# Just Research, 5th

By Laurel Oates & Anne Enquist. (2017) 153 pages, ISBN: 9781454886518. $108.00

**Subject:** Legal Research Textbook

**Useful for:** Useful for those who teach legal research, especially in the first year curriculum.

**Format:** Thirteen chapters with a glossary, table of contents, and an index.

**Reviewer's Comments:**

The authors of *Just Research* preface their book by explaining how their legal research text differs from existing legal research books. Their book differs because it is organized around the issues that lawyers research rather than sources and because it pays particular attention to free and fee-based electronic sources. However, most new legal research texts also do the latter. The book is divided into issue-based chapters. While there is a lot to like about *Just Research*, the issues versus sources distinction is not always clear.

The authors introduce legal research in the first three chapters. Chapter one has a basic research plan. Throughout the book, the authors introduce research plans for each issue that they are researching, thereby reminding students of the importance of planning their research. Chapter two provides an overview of the U.S. legal system, and chapter three introduces sources of law and citations.

Throughout the text are Practice Pointers, which are highlighted blocks of text with practical information. Also, each chapter contains exercises requiring students to locate resources in print and/or online and providing students with opportunities to practice. At the conclusion of each chapter is a short quiz. There is a teacher's manual that accompanies the text, but it combines several textbooks with limited focus on *Just Research*. Importantly, there are no sample answers to the exercises and quizzes.

Chapters four through six cover state statutes and regulations, federal statutes and regulations, and local ordinances, respectively. Here the issues versus sources distinction becomes less clear; the authors suggest a process for researching issues governed by these various sources. In each chapter they walk through various sources of information a student would use to research an issue beginning with background reading using secondary sources, locating the source of law, e.g. a state statute, and cases that apply that law, cite checking your results, and returning to secondary materials as needed. The authors give somewhat short shrift to background reading,

and while established secondary materials are mentioned, the authors routinely suggest using Bing or Google as the first step with little accompanying information literacy overview.

The authors use this same approach with the next three chapters for researching issues covered by common law, constitutional law, and court rules. The chapter on common law research contains a limited introduction to the digest system, but more emphasis coupled with exercises is needed for students to understand this valuable resource.

The concluding chapters briefly introduce several other topics. Chapter 10 provides a limited discussion of citators. Yet, students are instructed to use citators as part of their research plans, so students may want to read this chapter early. Chapter 11 introduces legislative histories, and wisely focuses on locating summaries or compiled histories. The next short chapter introduces forms, but there could be more emphasis on distinguishing fill-in-the-blank forms versus templates for drafted forms such as motions, the latter having significant utility for practitioners. Finally, in Chapter 13, the authors discuss strategies for researching judges, firms, companies, and people.

There are several reasons to appreciate *Just Research*, but a legal research instructor will want to review prior to adoption to evaluate the issue-based approach taken by the authors.

**Reviewed by:** Stewart Caton, University of North Texas Dallas College of Law, in 2019.