online*, the *Random House Thesaurus*, *Rodale: The Synonym Finder*, and *West's Legal Thesaurus/Dictionary*.

### III. Treatment by U.S. Supreme Court

As the highest court in the land, the U.S. Supreme Court serves as standard bearer of American jurisprudence and lower courts respond to guidance and trends from the U.S. Supreme Court.<sup>20</sup> The U.S. Supreme Court has explicitly cited to thesauri to determine the meaning of specific words in three separate opinions.<sup>21</sup> In *McLaughlin v. Richland Shoe Co.*<sup>22</sup>, Justice Stevens cited to *Roget's International Thesaurus* to

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<sup>20</sup> See Sarah A. Maguire, *Precedent And Procedural Due Process: Policymaking In The Federal Courts*, 84 U. DET. MERCY L. REV. 99, 100 (2007).

<sup>21</sup> *Infra*.

<sup>22</sup> 486 U.S. 128, 133, 108 S.Ct. 1677, 1681 (1988).



ascertain the meaning of the word “willful.”<sup>23</sup> Stevens wrote that the term “willful” is considered synonymous with such words as “voluntary,” “deliberate,” and “intentional.”<sup>24</sup> In *McLaughlin*, Justices Rehnquist, White, O’Connor, Scalia, Kennedy joined Justice Stevens in delivering the opinion of the court.<sup>25</sup>

Besides Justice Stevens, Justice Scalia is the only other justice to explicitly cite to a thesaurus in a U.S. Supreme Court opinion.<sup>26</sup> Other commentators have previously observed that Justice Scalia frequently cites to dictionaries and *Roget’s Thesaurus* in textual legal analysis.<sup>27</sup> A search for the term “thesaurus” in opinions written by Justice Scalia yields two cases.<sup>28</sup> In one dissenting opinion, Justice Scalia cited to *Roget’s International Thesaurus* to find the plain and ordinary meaning of the adverb “regularly” which can mean “constantly, continually, steadily, sustainedly.”<sup>29</sup> In another dissenting opinion, Scalia cited to *Roget’s Thesaurus of Synonyms and Antonyms* to construe the term “compile.”<sup>30</sup>

While the U.S. Supreme Court has not extensively relied on thesauri, a review of opinions indicates that some justices, particularly Justices Stevens and Scalia, will look to thesauri as persuasive secondary sources in certain situations.

#### IV. Cases Where Courts Found Thesauri Persuasive

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<sup>23</sup> Id.

<sup>24</sup> Id.

<sup>25</sup> Id. at 128.

<sup>26</sup> Based on a Westlaw search of “thesaurus” in the U.S. Supreme Court cases (SCT) on Aug. 31, 2007.

<sup>27</sup> See 3 Sutherland Statutory Construction § 65A:10 (6th ed.); Bradley C. Karkkainen, “Plain Meaning”: Justice Scalia’s Jurisprudence of Strict Statutory Construction, 17 HARV. J.L. & PUB. POL’Y 401, 407 (1994).

<sup>28</sup> Based on a Westlaw search of “ju(scalia) & thesaurus” in the U.S. Supreme Court cases (SCT) on Aug. 31, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> *FW/PBS, Inc. v. City of Dallas*, 493 U.S. 215, 259, 110 S.Ct. 596, 623 (1990).

<sup>30</sup> *John Doe Agency v. John Doe Corp.*, 493 U.S. 146, 162, 110 S.Ct. 471, 480 (1989).

When a state legislature fails to define a statutory term, courts often apply the ordinary meaning of the term as found in the dictionary.<sup>31</sup> Although courts routinely look to dictionaries such as *Webster's Dictionary* or *Black's Law Dictionary*<sup>32</sup>, the question remains open on whether thesauri can serve as helpful secondary sources when trying to determine the plain and ordinary meaning of words in constitutions, statutes, regulations, and contracts.

#### A. Construction of Statutes and Constitutional Provisions

In construing statutory provisions, courts may consult dictionaries in use at the time the statute was enacted.<sup>33</sup> A thesaurus can also serve as an appropriate source to ascertain the ordinary, plain and usual meaning of undefined terms.<sup>34</sup>

A number of state courts have relied on *Roget's International Thesaurus* as an aide to find the plain and ordinary meaning of terms in statutory construction. The Iowa Supreme Court looked to *Roget's International Thesaurus* along with dictionaries to find the plain and ordinary meaning of the term “policy-making duties” which the Iowa Legislature failed to define in the Iowa open-meetings law.<sup>35</sup> The Louisiana Supreme Court also relied on *Roget's International Thesaurus* to conclude that the words “imminent” and “impending” in a statute are synonymous and have the same meaning.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, the Washington Supreme Court also cited to *Roget's International Thesaurus* to conclude that the words “arising from” are synonymous with the words “resulting

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<sup>31</sup> See *In re Care and Treatment of Coffman*, 225 S.W.3d 439, 444 (Mo. 2007).

<sup>32</sup> See *id.*

<sup>33</sup> See *Coltec Industries, Inc. v. U.S.*, 454 F.3d 1340, 1351 (Fed. Cir. 2006).

<sup>34</sup> See *Boddy v. Cigna Prop. & Cas. Cos.*, 334 N.J.Super. 649, 760 A.2d 823, 827 (N.J. Super. App. Div. 2000).

<sup>35</sup> *Mason v. Vision Iowa Bd.*, 700 N.W.2d 349, 354 (Iowa 2005).

<sup>36</sup> *Garza v. Delta Tau Delta Fraternity Nat.*, 948 So.2d 84, 93 (La. 2006).

from.”<sup>37</sup> *Roget’s International Thesaurus* provides helpful guidance to determine the plain meaning of state statutes by the court of last resort in many states.<sup>38</sup>

Federal courts have also consulted *Roget’s International Thesaurus*, especially to determine the meaning of the word “willful” or “willfulness.” Following the U.S. Supreme Court’s reference to *Roget’s International Thesaurus* to arrive at the meaning of the word “willfulness” in *McLaughlin v. Richland Shoe Co.*<sup>39</sup>, the Second, Fourth, Fifth Circuits have also cited *Roget’s International Thesaurus* to find the common usage the word willful or willfulness.<sup>40</sup> After the U.S. Supreme Court consults a specific thesaurus to find the meaning of a particular term, other courts will likely follow the U.S. Supreme Court’s lead and look to that same thesaurus to find the meaning of that same term.

Courts also rely on *Burton’s Legal Thesaurus* to find the meaning of terms not expressed defined in statutes. The Tenth Circuit cited *Burton’s Legal Thesaurus* to construe a provision not defined in CERCLA.<sup>41</sup> In construing the meaning of the term “monitoring,” the Tenth Circuit held that a term not defined in a statute must be construed in accordance with its ordinary and natural meaning.<sup>42</sup> The court stated: “[t]he verb “monitor” is generally synonymous with audit, check, control, inspect, investigate, observe, oversee, regulate, review, scrutinize, study, survey, test and watch.”<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, the West Virginia Supreme Court relied on synonyms found in the *Burton’s*

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<sup>37</sup> Crane Towing, Inc. v. Gorton, 89 Wash.2d 161, 171, 570 P.2d 428, 435 (1977).

<sup>38</sup> See also Lockhart v. Cedar Rapids Community School Dist., 577 N.W.2d 845, 847 (Iowa 1998); State ex rel. Kroger Co. v. Industrial Commission of Ohio, 80 Ohio St.3d 649, 652, 687 N.E.2d 768, 771 (1998).

<sup>39</sup> See supra note 22.

<sup>40</sup> See Benjamin v. United Merchants and Mfrs., Inc., 873 F.2d 41, 43 (2<sup>d</sup> Cir. 1989); Pforr v. Food Lion, Inc., 851 F.2d 106, 110 (4<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1988); Cash v. Jefferson Associates, Inc., 978 F.2d 217, 218 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1992).

<sup>41</sup> See Atlantic Richfield Co. v. American Airlines, Inc., 98 F.3d 564, 569 (10<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1996).

<sup>42</sup> See Id.

<sup>43</sup> Id.

*Legal Thesaurus* to find the meaning of the word “proceed.”<sup>44</sup> The court stated that the term “proceed” is commonly used in legal parlance to signify the commencement or beginning of a particular action.<sup>45</sup>

In a concurring opinion, one Alabama Supreme Court Justice consulted a thesaurus in construing a provision found in the Alabama Constitution.<sup>46</sup> To find the meaning of the term “interested” as used in Ala. Const. art. IV, § 93, which prevents the State from being placed in business enterprises in competition with private individuals or corporations, Justice Houston opined:

“[n]owhere can I find any authority to support the majority’s contention that the phrase ‘to be interested in’ is synonymous with the phrase ‘to be in competition with.’ *The Oxford Thesaurus*, American Edition 242 (1992), does not list ‘compete’ as a synonym of ‘interested,’ nor does it list ‘interested’ as a synonym of ‘compete,’ pp. 70-71.”<sup>47</sup>

The lack of a synonymous term in a thesaurus can also assist the court to determine the plain meaning of a specific word.<sup>48</sup>

Federal courts have also relied on the *Merriam-Webster Online Thesaurus* to find the plain meaning of words found in statutes where Congress has failed to provide express definitions. Two bankruptcy court judges cited to the *Merriam-Webster Online Thesaurus* to find the meaning of the term “subject to” under 11 U.S.C. § 521.<sup>49</sup> The Fifth Circuit also cited to *Merriam-Webster’s Online Thesaurus* to construe the

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<sup>44</sup> Walker v. West Virginia Ethics Com’n, 201 W.Va. 108, 123, 492 S.E.2d 167, 182 (W.Va. 1997) (citing WILLIAM C. BURTON, LEGAL THESAURUS 408, 896 (deluxe ed. 1980)).

<sup>45</sup> Id.

<sup>46</sup> Ex parte Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Bd., 683 So.2d 952, 959 (Ala. 1996).

<sup>47</sup> Id.

<sup>48</sup> Id. See also Cousin v. Enterprise Leasing Company-South Cent., Inc., 948 So.2d 1287, 1293 (Miss. 2007) where the court found the absence of terms in a thesaurus to determine the meaning of a word.

<sup>49</sup> In re Jackson, 348 B.R. 487, 497 (Bkrcty. S.D. Iowa 2006). See also In re Brickey, 363 B.R. 59, 64 (Bkrcty. N.D.N.Y. 2007).

Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (AEDPA).<sup>50</sup> Relying on the online thesaurus, the Fifth Circuit recognized that the terms “plausible” and “credible” do not have identical definitions.<sup>51</sup>

Courts have utilized other thesauri, including the *Random House Thesaurus* and *Roget’s New Millennium Thesaurus*, as aids in statutory construction.<sup>52</sup> The Tenth Circuit relied on synonyms found in the *Random House Thesaurus* for the term “modify” to conclude that the term “modify” as used in 18 U.S.C. § 1818(i)(2)(F), is ambiguous.<sup>53</sup> The Mississippi Supreme Court consulted *Roget’s New Millennium Thesaurus* in a 2007 opinion where the court found that synonyms for the word “duly” include “appropriately,” “fitly,” “properly,” and “suitably.”<sup>54</sup>

While thesauri do not serve as the definitive source to interpret statutes, several courts have relied on thesauri, especially *Roget’s International Thesaurus* and *Burton’s Legal Thesaurus*, as aids in statutory construction.

## B. Construction of Regulations And Other Agency Actions

Like dictionaries, thesauri can also provide guidance in construing regulations and other actions by administrative agencies. It is well settled that it is appropriate to consult dictionaries to discern the ordinary meaning of a term not explicitly defined by regulation.<sup>55</sup> Authority also exists for the use of thesauri to determine the plain and ordinary meaning of words in regulations where the administrative agency fails to provide an express definition.

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<sup>50</sup> Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-132, § 101-08, 110 Stat. 1214. See *Pondexter v. Dretke*, 346 F.3d 142, 149 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2003).

<sup>51</sup> *Id.*

<sup>52</sup> *Long v. Board of Governors of the Fed. Reserve Sys.*, 117 F.3d 1145, 1157 (10<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1997).

<sup>53</sup> *Id.*

<sup>54</sup> *Cousin v. Enterprise Leasing Company-South Cent., Inc.*, 948 So.2d 1287, 1293 (Miss. 2007).

<sup>55</sup> See *American Express Co. v. U.S.*, 262 F.3d 1376, 1381 (Fed. Cir. 2001).

In *Bergerac v. U.S.*<sup>56</sup>, the Court of International Trade cited *West's Legal Thesaurus/Dictionary* to ascertain the term “unusual” as used in 19 C.F.R. § 351.102(b).<sup>57</sup> The court found that the words “unique” and “unusual” are synonymous with the term “extraordinary.”<sup>58</sup>

The Tax Court of Indiana also referenced the utility in consulting thesauri to find the plain and ordinary meaning of terms appearing in regulations and agency bulletins.<sup>59</sup> The opinion states that where “specific words or phrases used in the statutes, regulations or documents like the bulletin in question are not defined, [the court] will strive to give those words or phrases their plain, ordinary and usual meanings . . . [and a] myriad of dictionaries and *thesauri*-both general and specialized-are available to assist the taxpayer in ferreting out a word’s or phrase’s meaning.”<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, the opinion states, “[t]he Court also reminds Counsel . . . that today’s word processing programs often have a thesaurus feature for ease of reference in assisting the writer in fleshing out the meaning of a word or phrase.”<sup>61</sup>

In another Indiana state court opinion, the Indiana Court of Appeals cited a thesaurus in reviewing a factual finding made by an administrative agency.<sup>62</sup> The Review Board of the Indiana Department of Workforce Development Review Board found that an employer “customarily” closes its plant for several weeks each year for the holiday season which made employees ineligible for unemployment compensation

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<sup>56</sup> 102 F.Supp.2d 497, 507 (Ct. Int’l Trade 2000).

<sup>57</sup> *Id.*

<sup>58</sup> *See Id.*

<sup>59</sup> *CDI, Inc. v. State Bd. of Tax Com'rs*, 725 N.E.2d 1015, 1022 (Ind. Tax. 2000).

<sup>60</sup> *Id.* (emphasis added).

<sup>61</sup> *Id.* *See also Korotko-Hatch v. John G. Shedd Aquarium*, 65 F.Supp.2d 789, 801 (N.D. Ill. 1999) where a U.S. Magistrate Judge consulted the thesaurus in the Court’s computerized word processing program, Corel, Word Perfect, Version 8.0, to find synonyms for the terms “youthful” and “academic.”

<sup>62</sup> *See Briggs v. Review Bd. of Indiana Dept. of Workforce Development*, 648 N.E.2d 1225, 1229 (Ind. App. 1995).

benefits.<sup>63</sup> The court looked to *Roget's International Thesaurus* to conclude that the word “customary” is synonymous with the word “normal” which served as a basis for the denial of the employees’ claim for unemployment compensation benefits.<sup>64</sup>

The North Dakota Supreme Court also utilized a thesaurus in reviewing a police officer’s use of the term “glossy” in a report when describing a suspect’s eyes affected by the consumption of alcohol.<sup>65</sup> After consulting the *Oxford Thesaurus: American Edition*, the court determined that the term “glossy” has a different legal significance than the term “glassy” when describing eyes affected by the consumption of alcohol.<sup>66</sup>

The Eleventh Circuit also cited to a thesaurus to find the meaning of the term “frivolous” to determine whether an alien filed a frivolous application for asylum.<sup>67</sup> The Court noted that “[s]ynonyms for frivolous are ‘carefree, fanciful, fickle, giddy, flippant, nonchalant.’ *Roget, International Thesaurus* (3d ed.1965) . . . Here we think that the record very clearly reflects that [petitioner] was sincere, albeit fraudulent, in his application. He was not nonchalant or flip.”<sup>68</sup>

In the construction of administrative regulations and other administrative agency actions, thesauri can serve as persuasive resources to find the plain and ordinary meaning of certain words and phrases.

### C. Construction of Contracts

Thesauri can also assist in the interpretation of words and phrases found in contracts and agreements. In searching for the meaning of contractual terms, courts often

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<sup>63</sup> Id.

<sup>64</sup> Id.

<sup>65</sup> *Baer v. Director, North Dakota Dept. of Transp.*, 571 N.W.2d 829, 832 (N.D. 1997).

<sup>66</sup> Id.

<sup>67</sup> *Barreto-Claro v. U.S. Atty. Gen.* 275 F.3d 1334, 1339 (11<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2001). For further discussion of the efficacy of thesauri by the Eleventh Circuit, see Part V. Cases Where Courts Found Thesauri Unpersuasive.

<sup>68</sup> Id.

resort to the dictionary to ascertain a term's common meaning.<sup>69</sup> Since thesauri are akin to dictionaries, courts also employ thesauri to find synonyms to find the plain and ordinary meaning of terms in contracts.

In a 2002 opinion, the Eleventh Circuit cited thesauri to construe terms not expressly defined in contracts.<sup>70</sup> The court researched synonyms found in two thesauri to find the meaning of the word "expense" which the court considered the crucial word in the disputed term for "health care expense" in a contract.<sup>71</sup> The court consulted *Roget's International Thesaurus* and *Webster's Thesaurus Online* and found that synonyms for expense include expenditure, cost, outlay, and disbursement.<sup>72</sup>

The Third and Ninth Circuits have also cited thesauri to construe contracts. The Third Circuit cited *Burton's Legal Thesaurus* and dictionaries to find the meaning of the terms "eligible" and "entitled."<sup>73</sup> The Ninth Circuit also cited *Burton's Legal Thesaurus* and dictionaries to find the meaning of the phrase "no longer" used in a contract.<sup>74</sup>

Authority also exists for the utilization of thesauri in arbitration proceedings to determine the plain meaning of terms found in contracts and agreements.<sup>75</sup> To ascertain the plain meaning of the term accident under a collective bargaining agreement, a federal court confirmed an arbitrator's decision when the arbitrator looked to a dictionary definition and thesaurus to conclude that one could have an injury without having an accident.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> *Harrington v. University of Northern Iowa*, 726 N.W.2d 363, 368 (Iowa 2007).

<sup>70</sup> *Vencor Hospitals v. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island*, 284 F.3d 1174, 1181 (11<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2002).

<sup>71</sup> *Id.*

<sup>72</sup> *Id.*

<sup>73</sup> *Local Union No. 1992 v. Okonite Co.*, 189 F.3d 339, 350 (3d Cir. 1999).

<sup>74</sup> *United Food & Commercial Workers Union Local 1119 v. United Markets, Inc.*, 784 F.2d 1413, 1416 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1986).

<sup>75</sup> See *Chamberlain Mfg. Co. v. Local Lodge No. 847*, 474 F.Supp.2d 682, 686 (M.D. Pa. 2007).

<sup>76</sup> *Id.*



Courts of last resort in several states have found synonyms helpful and persuasive in construing contracts. The Michigan Supreme Court applied language in *Roget's II: The New Thesaurus* to arrive at the meaning of the phrase “specific market segments” used in a commercial general liability (GPL) insurance policy. The court found that since the word “segment” is a synonym for the term “piece” or “section,” it can be presumed that “market segments” refers to particular customers or vendors in the marketplace.<sup>77</sup> The Oklahoma Supreme Court cited *Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus* in construing the word “jurisdiction” where the court noted that synonyms for “jurisdiction” include authority, range, supervision, and control.<sup>78</sup> The Wyoming Supreme Court consulted *Burton's Legal Thesaurus* and found that one of the synonyms for “satisfy” is “settle” in construing the phrase “full satisfied” in a contract construction action.<sup>79</sup>

Federal and state courts alike have consulted a variety of thesauri to find the plain meaning of words when construing contracts.

#### V. Cases Where Courts Found Thesauri Unpersuasive

Although thesauri can serve as helpful secondary sources to determine the plain and ordinary meaning of words, courts do not always find thesauri persuasive so legal writers should use some caution when relying on thesauri as persuasive resources in briefs.

In *Price v. Time, Inc.*<sup>80</sup>, the Eleventh Circuit outright rejected the efficacy of thesauri in determining a word's plain meaning and instead relied especially on *Black's*

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<sup>77</sup> See *Citizens Ins. Co. v. Pro-Seal Service Group, Inc.*, 477 Mich. 75, 96, 730 N.W.2d 682, 692 (2007).

<sup>78</sup> *M.J. Lee Const. Co. v. Oklahoma Transp. Authority*, 125 P.3d 1205, 1214 (Okla. 2005).

<sup>79</sup> *Hayes v. American Nat. Bank of Powell*, 784 P.2d 599, 609 (Wyo. 1989).

<sup>80</sup> 416 F.3d 1327, 1336 -1337 (11<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2005).

*Law Dictionary* and the *Oxford English Dictionary*.<sup>81</sup> To argue that the term “newspaper” included magazines such as *Sports Illustrated* in the Alabama Shield Law, the defendants in *Price* cited to *Roget’s 21st Century Thesaurus in Dictionary Form* and *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Thesaurus* because those books list magazine as one synonym of “newspaper.”<sup>82</sup> The court found fault with counsel’s “selective synonymizing” since other thesauri not cited by defendants fail to list the term “magazine” as a synonym for “newspaper.”<sup>83</sup> The *Price* court continued with its rejection of thesauri:

More fundamentally, a thesaurus is not a dictionary. It does not purport to define words but instead suggests synonyms and antonyms. A synonym is not a definition because words that are similar can, and often do, have distinct meanings. To illustrate the problems with the definition-by-thesauri approach, we note that the listing of “newspaper” that the defendants cite from *Roget’s 21st Century Thesaurus in Dictionary Form, supra*, also indicates that “scandal sheet” is a synonym of “newspaper.” *Id.* at 573. We doubt that most publishers of newspapers or magazines would define their product as a scandal sheet. Another example of the perils of using a thesaurus to define can be found when one looks up “lawyer.” Among the listed synonyms in one thesaurus are “fixer,” “mouthpiece,” “ambulance chaser,” and “shyster.” *Roget’s International Thesaurus, supra*, at 422-23. We doubt that counsel would concede that those synonyms define lawyers.<sup>84</sup>

Based on this strong language in *Price*, counsel should consider the possible ramifications of citing to thesauri in briefs, especially where different thesauri provide inconsistent results. Although the *Price* decision does not outright reject the use of thesauri in all circumstances, counsel writing a brief before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit should check entries in multiple thesauri before citing to a thesaurus to avoid “selective synonymizing.”

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<sup>81</sup> *Id.* See also John Thomas Richie, et al. *Eleventh Circuit: Survey of Recent Decisions*, 36 CUMB. L. REV. 665, 668 (2006).

<sup>82</sup> 416 F.3d at 1337-1338.

<sup>83</sup> *Id.*

<sup>84</sup> *Id.*

Other courts have also found thesauri unpersuasive. The Oklahoma Supreme Court rejected the reference materials found in *Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus*, *Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms*, and *Burton's Legal Thesaurus* in conjunction with dictionaries to find the meaning of the word "grounds" in a contract construction case.<sup>85</sup> The court plainly stated that "[w]e find these sources unpersuasive."<sup>86</sup> A Texas state court also disagreed with a party that cited to two thesauri, arguing that "extent" is "defined" to mean "proportion, a relative intensity or amount."<sup>87</sup> In a footnote, the Missouri Court of Appeals observed, "[t]his Court is not aware of any authorization for the use of a thesaurus when defining words used in an insurance contract."<sup>88</sup>

While some courts have rejected the utility of thesauri and found thesaurus unpersuasive in certain cases, no authority exists that outright prohibits the use of thesauri as a helpful resource to find the plain and ordinary meaning of terms.

## VI. Comparative Law Analysis

Courts in other English-speaking common law countries have also consulted thesauri in legal analysis. Like their counterparts in the United States, judges in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia have cited various thesauri when also consulting dictionaries to find the meaning of words appearing in contracts and statutes.

### A. United Kingdom

Some authority exists in the United Kingdom for the use of thesauri to interpret the plain meaning of words found in statutes. In a 1991 opinion, one court cited to the *Oxford Shorter Dictionary* and *Roget's Thesaurus* to arrive at the meaning of the word

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<sup>85</sup> *Lewis v. Sac & Fox Tribe of Oklahoma Housing Authority*, 896 P.2d 503, 515 (Okla. 1994).

<sup>86</sup> *Id.*

<sup>87</sup> *Dan's Big & Tall Shop, Inc. v. County of Dallas*, 160 S.W.3d 307, 310 (Tex. App. 2005).

<sup>88</sup> *Sanders v. Wallace*, 884 S.W.2d 300, 303 (Mo. Ct. App. 1994).

“parasite” to determine if the accused violated section 30 of the Sexual Offences Act of 1956 that prohibits living on the earnings of prostitution.<sup>89</sup> In 1989, the House of Lords also cited to *Roget’s Thesaurus* as well as the *Oxford English Dictionary* to define and interpret the word “participate” in the context of the Abortion Act of 1967.<sup>90</sup> In construing the meaning of the words “outside” and “inside” under section 39 of the Finance Act of 1947, the House of Lords cited to both a dictionary and a thesaurus.<sup>91</sup> The opinion states that “[i]n Murray’s English Dictionary ‘inside’ is defined as ‘the opposite of outside’ and ‘foreign’ as ‘outside the country.’ *Roget’s Thesaurus* equates ‘outside’ with ‘exteriority.’”<sup>92</sup> While not heavily relied upon, a certain degree of legal precedent exists for the use of thesauri in the construction of laws in the United Kingdom.

## B. Canada

Canadian courts have relied on thesauri to find the meaning of words and phrases. The U.S. and Canadian legal systems share many common characteristics and as followers of the common law tradition, they adhere to similar interpretations of the rule of law.<sup>93</sup> Like courts in the United States, a review of Canadian cases shows that Canadian courts also frequently cite to both general thesauri and legal thesauri.

Two cases from the Supreme Court of Canada have relied on thesauri. In 1998, the court cited *Burton’s Legal Thesaurus* in deciding whether a juror was considered “partial.”<sup>94</sup> The court noted that the synonyms for “partial” in *Burton’s Legal Thesaurus* illustrate the attitudes that may serve to disqualify a juror.<sup>95</sup> In another case, the

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<sup>89</sup> R. v. Ian Charles Howard, [1992] 94 Cr. App. R. 89.

<sup>90</sup> Janaway v. Salford Area Health Authority, [1989] A.C. 537 (H.L.).

<sup>91</sup> Union Corp v. Inland Revenue Commissioners, [1953] A.C. 482, 491 (H.L.) (U.K.).

<sup>92</sup> Id.

<sup>93</sup> Sarah K. Harding, *Comparative Reasoning and Judicial Review*, 28 YALE J. INT’L L. 409, 411 (2003).

<sup>94</sup> R. v. Williams, [1998] 1 S.C.R. 1128 (Can.).

<sup>95</sup> Id.

Supreme Court of Canada cited to the *New Roget's Thesaurus in Dictionary Form* to find the meaning of the word “peculiar.”<sup>96</sup>

The Ontario Court of Justice discussed the value of using thesauri in legal analysis after counsel for one of the parties cited *Burton's Legal Thesaurus*.<sup>97</sup> The court observed:

[I]t must be remembered that a thesaurus, unlike a dictionary, does not provide definitions, but rather alternatives or synonyms. There is no rule against using a thesaurus per se in interpreting a statutory provision, and it may, in fact, provide some helpful guidance. However, its use is limited and is certainly not determinative.<sup>98</sup>

The Ontario Court of Justice affirms the notion that while not determinative, a thesaurus can provide helpful guidance in construing a statutory provision.

Courts in Canada have also relied on non-legal thesauri. In an obscenity case, the Ontario Court of Appeal cited to the *Oxford Dictionary* and *Roget's International Thesaurus* to construe the meaning of the word “obscene.”<sup>99</sup> An article in the *Saskatchewan Law Review*, referring to a case where a court construed the British Columbia consumer protection statute, observed “[t]he judge took the view that since *Roget's Thesaurus* equated ‘individual’ with ‘person’, the *Act* could be applied to a transaction involving a ‘person’ as defined by the British Columbia *Interpretation Act*.<sup>100</sup>

Similar to U.S. jurists below the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, Canadian judges rely on thesauri along with dictionaries to find the meaning of words in legal analysis.

### C. Australia

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<sup>96</sup> Basarsky v. Quinlan, [1972] S.C.R. 380 (Can.)

<sup>97</sup> Greyhound Canada Transportation Corp. v. Trentway-Wagar Inc., [1997] 35 O.R.3d 145 (Can.).

<sup>98</sup> Id.

<sup>99</sup> R. v. American News Co. [1957] O.R. 145.

<sup>100</sup> Tamara M. Buckwold, *Statutory Regulation Of Unfair Business Practices In Saskatchewan: Possibilities And Pitfalls*, 62 SASK. L. REV. 45 (1999) (citing Gray v. Woodgrove Chevrolet Oldsmobile Ltd., [1985] B.C.J. No. 1648).

Courts in Australia also utilize thesauri to arrive at the meaning of words. To find the meaning of “consider,” the Federal Court of Australia cited to *Burton’s Legal Thesaurus* in addition to dictionaries in a 1995 opinion.<sup>101</sup> In 1988, the Federal Court of Australia also consulted a thesaurus along with the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* to arrive at the meaning of the word “nature.”<sup>102</sup> The court recognized that *Roget’s Thesaurus* lists “essence,” “character,” “composition,” and “sort” as synonyms for the word “nature.”<sup>103</sup>

Several Australian courts have also cited the *Macquarie Thesaurus* and the *Macquarie Dictionary and Thesaurus*.<sup>104</sup> In 1991, the Supreme Court of Australia consulted the *Macquarie Thesaurus* in construing the phrase “in motion” in construing a statute:

The words “*in motion*” are clearly descriptive of the motor vehicle’s condition on the road. It is an absolute status. The *Macquarie Thesaurus* classifies the words “in motion” as adjectival. The *Thesaurus* gives other words relative to “in motion” as “astir, away, live, off, *running*, shifting, volitant.” All of these are to be contrasted with a static condition or state.<sup>105</sup>

Similar to courts in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada, courts in Australia have consulted thesauri to ascertain the meaning of words.

A comparative law analysis of English-speaking common law countries clearly demonstrates that courts in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia will look to thesauri in conjunction with dictionaries to determine the plain meaning of words.

## VII. Using Thesauri In Legal Research

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<sup>101</sup> Chapman v. Tickner (1995) 55 F.C.R. 31.

<sup>102</sup> State Authorities Superannuation Board v. Commissioner of Taxation (1988) 21 F.C.R. 535, 547.

<sup>103</sup> Id.

<sup>104</sup> See Attorney-General’s Dept. and Australian Iron and Steel Pty Ltd v. Cockcroft (1986) 10 F.C.R. 180; E (A Child) (1994) 76 A. Crim. R. 343; Carroll v. Lewitzke (1991) 56 S.A. St. R. 18, 22.

<sup>105</sup> Id.

Along with the persuasive value of thesauri as authoritative secondary sources, a thesaurus can also help those who conduct legal research. One author wrote that “often a thesaurus is more helpful for a writer than a dictionary, because the thesaurus uses information the writer already knows as a reference point.”<sup>106</sup> Another article suggests that “[e]ven knowledgeable professionals occasionally need an encyclopedia, thesaurus, dictionary, or other general reference to serve as a springboard to further investigation or guide a creative problem-solving initiative.”<sup>107</sup> Another commentator recognized the value of thesauri, especially legal thesauri: “Just like a regular thesaurus, a legal thesaurus provides alternate terms for a specific word or phrase. This can greatly aid researchers who may not be aware of the legal terminology in the area in which they are researching.”<sup>108</sup> In further support of legal thesauri as helpful resources, the Library of Congress assigns legal thesauri the KF classification for legal authorities.<sup>109</sup>

Thesauri and dictionaries can assist legal researchers find synonymous and related search terms to expand the search parameters. For example, *Burton’s Legal Thesaurus* lists “deliberate” “disobedient” “express” “forward” “hot-blodded” and “inexorable” as synonyms for the term “willful.”<sup>110</sup> *Black’s Law Dictionary* lists “act of nature” “act of providence” “superior force” “vis major” “irresistible superhuman force” and “vis divina” as related terms for “act of God.”<sup>111</sup> These synonyms can assist the legal

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<sup>106</sup> Paul F. Kirgis, *Lawyer’s Bookshelf*, 72 N.Y.ST. B.J. 50, 53 (2000) (reviewing JO ANN HARRIS, ET AL., NEW YORK EVIDENCE WITH OBJECTIONS (1999)).

<sup>107</sup> William H. Ginsburg, *Problems In Health Care Law (7th Edition)*, 18 J. LEGAL MED. 395, 396 (1997).

<sup>108</sup> William A. Hilyerd, *Using The Law Library: A Guide For Educators Part IV: Secondary Sources To The Rescue*, 34 J.L. & EDUC. 273, 279 (2005).

<sup>109</sup> John J. Hasko, *Persuasion In The Court: Nonlegal Materials In U.S. Supreme Court Opinions*, 94 LAW LIBR. J. 427, 457 (2002).

<sup>110</sup> WILLIAM C. BURTON, LEGAL THESAURUS 1051 (1980).

<sup>111</sup> BLACK’S LAW DICTIONARY 37 (8<sup>th</sup> ed. 2004).

researcher. An article in the *Law Library Journal* also identifies thesauri as useful legal reference tools along with dictionaries.<sup>112</sup>

Researchers can also use online thesauri to find synonyms and alternative terms not previously considered. Both Westlaw and Lexis-Nexis have an online thesaurus feature to search for synonyms and related terms.<sup>113</sup> The online thesaurus and related terms feature on Lexis-Nexis contains data from the *Burton's Legal Thesaurus* and *Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus*.<sup>114</sup> In addition to a standard thesaurus feature, Westlaw also has a "Smart Tools" feature to improve search results by suggesting synonyms and . . . recognize legal terms of art and suggest related legal terms.<sup>115</sup> Legal researches can also search leading thesauri available for free on the Internet.<sup>116</sup>

Print and online thesauri can also assist those who conduct legal research to find and use the appropriate terminology for effective searching.

## VIII. Conclusion

Although the synonyms found in thesauri are not determinative, legal professionals should consider the value of thesauri as helpful and persuasive secondary sources, in conjunction with dictionaries, to ascertain the plain and ordinary meaning of particular words found in statutes, regulations, and contracts.

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<sup>112</sup> See *Standards For Appellate Court Libraries And State Law Libraries*, 98 LAW LIBR. J. 189, 198 (2006).

<sup>113</sup> Heather Meeker, *Stalking The Golden Topic: A Guide To Locating And Selecting Topics For Legal Research Papers*, 1996 UTAH L. REV. 917, 936 (1997).

<sup>114</sup> See <http://www.lexisnexis.com/custserv/freestyle/#TocTARC> (last visited Sept. 3, 2007).

<sup>115</sup> *Smart Tools On Westlaw Can Help Legal Pros Conduct More Thorough Research*, 22 No. 10 LAW. PC 7 (2005).

<sup>116</sup> See *Roget's II: The New Thesaurus* (3d. ed. 1995) and *Roget's International Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases*, available at <http://www.bartleby.com/thesauri/> (last visited Sept. 3, 2007); *Roget's New Millennium Thesaurus*, available at <http://thesaurus.reference.com/> (last visited Sept. 3, 2007).



**TABLE 1**

**FREQUENCY OF CITATIONS TO THESAURI  
U.S. FEDERAL AND STATE CASES (1990 - 2006)**

Legend

- A: Roget's International Thesaurus
- B: Roget's II: The New Thesaurus
- C: Roget's New Millennium Thesaurus
- D: Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus
- E: Burton's Legal Thesaurus
- F: Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus
- G: Webster's New World Thesaurus
- H: Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms
- I: Random House Thesaurus
- J: Rodale: The Synonym Finder
- K: West's Legal Thesaurus/Dictionary
- L: Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus
- M: Oxford Thesaurus: American Edition
- N: Merriam-Webster Online Thesaurus

Year	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	Total
2006	3	2	5	0	4	3	0	0	0	2	2	1	0	1	23
2005	5	3	2	1	6	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	22
2004	2	4	2	1	2	1	0	0	1	1	0	3	0	0	17
2003	3	2	0	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	14
2002	3	3	0	0	3	3	1	0	1	0	3	1	0	0	18
2001	3	2	0	1	3	2	3	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	16
2000	3	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	2	0	1	15
1999	3	4	0	1	4	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	16
1998	2	2	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	13
1997	1	1	0	0	4	1	1	0	2	2	1	1	1	0	15
1996	1	0	0	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	8
1995	1	3	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	8
1994	4	0	0	1	2	1	0	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	14
1993	2	4	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	12
1992	11	2	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	3	4	0	0	0	25
1991	3	2	0	0	3	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	13
1990	2	2	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	5	5	0	0	0	18
Total	52	38	9	10	50	19	10	7	7	19	30	10	3	3	267

**TABLE 2**

**FREQUENCY OF CITATIONS TO LEGAL THESAURI  
U.S. FEDERAL AND STATE CASES (1990 - 2006)**

Legend

- A: Burton's Legal Thesaurus (all editions)
- B: Burton's Legal Thesaurus (3d ed. 1998)
- C: Burton's Legal Thesaurus (2d ed. 1992)
- D: Burton's Legal Thesaurus (1980)
- E: West's Legal Thesaurus/Dictionary

Year	A	B	C	D	E
2006	4	1	2	1	2
2005	6	5	0	1	1
2004	2	1	1	0	0
2003	5	1	1	3	2
2002	3	1	2	0	3
2001	3	1	0	2	0
2000	1	0	0	1	3
1999	4	0	0	4	2
1998	3	0	1	2	3
1997	4	0	1	3	1
1996	2	0	0	2	0
1995	1	0	1	0	0
1994	2	0	1	1	2
1993	2	0	0	2	1
1992	2	0	0	2	4
1991	3	0	0	3	1
1990	3	0	0	3	5
Total	50	10	10	30	30