

Finding the Law: Legal Research for Activists

Dean Wallraff, EnviroDefenders, dean@EnviroDefenders.org
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Primary Sources of the Law

Federal	State	County & City
Constitution	Constitution	Charter?
Statutes	Statutes	Ordinances
Regulations	Regulations	Regulations
Federal and State Court Cases		

The Way In: Legal Research & Writing Texts

- Michael D. Murray & Christy Hallam DeSanctis, *Legal Research and Writing* (Foundation Press 2005)
- Helen S. Shapo, Marilyn R. Walter & Elizabeth Fajans, *Writing and Analysis in the Law* (4th ed., Foundation Press 2003)
- Roy M. Mersky & Donald J. Dunn, *Fundamentals of Legal Research* (8th ed., Foundation Press 2002)
- Several others – find the one you like by visiting your local law library

Typical Contents (besides writing):

- Rules of law and legal reasoning
- Determining the law from cases and statutes
- Citation mechanics
- Primary sources
- Printed / online
- Secondary sources
- Printed / online
- Research strategies

Secondary Sources

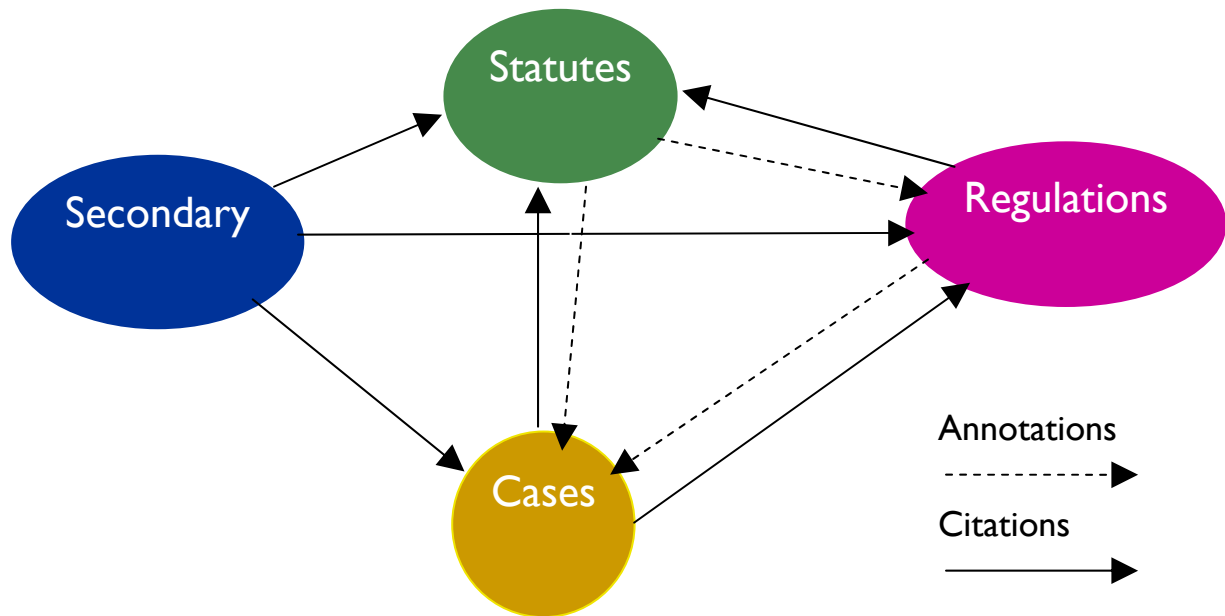
- Hornbooks & Nutshells (West Publishing Co.)
- Treatises range from simple ones you can buy to very expensive, very comprehensive ones you'll want to access in the law library.
 - CEQA Example:
 - J. William Yeates, Esq., *Community Guide to the California Environmental Quality Act* (Planning and Conservation League Foundation, 2007) 36 pages, \$35 from www.pcl.org

- Tina A. Thomas, James G. Moose & Whitman F. Manley, *Guide to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)* (11th ed., Solano Press 2006) 1200 pages, \$85
- Federal (and general state) Law
 - American Jurisprudence (Am Jur)
 - Corpus Juris Secundum
 - ALRs (“annotations”)
- California
 - California Jurisprudence (Cal Jur) – legal encyclopedia
 - Witkin Summary of California Law – super treatise
 - Miller & Starr California Real Estate – super treatise
- Law Reviews
 - Index to Legal Periodicals
 - Hein Online (especially for older issues)

Research Method

Where to start?

- Start wherever you have an entry point into the web, depending on what you know about the particular area of the law.



Citation Examples

	Federal	California	L.A. County / City
Constitution	U.S. Const. art. III § 2	Cal. Const. art. VI § 3	Los Angeles City Charter § 1
Statutes (Code)	16 U.S.C. §§ 1531-1544	Cal. Pub. Resources Code §§ 21000-21177	Los Angeles Mun. Code (Cal.) § 31.00(a)(1)(A)
Regulations (Code)	50 C.F.R. § 17.21	23 Cal. Code Regs. tit. 23 § 497.2	
Cases	<i>Sierra Club v. Froehike</i> , 534 F.2d 1289, 1292	<i>Sierra Club v. County of Napa</i> , 121 Cal.App.4th 1490	

L.A. Law Libraries

All have online catalogs.

- **L.A. County Law Library**
 - 301 W. First St., LA, CA 90012
 - <http://lalaw.lib.ca.us/>
 - Free trainings in legal research, etc. Free use of Westlaw, Lexis Nexis
- **Loyola Law School Library**
 - 919 Albany St., LA, CA 90015
 - <http://library.lls.edu>
- **U.S.C. Law School Library**
 - 699 Exposition Blvd. LA, CA 90089
 - <http://lawweb.usc.edu/library/>
- **U.C.L.A. Law School Library**
 - UCLA School of Law, 1112 Law Bldg., LA, CA 90095
 - <http://www.law.ucla.edu/home/index.asp?page=11>
- **Southwestern Law School Library**
 - 3050 Wilshire Blvd., LA, CA 90010
 - <http://www.swlaw.edu/library>
- **Pepperdine University School of Law Library**
 - 24255 Pacific Coast Hwy, Malibu, CA 90263
 - <http://law.pepperdine.edu/library/>
- **Whittier Law School Library**
 - 3333 Harbor Blvd., Costa Mesa, CA 92626
 - <http://www.law.whittier.edu/library/LibraryFacility.asp>

Online Law Libraries

- Free: Findlaw.com
 - Click on “legal professionals click here”
 - Click on “cases and codes”
 - May need to register (no charge)
 - US Constitution, US Code, Code of Federal Regulations
 - Federal Cases – by citation and full-text search
 - California Constitution, Codes, Regulations
 - California Cases – by citation and full-text search
- Expensive: Westlaw and LexisNexis
 - Westlaw
 - Subscription service – need to call sales rep.
 - Document retrieval service at <http://creditcard.westlaw.com>
 - Only document retrieval, no searching
 - LexisNexis
 - Subscription service – call sales rep
 - Pay as you go options available at <http://www.lexisone.com>

Other Online Resources

This is a small list to get you started. Try googling your subject or the law you’re interested in. Many federal and state agencies maintain Web sites with information about the laws they’re charged with administering.

- Federal
 - GPO Access
 - US Code, Code of Federal Regulations, Federal Court Decisions, Federal Register, Current Legislative Materials
 - Cornell University Legal Information Institute
 - www.law.cornell.edu
 - US Constitution, Codes
 - Introduction to citations: www.law.cornell.edu/citation/
- California
 - California Environmental Resources Evaluation System (CERES)
 - www.ceres.ca.gov
 - Info on CEQA, Land Use Planning, Wetlands and much more
 - California Legislative Info official site
 - www.leginfo.ca.gov
 - Info on California bills, laws, etc.