

## **Where the Law Is: An Introduction to Advanced Legal Research, 5th edition**

By J.D.S. Armstrong, Christopher A. Knott, & R. Martin Witt (2018). 266 pages, ISBN: 9781683285250. \$57

**Subject:** Legal research textbook

**Useful for:** Useful as a beginner-to-intermediate legal research textbook, especially because of its brevity and lower price.

**Format:** Chapters with index, appendix of legal research guides for all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and tables highlighting locations of sources.

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

If legal research textbooks were Olympic sports, Where the Law Is would be the luge. While it doesn't sacrifice any vital content, it is definitely built for speed and efficiency—particularly when compared to other lengthy, yet extremely detailed textbooks like Barkan, Bintliff, and Whisner's Fundamentals of Legal Research.

I was initially skeptical, but ultimately ended up agreeing with my co-professor this semester when she suggested using this book. My primary concern was the length and depth of the reading assignments—would students take a 10 page, larger-than-casebook font size reading assignment seriously?

Upon closer inspection, I realized that the short length of the book and the chapters was due to extensive analysis and synthesis on the part of the authors. For example, chapter six introducing the bulk of the basic secondary sources contains the clearest explanation of the difference between secondary sources that I've seen:

The ALR essays, called Annotations, usually go into considerable depth in their presentation of the decisional law on the topics covered. For example, an Annotation on the subject of Recovery of Damages for Emotional Distress Due to Treatment of Pets and Animals covered dozens of pages and over 80 case citations (see 91 A.L.R. 5th 545). By contrast, a 135 comparable entry in Am. Jur. (4 Am. Jur. 2d Animals § 116: Liability for Injuries to Animals—Damages Recoverable—Damages for emotional distress and punitive damages) is a dozen sentences and includes roughly ¼ as many case citations; a related CJS entry (3B C.J.S. Animals § 500: Injuries to or Killing of Animals—Civil Liability—Actions and Proceedings—Damages—For dogs) was four sentences long and had 13 case citations. It is worth noting, however, that both the Am. Jur. 2d entry and the CJS entry included citations or references to this more in-depth ALR Annotation.

pp. 135-36

I don't know if I can adequately explain how great I think this quote is. With some light editing, it easily fits in a table on a PowerPoint slide that you can use to quickly summarize the differences in scope and depth of all of the secondary sources you just showed students. Maybe

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some students see right away, and maybe it clicks for others when they're reviewing the slides at home. Regardless, following along with the authors' analysis provides an excellent gateway to deep learning.

Alas, as is the nature with our profession, this book was published at the start of this year and as I write this in November some terminology is already out of date. Most notably, references to FDsys and Westlaw will have to be updated to GovInfo and Westlaw Edge in the 6th edition. Though this isn't ideal, it is at least less noticeable than having a plethora of quickly outdated screenshots, and could even be a good teachable moment for students about the pace of legal technology and the need for adaptability when using research tools.

Besides the perennial changes to reflect new (or, more accurately, rebranded) online databases, the chapters on International Law, Foreign Law have been expanded, with more focus on legal translations and finding material, whereas the bulk of previous editions solely focused on describing broad concepts like major world legal systems.

**Reviewed by:** Savanna L. Nolan, Georgetown Law Library, in 2018.