Legal Research: How to Find and Understand the Law, 19th ed.

By Cara O'Neill, ed. (2021), 356 pages, ISBN: 9781413328882. $49.99

Subject: Legal research textbook.

Useful for: Useful for patrons lacking legal education who wish to understand sources of law and how to locate them, such as pro se litigants, paralegals or other legal administrative staff, or non-law university students or faculty.

Format: Chapters with index, with a substantial glossary of legal terms following chapters.

Reviewer's Comments:

Now in its 19th edition, Nolo's legal research guide is, in keeping with the publisher's mission of providing legal information to the general public, in an accessible format, an easy-to-read title, free of jargon. Law librarians, faculty, and attorneys will likely find this work too basic for their needs, and librarians might prefer a text offering more nuance to assign in research courses, but first-year law students might appreciate the book's straightforward explanations of sources of law. Law libraries serving *pro se* litigants and other patrons without legal education, such as paralegals, legal assistants, and students and faculty in non-law disciplines, will also find this title to be a useful addition to their collections.

The book begins by describing the U.S. legal system and major sources of law, and Chapter 3 provides a primer on types of law, both substantive and procedural, that may govern common legal matters. It describes types of legal secondary sources, emphasizing which might be more and less useful for research conducted by a typical litigant (ex.: the authors discourage lay researchers from beginning their research with a Restatement or academic journal article), and in discussing primary authority the book likewise highlights the sources most likely to govern a *pro se* patron's matter—statutes, cases, regulations, ordinances—while de-emphasizing constitutions. The authors rightly stress the importance of currency in legal research, the drawbacks of utilizing free resource in that regard, and one chapter discusses strategies for validating research.

Following its discussion of research resources and techniques there is a chapter on drafting basic legal documents, discussing under what circumstances a litigant might

need or chose to draft or file particular materials. A rather extensive glossary of legal terminology follows. Finally, a short appendix provides a list of websites, organized by legal topic, that researchers may consult to gain a basic understanding of a particular area of law, and in seeking additional key relevant secondary and primary sources for the topic.

The book offers significant coverage of print materials, including the Shepard's print citators, which may puzzle today's law librarian given the discontinuation of print citators in many law libraries, and availability of at least one commercial electronic research service in most public law libraries. And given at least limited availability of Westlaw/Lexis, and the importance of the editorial enhancements offered in these platforms, librarians might wish that the authors offered greater coverage of the platforms.

Reviewed by: Meredith Capps, Vanderbilt University Law School, in 2021.