

## **Legal Research Boot Camp: Bridging the 1L Knowledge Gap**

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What do you remember about your first semester of law school?

Did you remember learning in a previous high school or college class that there were three branches of government? That there were different levels of court? Could you have identified primary source documents and legal citation? Were you comfortable looking for information on a library website (i.e. using the library catalog, searching for articles in a legal database)?

The reference librarians at Lewis & Clark Law School knew that entering 1Ls had a knowledge gap that needed to be filled. Second and third year law students told us stories about being embarrassed in first-year doctrinal classes because they did not know the definition of "appellate," understand how a case made its way to the Supreme Court, or why a regulation mattered as much as a statute. And worst of all, they did not know who to ask for help. As librarians, we felt it was our job to not only inform, but also to reach out to incoming law students so they knew librarians were available from day one to help.

At Lewis & Clark Law School, 1Ls do not enroll in a formal Legal Research class until their second semester. It was not until the 2012-2013 school year that there was any formal legal research instruction to 1Ls in

the form of a Legal Research Boot Camp course. The Boot Camp content was developed by the Assistant Director for Reference and Research Services and myself, in consultation and cooperation with a Legal Writing faculty member. Attendance at these sessions was mandatory and included a three-hour introductory workshop, two in-class labs, and one online lab with a required written assignment due one week later.

My initial research to see if other law schools had developed anything similar to our Boot Camp showed that many schools have short legal research sessions that are voluntary, or a reference librarian visits Legal Writing to discuss legal research strategies. Or more likely, Legal Research is taught the first semester of law school so other law schools do not encounter this same knowledge gap. Additionally, some law schools offer Legal Research Boot Camps for 2L or 3Ls, but these focus on already learned skills as these students get ready for their summer or associate jobs. See University of California Irvine Law Library's Legal

Research Boot Camp 2012 – Materials (May 7, 2012),

<http://sites.uci.edu/lawlibrary/2012/05/07/boot-camp-201-materials/>;

University of Washington School of Law & Seattle University School of Law's 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Bridge the Legal Research Gap Program,

<http://lib.law.washington.edu/btg/2011/register.htm> (last visited February

27, 2013); and Michael Chiorazzi & Cynthia Condit, *Legal Research Boot Camp: One Approach to Meeting the Research Needs of Law Students*, 30 Legal Ref. Serv. Q. 299 (2011).

It was important to introduce basic legal research skills and law library information literacy early on since these students would not enroll in Legal Research until their second semester of law school. These skills would serve them well in their doctrinal classes as well as their Legal Writing class. Our goal was to also flip the classroom, so students would view CALI lessons or in-house online tutorials, as well as read a few short legal research articles before coming to class. Assigned reading included Mark Cooney, *Get Real About Research and Writing*, 32 STUDENT LAW. 18, (May 2004) and Shawn Nevers, *Legal Research: Becoming a Better Online Researcher*, 40 STUDENT LAW. 17, (Feb. 2012). The majority of class time would be spent on in-class exercises.

### **Three-hour Boot Camp**

The purpose of the three-hour Boot Camp was to familiarize students with the main concepts of legal research as well as introduce them to a reference librarian. Each reference librarian taught between 20-80 students, based on classroom size availability. During the first hour, we discussed primary and secondary sources, and read a short newspaper article. The students were to identify all the primary sources mentioned in

the article. As the article was about a Voting Rights case, it gave us the opportunity to talk about the interconnectedness of the law, the litigation process and legal publishing. We also discussed dockets and Bloomberg Law.

During the second hour, we looked at the three branches of government and primary sources' relationship to legal publishing. We also talked about legal citation, and sources for legal citation assistance. Class time was also spent on a library catalog and library website familiarization exercise.

The third hour focused on research strategy. The students were given a torts hypothetical and in groups of two or three, discussed the hypothetical and generated research terms. The end of the hour was spent on the concept of updating with KeyCite, Shepard's, pocket parts and supplements.

This torts hypothetical was also used in the remaining Boot Camp labs. This proved useful as by the end of Boot Camp, many students felt familiar with doing research in at least one area of law.

### **In-class Lab: Secondary Sources**

Before class, students were asked to view two CALI lessons: *Introduction to Secondary Resources* and *American Law Reports*. In

class, we discussed Oregon BarBooks, a very helpful secondary source for legal research in this state. After an in-class exercise reviewing BarBooks, we discussed CJS, AmJur, and American Law Reports and students completed another exercise using WestlawNext and these additional national secondary sources.

### **In-class Lab: Case Law**

Before class, students were asked to view one CALI lesson: *How to Find Case Law Using the Digests* and focus on the section about headnotes, topics and key numbers. In class, we discussed various methods for searching for case law, as well as why headnotes, topics and key numbers were useful in online legal research. In the exercise, we also talked about parts of a case, including the synopsis and star pagination. Finally, we discussed KeyCite, citing references, and the difference between published and unpublished decisions.

### **Online Lab: Statutory Research**

Students watched an online tutorial I made using ScreenFlow and were then asked to complete an exercise that was due a week later. The tutorial covered how to find Oregon Statutes on WestlawNext, as well as on a free online resource called OregonLaws.org. Students learned how to find statutes by citation, how to use the index and table of contents, and

how to check for currency information. They also learned about the history line, notes of decisions and citing references.

This in-class exercise required students to closely read certain sections of the Oregon statutes for currency, to find the year of last amendment, and to find effective dates. It also required them to use Citing References to locate case law. In addition, students used the free online resource [OregonLaws.org](http://OregonLaws.org) to find a section of the Oregon Statutes, find the history line to look for amendments, and find annotations. Students were also asked to compare the advantages and disadvantages to doing legal research on WestlawNext and a free online database.

### **Challenges and Lessons Learned**

We faced a few challenges when implementing Boot Camp. First, our three-hour introductory session and subsequent in-class labs were held on Friday mornings, a day 1L students are not normally required to be on campus. Some students could not attend due to prior commitments. Next year, we will notify students of the required dates much sooner; ideally it will be printed on their initial Legal Writing Syllabus.

Because we required students to be on campus on Fridays, we heard from a few students that they would have preferred online tutorials to required in-class attendance. We eventually did an online tutorial and accepted online submissions for their exercise. However, the first Boot

Camp session will always be in person as one of the primary goals is to introduce students to a librarian and this face-to-face interaction cannot be substituted.

Our introductory session lasted three hours, with two 10-minute breaks. We did not provide food or snacks. This was a marathon. Ideally we would find a way to break it down to two hours. Even better, however, would be to incorporate our Legal Research Boot Camp with the already required Legal Elements course all 1L students take for two weeks at the beginning of law school. Law students would immediately meet their librarians in person begin to learn about library resources, research strategy and legal information literacy.

This experience was a learning experience for us all and we are grateful to the Legal Writing faculty for working with us to incorporate important legal research principles into 1L curriculum to bridge the 1L knowledge gap.