

Massachusetts Legal Research

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Second Edition

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To Dan

E.J.B.

To Deb, for believing in me

S.B.S.

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Series Note

The Legal Research Series published by Carolina Academic Press includes titles from 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

Legal research is a complex skill. Competent legal research requires ongoing analysis as well as mastery of a knowledge base and of techniques for using it. While some tools of legal research change—sometimes with breathtaking speed—the basics of legal research remain the same. An effective research process continues to include analyzing a problem carefully to identify issues to research, choosing research tools and using them efficiently to identify relevant legal authorities, and then analyzing and applying those authorities to the problem.

Legal researchers have always benefited from advances in technology. These advances affect the way legal authorities are distributed and how we find them. Given the constant evolution of online legal research services, we have minimized the degree to which we address the specifics of existing services. Instead, we emphasize general functions and strategies to help you conduct effective legal research regardless of which service you use.

For this book, we were privileged to work closely with Suzanne Rowe, the editor of the Legal Research Series. Suzanne is a masterful and compassionate editor whose contributions to our work have been invaluable. Some of the general explanations in our book are drawn from earlier editions of *Oregon Legal Research*, authored by Suzanne, and are used with permission. We are indebted to Joan Shear of the Boston College Law Library and to Spencer Clough of the University of Massachusetts School of Law Library for their assistance with this book and their collaboration over many years of teaching legal research.

Our thinking about legal research as a process and its relationship with legal analysis and writing has developed over our combined four decades of teaching legal research and writing at Boston College Law School, Harvard Law School, and the University of Massachusetts School of Law. We are grateful for the support of the Boston College Law School Fund and the University of Massachusetts School of Law Summer Research Program, both of which made it possible for us to complete this book.

