

## RAPE VERDICT THROWN OUT: JURY USED WEB

By Vanessa Allen

A MAN'S rape conviction was overturned yesterday because a jury researched the crime on the internet.

The suspect, who was jailed in November 2003, will now face a retrial. Jurors may also be banned from using the net during hearings.

After the man was convicted at Canterbury Crown Court two downloaded documents - Rape and the Criminal Justice System and The Feminist Position on Rape - were discovered in the jury room.

Although it was not known if the documents were discussed, Lord Justice Judge told the Appeal Court the suspect might have been denied a fair trial. He said: "The internet can provide material which may influence a juror's views. If used for research purposes during a trial, it can just as easily influence the juror's mind as a discussion with a friend or neighbour.

"If so, the verdict is no more a true verdict according to evidence than one in which jurors have taken account of something said to them out of court."

The man's conviction was quashed at the London hearing as "unsafe". The Judicial Studies Board is considering whether jurors should be told why they should not research cases out of court.

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