

Pennsylvania Legal Research

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Second Edition

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Series Note

The Legal Research Series published by Carolina Academic Press includes titles from many states around the country as well as a separate text on federal legal research. 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 jurisdiction. Unlike more bibliographic texts, the Legal Research Series books seek to explain concisely both the sources of legal research and the process for conducting legal research effectively.

Preface and Acknowledgments

This is the second edition of a book originally published in 2007. The primary audience for the book is law students who are preparing to practice law in Pennsylvania, but the book is intended to be helpful to anyone who needs a practical introduction to legal research, with a focus on Pennsylvania sources. This wider audience may include students in other disciplines, professionals, and even people representing themselves in Pennsylvania courts. Researchers who have already learned the basics of legal research, but who are not familiar with unique features of Pennsylvania law, will also find this book a handy reference.

Since the first edition was published, electronic legal research has become dominant, and online sources of legal authority and analysis have increased exponentially. Thus, although the organization of this book is similar in many respects to the first edition, the focus has changed from describing print and online alternatives to describing the most efficient research methods for particular types of authority.

The second edition still begins with a general overview of the research process and research methods. Primary sources are covered next. While we debated beginning with secondary sources to emphasize their role as starting points for further research, we decided to use a chapter order that reinforces the priority of finding primary authorities. However, research courses that begin with secondary authorities can easily assign those chapters first. The original chapter on Secondary Sources has been expanded and divided into two chapters, Secondary Sources and Practice Aids. This division allowed us to expand coverage of these sources, and at the same time to reinforce the distinctions between those sources that might be cited as persuasive authority in a memo or brief, and those that are especially useful as springboards for further research. At the end of the book, an Appendix provides practical guidance on incorporating legal citations into documents, and highlights citation issues that frequently arise when citing Pennsylvania sources.

This edition benefitted tremendously from the addition of two co-authors, Catherine Dunn and Carla Wale, whose research and teaching expertise added valuable insights. We are indebted to those who helped develop the first edition, including other authors in the Carolina Academic Press Legal Research Series. We are also heavily indebted to the many students who have given us feedback on the first edition over the years.