

**INTERNATIONAL
LEGAL
RESEARCH
IN A NUTSHELL®**

THIRD EDITION

MARCI B. HOFFMAN
Lecturer in Residence and
Associate Director, Law Library
University of California,
Berkeley School of Law

 WEST
ACADEMIC
PUBLISHING

The publisher is not engaged in rendering legal or other professional advice, and this publication is not a substitute for the advice of an attorney. If you require legal or other expert advice, you should seek the services of a competent attorney or other professional.

Nutshell Series, In a Nutshell and the Nutshell Logo are trademarks registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

© 2008 Thomson/West
© 2017 LEG, Inc. d/b/a West Academic
© 2021 LEG, Inc. d/b/a West Academic
444 Cedar Street, Suite 700
St. Paul, MN 55101
1-877-888-1330

West, West Academic Publishing, and West Academic are trademarks of West Publishing Corporation, used under license.

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-1-68467-584-5

APPENDIX D

PLANNING YOUR RESEARCH AND ORGANIZATIONAL TOOLS

A. RESEARCH PLAN

If you have reached this appendix, hopefully you have already reviewed (maybe even read) Chapter 12 on general research strategies. As noted in this chapter, it's always a good idea to take a few minutes before you begin your research and create a research plan. A plan is even more important for tight time deadlines, although it may not seem like you have the time. A few minutes spent on a research plan can actually save you time and keep you on track.

Your research plan should identify the question(s) you are trying to answer and sets out a strategy of where to look.

- What is my question/issue?
- What are my keywords and concepts?
- What do I need?
- Where should I look?

Although these are not questions, they are good habits to develop:

- Turn off distractions (texting, email, cat videos, etc.).
- Have organizational tools ready.

A research plan can take many forms. It could be scribbled notes on a piece of paper or sticky note, or a more formal approach using Word or Excel. A research plan can also be the basis of a research log. A research log is a record of your research process and it can be used to take notes about how and where you found useful materials and how you plan to use them in your research. A log is also a good place to note useful sources to go back to later as you refine your project with additional research and analysis. And here's a bonus, creating a log can also help you build your overall research expertise. Here is a list of things that can be included in your log:

A More Complete List of Lists Every Researcher Should Keep:¹

1. **Keywords** from thinking, brainstorming, background reading, or a thesaurus.
2. **Relevant call numbers**, to use for both shelf and online browsing purposes.
3. **Subject headings** from the full display in an online catalog *and* subject descriptions from every relevant article database.
4. **Authors and scholars** whose work is repeatedly mentioned by others.
5. **Titles of peer-reviewed journals** and popular journals.

¹ Mary W. George, *The Elements of Library Research* 61 (2008).

6. **Titles of relevant reference tools** related to the research project.
7. **Publishers** that seem to specialize in the field.
8. **Institutions, associations, societies, or government agencies** that focus on the area of interest.
9. **Dates**, such as the life span of key people, the exact date of a major event, or the publication year of primary sources.
10. **Order of the steps** taken to obtain background information and discover sources, including the navigation path leading to electronic resources and the address of useful web pages.

A research log should also contain the following elements:

- Dates when you did your searching. This is very useful if you need to come back to a project later on.
- Where you searched (search tools and sources). This helps you avoid redoing your research.
- Search strategies that were useful (and even those searches that were not productive, so you don't repeat those same useless strategies).
- Ideas to pursue during the next research session.

- Any other notes that will help you be more productive and efficient.

B. ORGANIZATIONAL TOOLS

These tools can help you create your research log and help you organize the information you find. Many of these suggestions are freely available and easy to download and use.

- Note-taking tools
 - Evernote
<https://evernote.com/>.
 - OneNote (Microsoft)
<https://www.onenote.com/>.
 - Word, Excel, Google Docs, Google Sheets
 - Research notebook, index cards (you know, some sort of paper and a pen)
- Tools to help collect, manage, organize, and create citations.

For a comparison of some of these tools, see *Manage Your Citations*, a research guide from UC Berkeley Library.²

- EndNote (subscription)
<http://endnote.com>.
- Mendeley
<https://www.mendeley.com/>.

² <http://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/publichealth/citations>.
Compares Endnote, Refworks, Zotero, and Mendeley.

- Refworks (subscription)
<http://proquest.libguides.com/newrefworks>.
- Zotero
A very powerful tool, so take some time to learn how to use it effectively.
<https://www.zotero.org/>.

Zotero is a very powerful, open-source citation management tool, so you may want to read more about it in order to take full advantage of its features.

Zotero Research Guide (UC Berkeley Library)
<https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/zotero>.

Digital Annotation Tools: Zotero (Stanford Law Library)
<https://guides.law.stanford.edu/digitalannotationtools/zotero>.

Zotero for Law Students and Scholars (Washington and Lee Law Library)
<https://libguides.wlu.edu/c.php?g=99586&p=644177>.

How Do I Use Zotero with HeinOnline?
<http://help.heinonline.org/how-do-i-use-zotero-with-heinonline/>.

Juris-M

A Zotero-variant that has been modified to support legal writing and multilingual research.
<https://juris-m.github.io>.

For more assistance with Zotero and Juris-M, search for and check out the many research guides available on the web.

- Storing files and documents

These tools are all free (at least the basic versions) and provide secure storage available from anywhere and good for collaborative projects.

- Box
<https://www.box.com/home>.
- Dropbox
<https://www.dropbox.com/>.
- Google Drive
<https://www.google.com/drive/>.

A final note, most of the tools and applications mentioned in this Appendix require setting up an account. Do yourself a favor and start using a password manager, like LastPass. The basic versions of these applications are often free. Check out the many “best password managers” articles on the web.³

³ For example, see https://www.pcmag.com/picks/the-best-password-managers?test_uuid=0010QhoHLBxsrrrMgWU3gQF&test_variant=a; <https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/reviews/best-password-managers/>; or <https://www.cnet.com/how-to/best-password-manager-to-use-for-2020-1password-lastpass-and-more-compared/>.