

**Title:** Legal Research Guide: Patterns and Practice  
**Authors:** Bonita K. Roberts and Linda L. Schlueter  
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**Reviewed by:** Sarah K.C. Mauldin, Director of Library Services, Smith, Gambrell & Russell, LLP, Atlanta, GA

**Review:**

**Intended Audience:** First year law students

**Illustrations:** No true illustrations but many call-outs with differing research methods, computer notes, and research checklists. There is a poorly reproduced diagram of “A Simplified View of the Federal and State Court Systems” and several other charts.

**Gaps in Coverage:** No major coverage gaps.

**Unique Appendices:** The appendix includes three legal research problems with outlines of a suggested research process for each.

**Major Strengths:** Legal Research Guide: Patterns and Practice provides students with a reminder (or perhaps an introduction) to critical thinking with its use of checklists and numerous suggested approaches for nearly any legal research situation. It includes many clear examples of the use of each method presented. It also introduces students to the TAPP rule (Things, Acts, Persons, and Places) as a method for breaking down a legal problem into more manageable concept chunks. The book provides a good grounding in print legal research with a description of how the process might differ in Lexis or Westlaw and on the free Web. It also provides a brief introduction to low cost and free online legal research resources. The text gives relatively equal treatment to federal and state research with a good explanation of rules and regulations and why they are important.

**Major Weaknesses:** The book attempts to be evenhanded in its explanations of the use of finding aids and secondary sources but it shows a subtle bias toward Lexis products. It also suggests using Shepard’s in print. From a law firm perspective it is fine to know that there are books used for determining the status of a case, but nearly every firm has canceled most or all of its print Shepard’s volumes and insist that cases be Shepardized online to be sure to get the latest information and to avoid embarrassment and, possibly, malpractice accusations or sanctions. While it is important that an introductory legal research course be taught in a way that is accessible to those who are new to the language of law, this text is perhaps too dumbed down to hold the interest of law students. There is a discussion of the appropriate

uses of secondary sources, but treatises are given short shrift (rating a shorter description than legal dictionaries and Martindale-Hubbell, even though treatises are the backbone of research performed in a firm setting.

**Ebook features:** The ebook version that I used to review has handy blue hyperlinks for navigating within the book from the Table of Contents and back again. The ebook is also fully keyword searchable. There are green links to caselaw and statutory provisions that direct the student to log in to Lexis Advance. The book is published by Lexis, so this makes sense, but it is not something I would have chosen to do and presupposes that students have already been supplied with CALR passwords and that those passwords provide access to Lexis Advance.

**Overall Recommendation:** A fine book for an introductory legal research class, but too basic for an advanced course. I would be happy if summer and new associates brought this book with them to the firm as a reminder of the absolute basics of legal research.

**Note:** I do not teach legal research in a law school setting, but I am the Director of Library Services in a law firm. This means that the students coming to my firm as summer or new associates are the products of courses taught using these texts. I hope that you will find my review useful as a view from the law firm perspective.