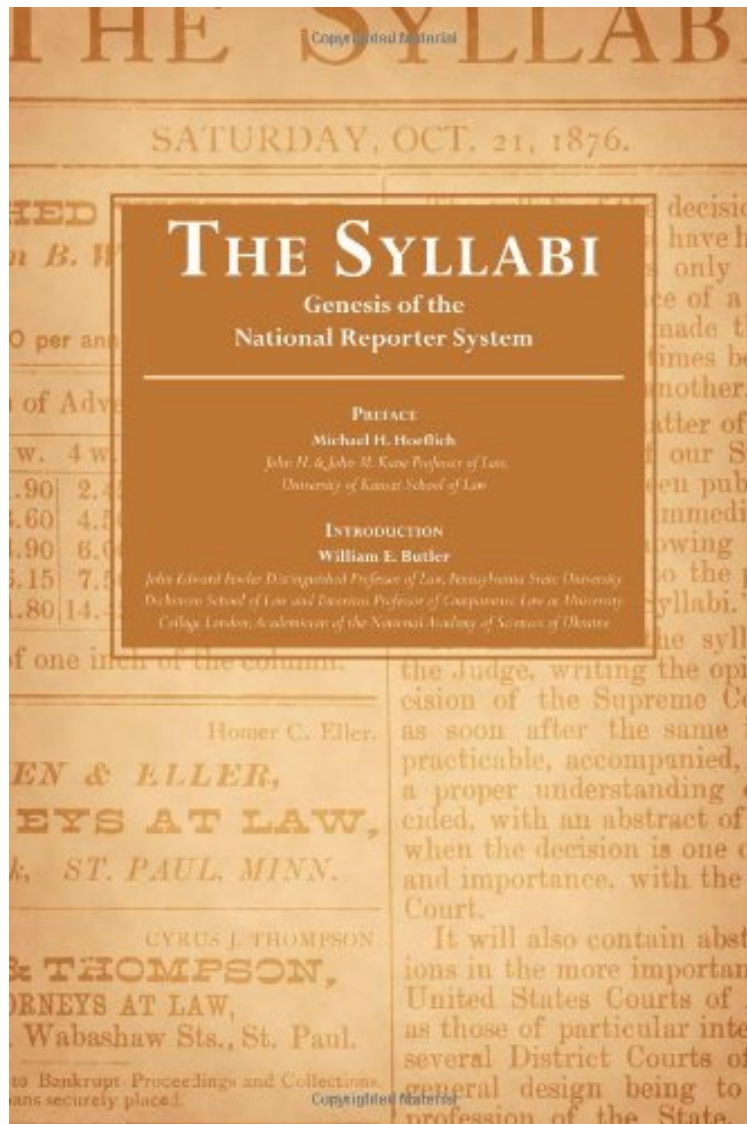


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## The Syllabi: Genesis of the National Reporter System

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With a preface by Michael H. Hoeflich, John H. John M. Kane Professor of Law, University of Kansas School of Law

and an introduction by William E. Butler, John Edward Fowler Distinguished Professor of Law, Pennsylvania State University Dickinson School of Law and Emeritus Professor of Comparative Law at University College London; Academician of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. Includes the text of Vol. 1, No. 1 (Oct. 21, 1876) to Vol. 1, No. 26 (April 14, 1877), originally published: St. Paul, Minn.: J.B. West Co. 1876-1877. "In 1876, John B. West, twenty-four years old, launched a new publication that would within a decade evolve into the National Reporter System. As a traveling salesman for an office supply company in St. Paul, young West visited many Minnesota attorneys. He learned that the official publishers of court reports were chronically slow. West was later to say that if the official state publishers had been properly doing their jobs there would have been no need for his reporters. His first publication, *The Syllabi* was an eight-page weekly news-sheet that contained "prompt and reliable intelligence as to the various questions adjudicated by the Minnesota Courts at a date long prior to the publication of the *State Reports*." Its immediate popularity among the bar soon forced it to outgrow its original format and coverage. In early 1877, only six months after it had begun, *The Syllabi* was replaced by the *North-Western Reporter*. The reporter, another weekly, was also a transitional publication. It contained the full text of all Minnesota Supreme Court decisions and Minnesota federal court decisions, as well as those from the Wisconsin Supreme Court in cases "of special importance." This publication lasted two years, four semi-annual volumes. In 1879, West announced a new series of the *North Western Reporter* (the first of the modern West regional reporters) that would publish the full text of all current supreme court decisions from Iowa, Minnesota, Michigan, Nebraska, Wisconsin, and the Dakota Territory. The *Federal Reporter* and the *Supreme Court Reporter* began within the next two years and, in 1885, West Publishing (as it was incorporated in 1882) announced the publication of four new reporters that, along with its current reports, gave it nationwide coverage. (.) The National Reporter System was soon proclaimed to have "Unquestionably revolutionized the whole plan of law reporting." --Thomas A. Woxland Patti J. Ogden, *Landmarks in American Legal Publishing*. An Exhibit Catalogue 38-40.

About the Author William E. Butler is Professor of Law at University College, London.