

**Title:** *Experiential Legal Research Sources, Strategies & Citation*

**Author:** Diana R. Donahoe

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**Length:** 384 pages

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**Reviewed by:** Jamie J. Baker, Reference Librarian, Thomas M. Cooley Law School

**Review:**

Intended Audience: Law students interested in the foundations of legal research, as well as *The Bluebook* & *ALWD* citation methods.

Accompanying Materials: There are quizzes and exercises throughout the book that test reader comprehension.

Illustrations: Screen captures, facsimiles of print resources, diagrams, and tables. There are often helpful explanations included with the graphics. All images are black and white.

Gaps in Coverage: The book includes the usual suspects in terms of legal research databases, i.e., Lexis & Westlaw. There is no mention of Bloomberg Law, which is becoming a more widely used resource, as well as all of the other WEXIS competitors. Any book on legal research today should include information on low-cost resources such as Google Scholar or Casemaker (which 25 state bars now make available to their members).

Unique Appendices: The book includes study aids, quick reference guides, and checklists covering the content in each chapter. Additionally, the answer keys for the chapter quizzes are included in the appendix.

Major Strengths: *Experiential Legal Research* is comprehensive and lays out the information in a logical order starting with an introduction to legal research, which includes an overview of the research process and strategy. The book then offers information on the various research sources, including primary and secondary authority. The research strategies offered in Chapter 3 cover both book research and online research with a discussion of both WestlawNext and Lexis Advance. There is also information on research strategies for particular sources, including finding constitutions and statutes, finding cases, finding legislative history, finding administrative law, and updating the law. Chapter 4 of the book is an overview of the *ALWD* & *Bluebook* citation methods with appended quizzes. The author does an exemplary job of teaching the reader the information and then quizzing for comprehension.

Major Weaknesses: The book starts strong with a wonderful overview of legal research and research strategy, but the author tackles too much content with the vast inclusion of *ALWD & Bluebook*. Although legal research and writing courses generally include an overview of citation, there is a clear deviation from research to citation in this book, and each topic could be a standalone book.

Comments:

*Experiential Legal Research* is a wonderful text for law students unfamiliar with legal research and citation. Donahoe introduces the reader to basic legal research and citation techniques in a clear, conversational tone, often speaking to the reader in the first-person. The book has all of the information necessary to understand how to research both primary and secondary authority. *Experiential Legal Research* breaks down the research process into manageable tasks discussing research strategy throughout the text. The author looks at both an overall research strategy, as well as research strategy specific to particular resources such as administrative law and legislative history. In fact, the research strategy portions of the text are the strongest, as the reader will leave with a plan to tackle any legal research issue.

In terms of electronic resources, WEXIS receives a lot of billing in the book, as Donahoe often explains a resource and then informs the reader how to find the resource on WEXIS. There is a very limited discussion of a few other electronic resources like GPO (now FDSYS), THOMAS, and HeinOnline. However, the author does not mention a wide variety of other electronic databases that one would expect with a legal research text today.

The chapter on citation is rather lengthy at over 100 pages. It gives an overview of both *Bluebook & ALWD*, including strategies for using each citation method and a discussion of the most-used rules. The quizzes appended to the chapter are specific to the various topics covered in the overview, including typefaces, basic structure and signals, cases, statutes, periodicals, etc.... Although most legal research and writing classes will use either *Bluebook* or *ALWD*, there is no mention of other citation methods such as the various state-specific citation methods used in practice.

The inclusion of hypothetical research fact patterns and case briefs help to illustrate research strategy, and the appended quizzes and exercises can be used in-class to test comprehension.

Recommendation:

Recommended for introductory legal research courses and for courses utilizing *The Bluebook* or *ALWD* citation methods.