

Arkansas Legal Research

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS
LEGAL RESEARCH SERIES

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CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS

Durham, North Carolina

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Barger, Coleen M., 1953-
Arkansas legal research / by Coleen M. Barger.
p. cm. -- (Legal research series)
Includes index.
ISBN 978-1-59460-395-2 (alk. paper)
1. Legal research--Arkansas. I. Title. II. Series.

KFA3675.B37 2007
340.072'0767--dc22

2007029337

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS
700 Kent Street
Durham, North Carolina 27701
Telephone (919) 489-7486
Fax (919) 493-5668
www.cap-press.com

Printed in the United States of America.

*To Donald and Pauline Miller,
who brought me to Arkansas,*

*and to Gary Barger,
who makes it my home*

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Series Note

The Legal Research Series published by Carolina Academic Press includes an increasing number of titles from states around the country. The goal of each book is to provide law students, practitioners, paralegals, college students, and laypeople with the essential elements of legal research in each state. Unlike more bibliographic texts, the Legal Research Series books seek to explain concisely both the sources of state law research and the process for conducting legal research effectively.

Preface and Acknowledgments

Today's legal researchers are fortunate to have an abundance of materials at their disposal, and yet that abundance can be overwhelming, whether the researcher is a first-year law student or an attorney with several years of experience. While law library shelves are filled with thousands upon thousands of volumes, even more material is available to researchers using electronic means such as the Internet or fee-based online databases. Therefore, deciding how and where to start a research project is more important than it has ever been.

Most of the books published on legal research are national in scope, and therefore the Carolina Academic Press series on state law research fills an important niche. This text has been written for legal researchers of various levels of experience and training. For those just learning the intricacies of legal research, it explains the basic processes and introduces the most important sources of Arkansas law. For those students, it also briefly discusses analogous materials in federal law, so that they can better see the parallels between state and federal research.

Experienced researchers will also benefit from having a text that brings together both print and online sources of Arkansas law. This text will help them determine which of those sources are better suited to accomplishing a particular research task.

The text is intended as a field manual to be carried into the library (or opened on the desk beside the computer keyboard). Therefore, it omits the sample pages usually reproduced in national texts, assuming instead that the researcher will browse or examine the actual sources. The opening chapter walks users through the legal research process. The second chapter introduces readers to the eclectic mix of

secondary materials that provide users with the concepts, vocabulary, and overview needed when researching unfamiliar areas of the law. Secondary materials may also save time by steering researchers to primary materials on point. Each of the remaining chapters focuses on particular sources of law, beginning with the ultimate source of state law, the Arkansas Constitution, and continuing through cases, statutes, legislation, administrative rules, executive materials, and rules of court. Unlike many books on legal research, which treat updating and citation in chapters of their own (and therefore in a more abstract and general fashion), this text integrates those processes into each chapter.

I owe thanks to several people who helped and encouraged me in writing this book. First, I am so grateful to Suzanne Rowe, director of the legal writing program at the University of Oregon School of Law, Series Editor for the state legal research series at Carolina Academic Press, and whose research texts, *Florida Legal Research*¹ and *Oregon Legal Research*, provided inspiration and guidance. Thank you, Suzanne, for asking me to write this book and for your patience and your skilled reviews. Next, many thanks to Pamela Lysaght, director of legal writing at the University of Detroit-Mercy School of Law and author of *Michigan Legal Research*. Thank you, Pam, for sharing the drafts of your book, but more importantly, for being the shoulder (the other shoulder!) I could lean on.

At the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, many thanks to the law librarians of the William H. Bowen School of Law, who answered my questions and steered me in the right direction: Kathryn Fitzhugh, Melissa Serfass, Jessie Burchfield, and June Stewart. Thank you to Steve Hyatt for technical support at critical junctures. I also owe thanks to my colleague Richard Peltz for his comments and sage advice, and to my students in the Advanced Legal Research course who test-drove the manuscript for me and helped me see it from a student's perspective: Rachel Barton, Joi Leonard, Eve LeVay, Mandy Meadors, Melissa McPherson, Michael Muskheli, Mitchell Simpson, and Maggie Smith.

1. This book was co-authored by Barbara J. Busharis.

Finally, my list of thanks would not be complete without acknowledging my husband, Gary Barger, and my mother, Pauline Miller, who put up with me when I was in the throes of creative chaos and who celebrated with me when the manuscript was completed.

Coleen M. Barger

May 2007