

# Ten Practical Tips for Effective & Time-Saving Legal Research

Tips 1- 5 ½



**THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA  
SCHOOL OF LAW  
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WILLIAM J. JAMESON LAW LIBRARY**

## Tip #1: Use Compiled Legislative Histories



“In the case of a statute . . . it would be possible to say that as we are dealing with the commands of the sovereign the only thing to do is to find out what the sovereign wants. If supreme power resided in the person of a despot who would cut off your hand or your head if you went wrong, probably one would take every available means to find out what was wanted.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Theory of Legal Interpretation*, 12 Harv. L. Rev. 417, 419 (1898).

# Use Compiled Legislative Histories



- **Law Library Print Collection**
  - <http://catalog.lib.umt.edu>
  
- **HeinOnline**
  - Law Library website / Research Tools / Electronic Resources
  - U.S. Federal Legislative History Library
    - ✦ Sources of Compiled Legislative History Database
    - ✦ U.S. Federal Legislative History Title Collection
  
- **Lexis & Westlaw**
  - Westlaw: Legislative History tab
    - ✦ Compiled Histories (GAO)
    - ✦ US GAO Federal Legislative Histories (1915-1995)
    - ✦ Find by Popular Name
  - Lexis: CIS Legislative Histories
    - ✦ Federal Legal / Find Statutes ... / Legislative History Materials
  
- **Thomas**
  - <http://loc.thomas.gov>

# Tip #2: Start with a Government Website



Public Law 107-347  
107th Congress

## An Act

To enhance the management and promotion of electronic Government services and processes by establishing a Federal Chief Information Officer within the Office of Management and Budget, and by establishing a broad framework of measures that require using Internet-based information technology to enhance citizen access to Government information and services, and for other purposes.

Dec. 17, 2002

[H.R. 2458]

# Start with a Government Website



- **What**
  - Statutes
  - Regulations
  - Administrative Decisions
  - Guidance
  - Statistics
- **Directories**
  - [USA.gov](http://USA.gov)
    - ✦ Topical or alphabetical
  - [mt.gov](http://mt.gov)

# Tip #3: Use a Good Research Portal



- **UM Law Library:** <http://www.umt.edu/law/library>
- **State Law Library of Montana:** <http://www.montanacourts.org/library/default.mcp>
  - Statutes
  - Opinions
  - Forms
  - Court Rules
  - Montana Legal Resource Directory
- **Legal Information Institute:** <http://www.law.cornell.edu/>
  - US Supreme Court
  - Wex: legal dictionary and encyclopedia
- **Findlaw:** <http://lp.findlaw.com/>
  - Cases
  - US Code and State codes
  - Articles and Commentary
- **LexisOne:** <http://www.lexisone.com>
  - Free case law
  - Federal and state
  - Last 5 yrs. only

# Tip #4: Come to the Law Library



- **Treatises**
  - Catalog: <http://catalog.lib.umt.edu>
  - Circulation Policy: Montana attorneys eligible for library card
- **Reference**
- **Online databases**
  - HeinOnline
  - BNA Environment Reporter
  - BNA Labor Relations Library (*coming soon*)
  - BNA Tax Management Portfolios
  - CCH Environmental Compliance Portfolio
  - Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO)
  - International Law Reports Online
  - LLMC Digital
  - Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law
  - Mansfield Library Electronic Resources
    - ✦ Homeland Security Digital Library
    - ✦ CCH Tax Research Network
    - ✦ Oxford University Press Journals (including law journals)
- **Public Access Westlaw**

# Tip #5: Use Some Sources in Print



- **Treatises**
- **Annotated Codes**
  - Combine with online
- **Administrative Codes**
  - Combine with online
- **Encyclopedias**

## Tip #5 ½ : Call or Email a Librarian



**Fritz Snyder, Library Director**  
[fritz.snyder@umontana.edu](mailto:fritz.snyder@umontana.edu)

**243-6569**

**Stacey Gordon, Associate Law Librarian for Public Services**  
[stacey.gordon@umontana.edu](mailto:stacey.gordon@umontana.edu)

**243-6808**

**Library Circulation & Reference Desk**

**243-2699**