

Teaching Cost-Effective Legal Research Skills

By Rebecca A. Mattson & Theresa K. Tarves. 20 AALL Spectrum 31 (2016).

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Reviewer's Summary:

In this article, Mattson and Tarves advocate for actively teaching cost-effective legal research skills in first-year legal research classes. Though Westlaw, Lexis, and Bloomberg are heavily marketed to students, the authors point out that in the real-world lawyers may not have access to the full pantheon of tools. Even if access is available, students and new lawyers can struggle to be truly cost-effective and know when to use free or lower-cost resources, when to use major platforms, and how to include their own time as a cost consideration. The authors outline a case study from Penn State where cost considerations were discussed in class, but not enforced on the final exam. A sidebar also outlines cost-effective platforms like Google Scholar, Fastcase, CaseText, and the (now Lexis-owned) Ravel Law.

Summarized by: Savanna Nolan, Georgetown University Law Center, in 2020.