

## The Legal Research Survival Manual with Video Modules, 2nd

By Robert C. Berring & Michael Levy. (2017), 88 pages, ISBN: 9781683284659. \$50.00

**Subject:** Legal Research Textbook

**Useful for:** Useful for those that teach legal research, especially in the first year curriculum. Also, useful for incoming and current law students that want succinct legal research instruction

**Format:** Five Chapters with a Summary and Table of Contents; E-Book; Videos, Quizzes, and additional documents online.

### Reviewer's Comments:

Legal Research textbooks can be dry and dense for law students. Gasp! Perhaps they are not so dry to anyone reading this review, but this is what I have heard from an exasperated student or two. Perhaps a less than comprehensive treatment of legal research with a lighter delivery will be a more palatable to overwhelmed law students.

Robert (Bob) Berring and Michael Levy created the Legal Research Survival Manual to do just that. They published this book as a “survival manual for first year law students...to get through the first year of law school, specifically the first semester.” The book is brief, easy-to-read, and filled with humor. Any of those who have read scholarship from Professor Berring will not be surprised to see his (and Levy’s) humor sprinkled throughout the book.

The book starts with an overview of the forms of information that 1Ls are likely to encounter, e.g. casebooks, nutshells, restatements, online platforms etc. There are occasional “reminders” pointing to West Academic specific sources in the first chapter, which likely stem from the fact that they publish this book.

The second chapter discusses cases, starting with an overview of precedent and then breaking cases down by parts of opinions and available formats. Chapter Three is what seemingly every 1L is looking for: “Finding Cases.” Thankfully, the chapter ends with a “sobering conclusion” reflecting on the difficulty of starting research by simply looking for a case. Chapter Four discusses citators with a brief history, their functions, and their utility. The last chapter is a short overview of statutes. The authors note that law school makes it appear as if lawyers “spend all their time weighing one case against another.” Of course, as the authors observe, it is often a statute that is being interpreted in any case, and checking for a statute should be among a legal researcher’s highest priority.

Each chapter in the book is supplemented with screengrabs to illustrate the source for the reader. One interesting part of the book is that it sticks with one case throughout, *Gonzalez v. Raich*, which students are instructed to read in its entirety, a new step for many 1Ls. *Gonzalez* is a California medical marijuana case that made its way to the US Supreme Court. Unsurprisingly, marijuana is a topic students often find, shall we say, stimulating. It makes for an illustrative case because it grapples with a Constitutional provision, a federal statute, a state statute, and the Supreme Court grapples existing precedent.

## RIPS-SIS Legal Research Text Review

In addition to this book being made available as an e-book when purchased, it includes electronic supplementation. The authors note that today's students must have multiple ways of learning. Thus, they include (13) videos for those students that want to have the material delivered visually. Further, there are five multiple choice quizzes and several PDFs with self-assessment questions. Most of the videos feature Berring or Levy, but Professors Lindsay Saffouri and Patricia Hurley also each have a video.

For a relatively inexpensive price, this book can serve as a required textbook for a first year LRW professor or Legal Research instructor. However, you may need to supplement it with readings for deeper breadth on topics like regulations or secondary sources. Another plus is the electronic supplementation, particularly the videos, but students would have to purchase the book to make sure they have a registration code for access to these resources.

**Reviewed by:** Stewart Caton, University of North Texas Dallas College of Law, in 2018.