

Book Review

Louisiana Legal Research ***(Third Edition)***

by Mary Garvey Algero

Reviewed by Gail S. Stephenson

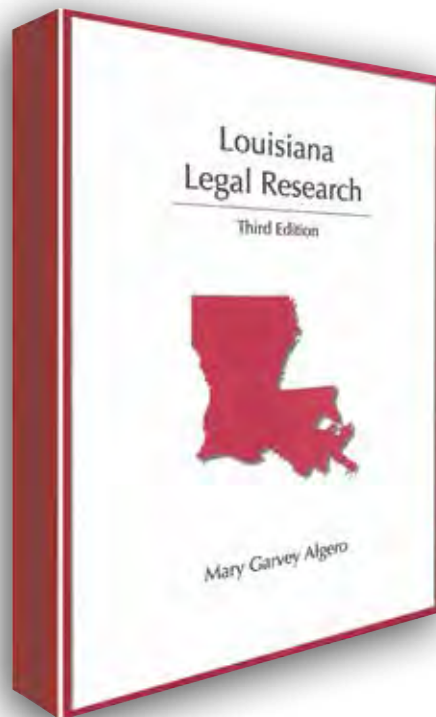
Employers are looking for practice-ready law school graduates, and legal research is one of the most important skills those grads need. Professor Mary Garvey Algero, the Warren E. Mouledoux Distinguished Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Faculty Development at Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, has written a guide to Louisiana legal research that is essential for novice researchers and valuable for experienced attorneys, paralegals and librarians.

Unlike flashier legal research texts written for the national law-school market, Algero's book, *Louisiana Legal Research*, contains no colorful diagrams or student exercises. Instead, this unassuming paperback is jam-packed with practical information for researching Louisiana and federal administrative law and other executive documents, statutes and cases in both print and online sources. While most textbooks begin with secondary sources, Algero approaches research as one would in actual practice; she shows how to research from many different starting points — a statute, a known case, commercial digests, legal encyclopedias or treatises.

The book begins with the fundamental principles of legal research and emphasizes the importance of Louisiana's civil-law legal tradition to legal research. It explains the research process step by step, provides several methods of generating search terms for computer-assisted legal research and details numerous considerations in deciding whether to research online or in print.

If the researcher determines that online sources are more appropriate than print for a particular project, the book gives the URLs for all seven commercial providers, as well as for free online legal research sources, such as the Library of Congress' Guide to Law Online and Google Scholar. It compares and contrasts these sources and explains differences in search techniques among them. For example, it explains how Westlaw interprets a blank space as *or* while Lexis reads adjoining words as a phrase. Thus, a search for *negligent homicide* without quotation marks yields cases on negligent homicide from Lexis but on Westlaw yields cases with either the word *negligent* or *homicide*, resulting in many irrelevant searches.

Algero's book provides URLs for researching all forms of Louisiana enacted law — such as the Louisiana Legislature's free web portal for researching statutes and the Louisiana Constitution — and gives detailed instructions for using state and federal websites to search legislative history. A chart lists websites for court rules for Louisiana and federal courts. And if the reader is researching administrative rules or executive documents, this book is a jewel, whether looking for a provision of the Louisiana Administrative Code, Louisiana Attorney General opinions or executive orders and



proclamations.

Because I teach legal analysis, I appreciate the way the book ties together two essential legal skills, research and analysis. It emphasizes how civilian analysis begins with legislation whenever possible and that technically case law is only persuasive authority, but adds that for pragmatic reasons, judges tend to follow the decisions of higher courts. It demonstrates how to use one's research to create an analysis chart and how to use prior decisions properly to support the analysis. It also teaches law students how to critically read and analyze cases.

My favorite feature of this book is what Algero calls "Louisiana Lagniappe," text boxes with "historical notes of interest and quotes about Louisiana law and the Louisiana legal system." These inserts reveal the depth of Algero's own re-

search into Louisiana law. One made me laugh aloud. In the section on Louisiana legislative history, she includes an excerpt from a speech by the governor at the start of the legislative session. The governor states that a delegation from Louisiana had gone to Washington "to lay before our representatives and before Congress the condition of the levees, and the inability of the State to rebuild and maintain them, with a view of inducing the government to take upon itself the rebuilding and maintenance of the larger levees as a national work." The wry humor was that this speech was not after Hurricane Katrina; it was from 1875. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Louisiana Legal Research is an excellent reference for attorneys, paralegals and law librarians and an indispensable tool for law students. The in-depth information combined with Algero's practical approach makes this a book students will use long after law school.

Louisiana Legal Research is part of the Legal Research Series published by Carolina Academic Press (Durham, NC). For more information on the book, go to: www.caplawn.com.

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