

Forty-Two: The Hitchhiker's Guide to Teaching Legal Research to the Google Generation

By Ian Gallacher. 39 Akron L. Rev. 151 (2006).

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Reviewer's Summary:

In this article, Gallacher discusses challenges arising for legal research instructors in teaching members of the “Google Generation.” As should be expected with any writing about technology from 2006, large portions of this article are out-of-date by today’s standards. Gallacher begins by looking at whether legal research is actually important and concludes that it is. (The surveys he relies on were outdated even in 2006, but there are many surveys conducted since then that prove his point). He then discusses the divide between “Traditionalists” who favor book-based research instruction and the “Google Generation,” comprised of students who favor computer-based instruction. While there are still some “Traditionalists” teaching legal research, the average law librarian has fully embraced online legal research, with many librarians forgoing teaching book-based research at all. Gallacher next makes a number of proposals for how legal research should be taught. First, he argues that legal research should be taught in the first year of law school. Second, he argues that law librarians or Legal Writing faculty should teach research (rather than teaching assistants, doctrinal faculty, or vendors). Third, he argues that instructors should teach how the law is indexed/organized, the problems/limitations of “Computer-Assisted Legal Research,” and issues relating to information access. Finally, he argues that instructors should use a practical client-based approach to teaching research.

Summarized by: Matthew Flyntz, UC Irvine School of Law, in 2019