

## **Legal Research: How to Find and Understand the Law, 17th**

By Stephen Elias. (2015), 376 pages, ISBN: 9781413321821. \$49.99

**Subject:** Legal research textbook.

**Useful for:** Useful for anyone who wants to learn how to conduct legal research.

**Format:** Chapters with index, a glossary of legal terms, and a guide to topic-specific research sites.

### **Reviewer's Comments:**

Chapter 1 of this legal research primer provides an introduction to the basic structure of the American legal system, including sources of law, state versus federal law, and the court system. Subsequent chapters cover topics such as finding legal sources, identifying legal issues, and finding and using secondary sources, cases, statutes, and regulations. The final chapter provides guidance for organizing your research, writing a memo, going to court, and finding and working with a lawyer.

The book appears to be aimed at a self-help or *pro se* audience. It focuses primarily on freely available resources, with only brief mentions of Lexis and Westlaw. It even has step-by-step instructions on how to use *Shepard's Citations* in print, although this skill is becoming less and less useful as more libraries cancel their print subscriptions.

The chapters are well organized, and written in a lucid style that makes the concepts easy to follow. There are also several page scans taken from reporters, statutory codes, and other legal sources as examples. The examples will be very helpful for those who are encountering legal materials for the first time.

One of the highlights of the book is the section on statutory interpretation, which will serve as a good introduction for the non-lawyer, and even as a helpful review for those already familiar with this aspect of legal analysis. The extensive glossary of legal terms will also be useful to the beginning legal researcher. The definitions are clear and concise, and refreshingly free of legalese. One of the drawbacks of the book is that some of the material is already outdated. This includes references to FDsys and THOMAS, rather than Govinfo and Congress.gov.

Overall, this would be a good book for a law library to have in its collection, particularly if the library serves a large number of *pro se* litigants.

**Reviewed by:** Robert N. Clark, University of Houston Law Center, in 2018.