

I. Introduction to the course

A. Course goals

B. Review of handout materials

C. Review of basic legal research

- Government structure
- Sources produced by each governmental body
- Format of sources in print

D. Review of simple citation formats

- Md Code Example: Md. Ann. Code. Real Property §1-104
- Md and Md App Example: 314 Md. 28 ; 232 Md. App. 117
- COMAR Example: 04.12.05.01

II. E-research

A. Choosing a source: What to consider

Scope

- What does it cover? (dates, documents)
- Will it cover what you need?
- How close to the official source is it? How critical is this to your research?

Cost

- Is the source free or fee-based?
- If fee-based, are there ways to minimize the cost?

Familiarity and comfort

- How comfortable are you using the source?
- Do you fully understand the structure, contents, and search capability of the source?
- Will you need additional assistance to use the source? (1-800 attorneys, librarian)

Search engines

- Does the source have one?
- How effective and efficient is it?
- How well do you understand how it works?
- Will the source's search engine allow you to construct the search the way you need to (simple vs. complicated)?

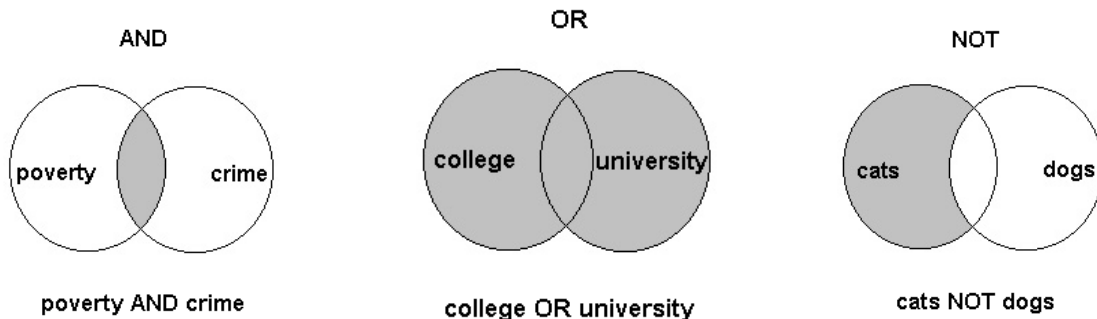
COURSE AGENDA

B. Using free and commercial sources

- Free web has less structure, sophistication and standardization (search engines differ, may need to search more than one source separately to obtain full results)
- Remember to evaluate any source – free or fee - for dependability
Ex: Legal Forms database – what is the source of the forms?
- Strategize your searches: get familiar with the search engine, read documentation (especially search tips), plan your search before jumping in

C. Constructing a search

- **Subject approach** – use established headings or directories to dig down
Ex: West's Key numbers
Generally only available via fee-based sources
- **Natural language searching**
Search string is structured like a sentence or question
For example:
[Teacher must follow curriculum requirements when assigning class work](#)
The computer may assign synonyms as:
(teacher or instructor or faculty or professor)
(follow or comply or conform)
(minimum or small)
(class or course)
(assign or convey or transfer)
(work or type or employment or labor)
- **Keyword approach**
 - Boolean logic, aka Terms and Connectors
 - and = all the words
 - or = one or more of these words
 - not = without these words (unwanted words)



COURSE AGENDA

- Word usage [synonyms, common terminology]
Ex: Automobile = motor vehicle = car
- Searching by phrase [use “”]
Ex: "speedy trial"
- Truncation [word root expanders: usually * or !]
Ex: reason! = reason, reasons, reasonable, reasoning
Different resources use different symbols to truncate a word or to act as a universal character.
Note: Some systems automatically pluralize words; some only pluralize words that add the single "s", as in turkey, turkeys vs. child, children
- Proximity [within a certain number of words of each other]
Ex: animal w/2 cruelty
Proximity allows you to search for words close to each other rather than just anywhere in the document. The above example, for instance, will retrieve a document with "The State dismissed the abuse and cruelty to animals charges at the beginning of the trial", but will not retrieve a document with "I submit to you, ladies and gentlemen, that short of death, it is the ultimate crime of cruelty" on page 211 and then "The victims' son feels that his parents were not killed, but were butchered like animals" on page 237.

EXERCISES

Review of Exercises: choose "best" search string

III. Free Internet sources:

A. Maryland Code

- Review of Code structure
- Code via the Maryland State Law Library website
On the State Law Library's website are links to two versions of the Maryland Code, one from LexisNexis and one from the Maryland General Assembly. Each has its own characteristics. When using these resources, it's important to understand what those differences are.

COURSE AGENDA

- Maryland General Assembly website
www.lawlib.state.md.us/researchtools/sourcesmdlaw.html
or
http://mlis.state.md.us/asp/web_statutes.asp
 - Contents: Full text of the current Maryland Code; text only, no annotations
 - Structure: Table of contents as a drop-down menu, requires a specific Code section cite to get to the text
 - Search capability: None
 - Finding aids: None
- LexisNexis Code version
www.lawlib.state.md.us/researchtools/sourcesmdlaw.html
 - Contents: Full text of the current Maryland Code; text and parenthetical history
 - Structure: Table of contents
 - Search capability: basic and advanced search engines, with some proximity searching possible
 - Finding aides: None

EXERCISES

B. Maryland Regulations (COMAR)

- Review of COMAR structure
- COMAR via the Division of State Documents website
<http://www.dsd.state.md.us/comar/comar.aspx>
 - Contents: full text of current regulations, administrative history of the regulations (regs)
 - Structure: full text database in a table of contents format
 - Search capability: by regulation number or by term; however, the word searching capability is functioning erratically at this time

EXERCISES

C. Maryland Cases

- Review of reporter structure
- Cases via the web
There are a number of free options for case searching on the internet. All have varying dates of coverage and varying search capabilities. Some require registration. Use the list of free sources available on the Maryland State Law Library's website for sites that are generally reliable, and for tips on coverage and searchability:
<http://www.lawlib.state.md.us/researchtools/freeresearch.html>

COURSE AGENDA

- Cases via the Maryland Judiciary's site
www.mdcourts.gov/opinions.html
 - Contents: Reported cases from the Court of Appeals and Court of Special Appeals
 - Structure: Full text of slip opinions in pdf format
 - Search capability: Basic term searching; advanced searching based on Google Advanced Search, which uses AND and phrase searching
 - Finding aids: Basic page can sort by party name, docket number, case citation or judge; the official case reporter citation is listed once available

- Cases via Google Scholar
scholar.google.com
 - Contents: Maryland appellate opinions from the 1950's
 - Structure: Full text of opinions as they appear in *Maryland Reports* and *Maryland Appellate Reports*
 - Search capability: Google-based search engine allows for term searching, with advanced features using AND and phrase searching; date restrictions are also available
 - Finding aids: No index; no sorting of results available
Tip: To find cases by party name, use the option for "where my words occur" – "in the title of the article"
You can shorten the search by typing the command in the search field as:
allintitle: party name

EXERCISES

IV. Summary Exercises