

Fundamentals of Legal Research, 10th

By Steven M. Barkan, Barbara A. Bintliff & Mary Whisner. (2015), 774 pages, ISBN: 978-1-60930-056-2. \$118

Subject: Legal research textbook

Useful for: Useful for those who want in-depth coverage of a broad range of legal research topics

Format: Glossary, chapters with index and appendixes

Reviewer's Comments:

Interacting with students at the reference desk—especially 2Ls doing source pulls for journals—I am increasingly concerned about the truncation that necessarily happens when legal research, analysis, and writing are all presented in one class. All three elements are vital to the success of a lawyer, and unfortunately students will have to independently cover any element that gets shortshrifed during required 1L classes.

It was largely because of the “catch up” that I immediately knew I wanted to use Fundamentals of Legal Research for an upcoming Advanced Legal Research class I’m co-teaching in the spring. The overall coverage of the the book is quite broad and includes advanced and specialized legal research topics, including state and municipal laws, administrative law, United Kingdom legal research, and federal tax research. At the same time, the coverage is fairly in-depth for each topic, with each subsection describing mutiple platforms for locating the various documents. While it doesn’t cover absolutely every question I’ve been asked as a librarian (e.g., constructing administrative histories), it does cover the vast majority of concepts. Perhaps most importantly, the text also covers topics traditionally taught during the first year, including case law, citators, digests, statutory research, and secondary sources. This easily allows an independently-minded student to remedy any holes they may have in their knowlegde base.

While I do have reservations about requiring a textbook that costs over \$100, I truly believe that students will keep their copies on their office shelves during the first few years of practice. In addition to the way the chapters outline sources and research processes, the appendixes are shortened versions of standard ready reference material, including a table of common legal abbreviations and a bibliography on good legal research guides for each state and U.S. territory.

The most notable difference between this edition and the 9th edition is the addition of a chapter on Native American Tribal Law. The chapter is a step-by-step guide for Native American legal resources and covers how to identify an officialy recognized tribe, where to locate primary sources (including historical treaties), traditional secondary sources, and born-digital secondary sources. Other updates include the 10th edition’s chapter on “topical services” like Bloomberg BNA, which replaces the 9th edition’s chapter specifically on looseleaf services. This change reflects the shift towards electronic subscriptions and away from paper looseleaf sets.

Reviewed by: Savanna Nolan, Georgetown University, in 2017