

*San Francisco Daily Journal, 2/22/01, p. 18.
Posted with permission of the Daily Journal.
This file cannot be downloaded from this page.*

CALIFORNIA LEGAL RESEARCH PRIMER

Vincent Moyer, Reference Librarian, J.D., M.S.
University of California Hastings College of the Law

California has a rich source of legal research material. One of the keys to successful legal research is being able to find and understand the law. Finding California law is easy because of the availability of resources in print, on CD-ROM, and on the Internet. In addition, compared to similar research for other states, it is easier to understand and interpret California law because of the numerous California legal treatises and practice guides.

This article outlines some of the best secondary sources of law in California and highlights some of the California legal resources available for free on the Internet.

CALIFORNIA LAW ON THE INTERNET

Attorneys and law librarians have access to case law, statutes, and regulations in print, on CD-ROM, and through subscriptions to online databases. In addition, some of the most useful California legal resources are also available on the Internet:

California Laws & Regulations:

- Bill, Bill Information, Bill History Documents, Analyses - <http://leginfo.public.ca.gov/bilinfo.html>
- Chaptered Laws - <http://leginfo.public.ca.gov/statute.html>
- Statutes - <http://leginfo.public.ca.gov/calaw.html>
- Code of Regulations - <http://www.calregs.com>
- Constitution - <http://leginfo.public.ca.gov/const.html>

California Cases, Court Rules & Forms:

- Slip Opinions of the California Supreme Court (available within hours of filing) - <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/opinions/>
- Court Rules - <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/rules/>
- Judicial Council Forms - <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/forms>
- California Findlaw (includes links to a variety of California legal information) - <http://california.findlaw.com/>

CALIFORNIA SECONDARY SOURCES OF LAW

There are numerous California legal treatises and practice guides; these works are invaluable when one is trying to understand and interpret California law.

The Rutter Group publishes several guides under the general title *California Practice Guide*. In addition to print, the Guides are available on CD-ROM and Westlaw (TRG-CA database).

The Rutter library includes guides on civil procedure in state and federal court, ninth circuit appellate practice, probate, law practice management, and real property transactions.

Continuing Education of the Bar (CEB) publishes many California-specific practice materials. One of the most useful is the CEB Action Guide series, which provides step-by-step guidance for many business, criminal, family, property, and probate law issues. The Action Guides focus on specific legal procedures and often include checklists, information on deadlines, and necessary forms. Specifically, they discuss topics such as handling civil appeals, obtaining an injunction, enforcing civil money judgments, laying a foundation to introduce evidence, preparing for trial, handling subpoenas, funding a revocable trust, and conducting family law discovery. Many CEB publications are available on LEXIS.

Matthew Bender publishes several practice guides dealing with California law on topics including community property, employment law, family law, tax planning, and workers compensation. Matthew Bender also publishes *California Points and Authorities*, a 24-volume set; *California Forms of Pleading and Practice, Annotated*, a 55-volume set including Judicial Council Forms; and *California Legal Forms: Transaction Guide*, a 36-volume set of forms for basic legal and business transactions. Many of the Matthew Bender treatises and practice guides are available on LEXIS or through an online subscription service.

The Witkin Institute publishes *Summary of California Law*, *California Procedure*, *California Evidence*, and *California Criminal Law*. These are highly regarded, comprehensive treatises on California law. All Witkin titles are available on Westlaw and LEXIS. To draft, challenge, or simply find out more information about jury instructions, two of the best sources include *California Jury Instructions: Criminal* (CALJIC) and *Book of Approved Jury Instructions/California Jury Instructions: Civil* (BAJI). Both of these publications are available on Westlaw and LEXIS. Another useful source of information on jury instructions is *California Forms of Jury Instructions* published by Matthew Bender. This four-volume set includes an introduction to the drafting and use of jury instructions, and detailed analyses of specialized instructions; it is available on LEXIS.

LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS

Law libraries in northern California provide access to a wide variety of legal resources. Law librarians locate, evaluate, manage, and organize these legal research tools. To find more information about California legal research, talk to your firm's law librarian or visit your local law library in person or on the web.

Copyright 2001 by Daily Journal. Reprinted with permission.