

Sources of American Law: An Introduction to Legal Research, 3d

By Beau Steenken & Tina M. Brooks. (2017) 177 pages, ISBN: N/A. Free Download; \$4.22 in print.

Subject: Legal Research Textbook

Useful for: Useful for those needing or teaching an introduction to legal research

Format: Chapters with index; exercises at end of each chapter

Reviewer's Comments:

Throughout the year I take time to reflect on and reevaluate various decisions I make about my legal research courses. One decision that I take especially seriously is course text selection. With so many good options, I have established a handful criteria to aid in the decision-making process: does the book sufficiently cover content to help students meet my learning objectives? When was it last updated? And, how much does it cost?

Sources of American Law succeeds as an introductory work and text for legal research, with features students and professors will appreciate. As one might expect from a foundational text, *Sources of American Law* covers much of the same material found in other such works. In addition to competent coverage of core legal research topics, Steenken and Brooks weave interesting historical references, clever and relevant research examples, and practical advice throughout their text.

A common complaint from legal research students is that their texts are expensive and, to add insult to injury, quickly out of date (e.g., the screenshots and paths in the texts no longer match the current legal research platforms). *Sources of American Law* assuages both of those concerns. First, I haven't found a cheaper book – it's hard to get cheaper than free. Second, the digital format of the work allows Steenken and Brooks to update links, screencasts, and screenshots as the legal research platforms evolve.

Legal research professors will appreciate some of the pedagogical features of *Sources of American Law*. Each chapter begins with a set of helpful learning objections, and concludes with a set of progressively more challenging practice questions. Those using *Sources of American Law* as a course text might consider using those questions for formative assessment. After each set of exercises, the authors recommend CALI exercise for additional practice, which provides another opportunity for formative assessment and exposure to CALI's other useful exercises.

RIPS-SIS Legal Research Text Review

Sources of American Law is not an exhaustive reference text for all of legal research. And, consequently, while it works as an introductory book, it would not likely be the best choice as a text for an advanced legal research course without substantial supplementation.

However, when considering my decisions-making criteria for my introductory research courses, *Sources of American Law* gets full marks. I look forward to teaching with this text, and I imagine many others will, too.

Reviewed by: Nickholas Harrell, University of Colorado, in 2017.