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Abstract of a possible presentation within the conference tracks “Information Retrieval for Legal Professionals” or “Legal Information”

### **„Ranking Austrian Supreme Court Cases According to their Legal Relevance“**

Research has shown that the World Wide Web is a so-called **scale-free network**, where the total of hyperlinks is not evenly distributed over all the Web pages: A few websites have many links, while most sites have only a few or none at all. This network structure provides the basis for modern **Web search ranking algorithms** which – extremely successfully – use the **link structure** of the Web to assign a relevance score to each indexed website.

Using a document collection that consists of more than **100,000 full-text decision and headnote documents** of the Austrian Supreme Court I construct a network of all **Austrian Supreme Court cases since 1985**. I show - for the first time - that this network is a scale-free one, which by itself suggests further looking into the possibility of using Web search ranking algorithms in legal information retrieval systems.

I then turn to **traditional indications** of impact concerning Supreme Court cases, including the publication in an **official legal reporter** or high citation counts in **annotated codes**. The next step is to examine the cases returned by those means of traditional legal research with respect to their position in the **“Web of Supreme Court Cases”**. As there is a skewed distribution of high-impact cases within the network, I prove the **general feasibility of using Web ranking algorithms in legal information retrieval systems**. In other words, I show that – using only **freely available data** from the Legal Information System of the Republic of Austria – I can compute a relevance ranking of Austrian Supreme Court cases that is in line with methods of traditional legal research.