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Law Library Blog (September 2023): Legal Beagle's Blog Archive

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Legal Beagle's Post

September 8, 2023

Getting Started—Directed Research

September 8, 2023



So, it's time to write your directed research paper. You may be wondering how to get started.

First thing first. You must select a topic. There are considerations to keep in mind as you go about your search for a paper topic. It's always a good idea to search for a topic that is of interest to you. The directed research paper will represent a large investment of your time. If you ultimately publish it, you should expect to discuss your work at future employment interviews. But just as important, your interest as an author is likely to shine through your writing and make your paper of more interest to readers. In addition, your topic selection should represent a legally significant issue that is arguable—from multiple, defensible perspectives—and relevant or timely.

With those considerations in mind, that are several ways to get your topic search started. The first is to reach out to your paper supervisor or a mentor with subject matter expertise for topic ideas. You can also search news or legal news sources for issues of legal controversy. Likewise, articles in law journals and bar publications can be excellent sources of information on the

developments, issues, and trends in various areas of law. Things to look out for may include cases of first impression where a lower court was reversed at the appellate level or issues that involve federal circuit court splits. Databases such as Westlaw Precision, Lexis+, and Fastcase also give you the capability of searching caselaw for such controversies.

Selecting a topic and conducting your research is exciting and work intensive. The law library has a multitude of resources to help you at all stages of the writing process.

For legal news, try browsing the [Lexis Legal News Hub](#) and [Westlaw Today](#) for up-to-date legal news and the cutting-edge issues facing lawyers and legal scholars today. If you want something a bit more off the beaten path, you can peruse Thomson Reuters's [Legally Weird blog](#), a great source for legal questions presented in emerging and unique areas of the law.

For other helpful resources, see some our library guides:

- [TimeSaver: Selecting a Topic](#) (basic information on selecting a topic)
- [TimeSaver: Legal Research & Writing](#) (information on legal research & writing)
- [LawGuide for Law Review](#) (information on topic development and preemption)

Regardless of where you are in your topic selection and research process, meeting with a research librarian is an invaluable step to help formalize your thesis and research trajectory. The library provides individualized research consultations for students to assist in the development of research strategies based on individual needs. To schedule a research consultation with a law librarian, contact us via [Ask a Librarian](#), or by email at LawLibraryHelp@rwu.edu.

Furthermore, we encourage students to meet with [Dr. Justin Kishbaugh](#), the Associate Director of Academic Success & Professor of Writing. If you are interested in scheduling a writing consultation with Dr. Kishbaugh, he can be reached at jkishbaugh@rwu.edu.

Happy writing, and we look forward to working with you!