Minnesota Legal Research

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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, laypeople, and librarians 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

This work is written to provide practical guidance to law students, legal assistants, librarians, attorneys, and others who are interested in researching Minnesota law. It describes important hard copy and online legal resources and explains when and how to use them. While Minnesota legal resources are the focus of the book, important federal legal resources and selected works that are useful for researching the law of any jurisdiction are also discussed. The concise nature of the series in which this book is published limits coverage to current sources that are widely available. For detailed information on additional Minnesota legal resources, consult the bibliographic *Minnesota Legal Research Guide* by John Tessner, Brenda Wolfe, and George Jackson (2d ed., William S. Hein 2002).

Throughout this book, the term “legal sources” is used to refer to legal authorities (i.e., cases, statutes, regulations, court rules) and commentary about them. In contrast, “legal resources” refers to the publications and databases in which legal sources are found. The online resources covered are primarily those available on LexisNexis, Westlaw, and the Internet.

For online research, the book uses the term “file” to refer to a LexisNexis database, which is how LexisNexis refers to its databases. To view a LexisNexis file, click on “by Source” under “Search” at the top of any screen. Under “Option 2,” click on “Find a Source.” In the box under “Option 1,” enter the relevant file name listed in the book. The book identifies Westlaw databases as “databases,” which reflects the terminology used by Westlaw. To view a Westlaw database, enter the database name listed in the book in the “Search for a Database” box found on the left side of most Westlaw screens.

After an introduction to the research process, the book continues with basic guidance for effectively finding and using hard copy and
online resources. It then discusses secondary sources. The remaining chapters focus on specific primary legal sources for Minnesota. Appendix A provides a listing of the major Minnesota legal resources in use today. Appendix B offers a quick guide for finding Minnesota primary legal sources in hard copy and online resources.

The book touches briefly on legal citation and provides references to citation rules found in *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (The Columbia Law Review et al. eds., 18th ed., The Harvard Law Review Assn. 2005) and the *ALWD Citation Manual: A Professional System of Citation* by the Association of Legal Writing Directors & Darby Dickerson (3d ed., Aspen Publishers 2006). These two citation manuals are abbreviated as “Bluebook” and “ALWD” respectively throughout the book. Citation examples for the Bluebook conform to practice format, which varies slightly from law review format. Appendix C provides more background on legal citation. The footnote citations given in this book are based on the ALWD manual, though various chapters provide example citations from both manuals in the text.

Although the chapters in the book briefly discuss federal legal resources, other legal research texts should be consulted for more detailed information. Appendix D provides a listing of important texts covering federal legal research.

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