

California Legal Research, 3d

By Aimee Dudovitz, Hether C. Macfarlane, and Suzanne E. Rowe. (2016) 220 pages, ISBN: 9781611638387. \$29

Subject: State-specific legal research (California)

Useful for: Useful for anyone (student, librarian, professor, practitioner) doing research in California law.

Format: Chapters with screen shots, charts, and callout boxes, as well as a table of contents and index.

Reviewer's Comments:

This is a relatively comprehensive, sensibly organized overview of California legal research. The chapters are arranged to facilitate jumping into topics as needed – for example, instruction on finding legislative history, or administrative law, or statutes. I keep one in my office for a quick review on topics I work with less frequently. But I also recommend it to students who plan on practicing in California. I don't require it as a textbook for students in Advanced Legal Research, because if they aren't the type to stop for instructions this book won't make a good doorstop. A paperweight, maybe. But I do recommend it because of the organization, and because if they're really interested in improving (or just doing well on a single project) it's a pretty good linear guide to better research.

Aside from practical instruction and suggestions, the book provides introductions to the topics – for example the chapter on judicial opinions doesn't just jump into search strategies for Westlaw, but instead reviews the structure of courts in both California and the federal system before moving on to explaining reporters and how to effectively read cases. The next chapter leads in to best research strategies for opinions, and includes information on both print resources (for those that want it!) and online options. I appreciate that context and history are available if desired, but that the authors don't dedicate so many paragraphs that the book becomes unwieldy.

What they do include are chapters on the research process overall, with information that offers a good reminder (or new instruction) on the do's and don'ts of research. Analysis, techniques, citation, updating, and secondary sources are all addressed. The research planning and strategy chapter is at the very back, which I question, but I can see the sense in not excessively frontloading the reader with procedure.

The latest edition is substantially similar to the 2d, but does make the effort to update the screenshots and descriptions of Westlaw, Lexis Advance, and Bloomberg Law. Some of those are of course outdated, but I expect that with any print research book these days. Overall, it's a small, state-specific research guide with good reminders about the legal research process generally, and it's reasonably priced. I would recommend to California researchers.

Reviewed by: Heather Joy, Chapman University, in 2019.