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Research Tips for Summer

As you start your new summer or fulltime positions, here are some pointers!

Researching New Subjects

All too often, you will be called upon to research a particular area of law with which you are unfamiliar. In case you are unable to go to a law library or consult with a reference librarian, do not despair! Freely available on the internet are numerous research guides and pathfinders on a myriad of topics. Authored by librarians, these research guides or pathfinders will frequently include references to both print and electronic sources. To locate a research guide or pathfinder, you can use the Google search engine by entering your topic along with the phrase "research guide" or the word "pathfinder." Here are a few noteworthy websites that have research guides or pathfinders available or provide links to them on the Internet.

The Cornell Legal Information Institute [www.law.cornell.edu] maintains Wex, a collaboratively-edited law dictionary and legal encyclopedia. Wex contains articles on 128 legal topics. There is an overview of each topic along with links to federal and state materials (with an emphasis on New York) on the Internet. Also included for each topic are links to key Internet sources

and a link to a print publication that is a good starting point for research on the topic.

LLRX.com [www.llrx.com] is a webzine maintained by law librarian Sabrina Pacifici. Updated monthly, *LLRX.com* contain articles written by law librarians and attorneys and covers a variety of legal and lawrelated topics. One can subscribe to receive updates about new information and articles posted to *LLRX.com*.

The Virtual Chase website [thevirtualchase.com] is maintained by law firm librarian Genie Tyburski whose focus is to teach legal researchers how to conduct legal research on various topics. Two of her major content areas are: "How to Research" and "Research Guides." Genie provides advice, guidance, strategies, suggestions, and tips for locating specific or general types of legal and non-legal information. References and links are to print and electronic resources.

Washlaw Web Legal Subject Index [www.washlaw.edu/subject] is maintained by the staff of the Washburn University Law Library. Indexed are approximately 120 subjects for which links to research guides and pathfinders are given where available.



Keep It Simple! (Advice from the Experts on Conducting Legal Research)

When you are given a legal research assignment for which you will be paid, the first thing to do is to take a deep breath and remember to **keep it simple!** Keep in mind that legal research is a skill which improves with practice. The Reference Librarians offer the following survival tips for conducting legal research.

Make sure you allow enough time. Good legal research takes time to thoroughly check all the appropriate sources and to update the citations. When learning a new skill or refreshing an old skill, the process usually takes more time than you expect.

If you are researching an area with which you are unfamiliar, use sources such as hornbooks, nutshells, periodical literature, and treatises to obtain background information. Write out your key concepts and terms before beginning your research. This will save you time when using any resource (print or electronic) by allowing you to easily switch between a variety of terms/searches while avoiding wasting time through repetition. If you are unable to search full-text databases

on LexisNexis or Westlaw, use the indexes to the sources (codes, digests, periodical literature, legal encyclopedias, and *American Law Reports* annotations). When using the West Digests, note both the Topic and the Key Number. A Key Number without a Topic is useless! Read what the appropriate legislative body, administrative agency, and/or judiciary have to say.

Update, update! Look for pocket parts and pamphlet supplements. Shepardize any cases or statutes upon which you may be relying. You always want to be citing good law.

Last, but not least, do not hesitate to seek the assistance of librarians! If you are fortunate enough to work in a large law firm that has a professional library staff, take the time during your firm orientation to make friends with the librarians. Non-firm law libraries also often have skilled reference librarians on staff to help you. It is worth your time to establish a solid professional relationship with law librarians at the beginning of your legal career as they tend to be better able to help you in emergencies when they know you.



Connecticut Judicial Branch Law Libraries

For those of you who will be working in a legal job this summer in Connecticut, do not overlook the resources of the Connecticut Judicial Branch Law Libraries. There are fifteen law libraries located in courthouses around the state. These libraries are for use by legal professionals and the public. Library staff provide reference assistance, interlibrary loan, and copy/fax ser-

vices. Please note that circulation of library materials is limited to officers of the court and *pro se* patrons.

Check out the website of the Connecticut Judicial Branch Law Libraries at http://www.jud.ct.gov/ lawlib for a wealth information on Connecticut law and practice. At the website are links for opinions issued by the various courts, court forms, statutes, current edition of the Connecticut Practice Book (in.pdf), and pathfinders and research guides. The research guides section consists of a few bibliographies, the Connecticut Family Law Notebooks, the Connecticut Law About....series, links to official state publications, some legislative histories, and pathfinders. The pathfinders focus on three areas: civil practice and procedure; family, juvenile, and domestic relations; and property. Keep in mind that these pathfinders and research guides are intended to be a starting point for research and that help from a Connecticut law librarian is only a phone call or email away!



Legal Forms on the Internet

If you are asked to draft legal forms, there are numerous sources to consult for sample forms for use in legal and business transactions and in civil and criminal court proceedings. Many legal forms are available on the Internet. Some forms on the Internet are free while others require a fee to access. Forms required by an organization or a governmental body may be accessible from its website. Also some law school and commercial websites have links to collections of forms. The following are some excellent websites for locating forms on the Internet.

*Consult TimeSaver No. 13 "Legal Forms: Selected Sources" for details on legal forms available in print and online.

Findlaw [forms.lp.findlaw.com] is a website of Thomson/West which contains extensive links to form collections, form indexes, government forms, and forms dealing with particular issues.

'Lectric Law Library Forms Room [www.lectlaw.com/form.html] has free business and general forms. Forms for law practice are available. There are fee-based Premium forms from U.S. Legal Forms, Inc.

Legaldocs [www.legaldocs.com/index.htm] allows one to create forms online for wills and trusts, leases, partnerships, sales, incorporations, trademarks and copyright, divorce, employment, business, and real estate. There is no charge for previewing any form. Some forms may be completed for free while other forms may be downloaded or printed for a fee.

LexisOne [www.lexisone.com] is a website of LexisNexis with free and fee-based access to forms published by Matthew Bender.

LLRX.com [www.llrx.com] has a link to state and federal court forms from the Court Rules, Forms & Dockets link on the home page.

Washlaw Web [www.washlaw.edu/legalforms] links to forms for state, federal and bankruptcy courts. There are forms pertaining to businesses, trademarks, UCC, workers' compensation and labor departments.

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