



TRUTH, JUSTICE AND INFORMATION FOR ALL

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Useful Internet Sites and Articles

Legal Research Behaviors by Solo and Small Firm Attorneys

“What About the Majority? Considering the Legal Research Practices of Solo and Small Firm Attorneys” *Law Library Journal*, Vol. 103, No. 3

Joseph D. Lawson, Deputy Director of the Harris County Law Library, recognized that while solo and small firm attorneys comprise the majority of attorneys practicing in the United States, this group is grossly underrepresented when it comes to studying legal research behaviors. Previous surveys have been conducted regarding the way in which attorneys conduct legal research but the results from these surveys come mostly from large firms. The goal of Mr. Lawson’s article is to “explore the potential correlation between solo and small firm practitioners and less frequent use of fee-based resources.” The article also “considers possible causes for unique practices among this demographic, the implications of such practices for law libraries, and the need for more research.” Mr. Lawson compares a local survey conducted by the Fort Bend County Law Library and a national survey conducted by the Academic Law Library Special Interest Section (AAL-SIS) of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL).

The local survey consisted of four multiple choice questions and two open ended questions and was conducted over a matter of weeks. The national survey was conducted in four parts and took over two months. More than 50% of the respondents in the local survey were from solo practices. By comparison, only 23.68% of the participants in the national survey were solo practitioners, even though solo practitioners make up almost half of the attorneys in private practice. Small firms accounted for 21% of the participants and the rest were midsized and large firms and government entities. The differences in the results are reflected by the difference in the

participants. Use of print and free online resources is similar in both surveys but use of fee-based online materials varies greatly, showing a much higher use of these materials by the participants of the national survey. Mr. Lawson suggests that the “digital divide” may be the reason for the varying results. Simply put, small firms and solo practitioners may be unable to afford the expensive subscription fees to Westlaw or Lexis. Aside from the cost of such subscriptions, solo and small firm practices may have less of a need for these costly resources. Attorneys from these firms are more likely than their peers to become general practitioners and may, for that reason, place a higher importance on secondary sources and practice materials, often found in law libraries. Mr. Lawson also mentions the importance small firms place on professional networks.

The purpose of law libraries is to “connect attorneys with appropriate resources when they move into new practice areas, engage in continuing education, or implement current awareness strategies to acquire information that they share with professional networks.” By understanding and studying research trends, law librarians are better equipped to meet the needs of their patrons. The Curt B. Henderson Law Library continuously endeavors to meet the needs of its patrons which includes attorneys, judges, courthouse and county staff, and pro se litigants. The library’s collection includes access to legal databases, law journals, state bar materials and litigation and transaction guides. The library houses local rules, municipal codes and access to both state and federal materials as well as the most current versions of code books. Patrons may access the online catalog on the library’s website at: http://www.collincountytx.gov/law_library/Pages/default.aspx. The library is always staffed and willing to provide assistance with both the print and electronic resources.

Copies of these articles are available in the library, or from the law librarian via email:

drobot@co.collin.tx.us

Spotlight on the Supremes

For the first time in more than 20 years, the Supreme Court of Texas issued an opinion on every case that was argued before it. On June 26, the Justices issued eight opinions which resulted in the Court's docket being completely cleared for the first time since 1991. The news article is available here: <http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/texas/article/Texas-Supreme-Court-clears-docket-for-first-time-6377603.php>

The Supreme Court of Texas heeded the request of the Texas Board of Law Examiners and approved changes to the rules that govern the admission to practice law in Texas. As of July 1, 2015, out of state attorneys must apply online and pay the fee electronically. According to Board of Law Examiners' director, Susan Henricks, the goal of the online applications is to "increase efficiency for our staff, eliminate rejection of incomplete applications and incorrect fee amounts and improve convenience for applicants. The full article is available here: <http://www.txcourts.gov/supreme/news/court-oks-rules-to-permit-online-bar-admission-applications.aspx>.

Did You Know?

On June 9, 2015 the Judges in the Court of Criminal Appeals signed the **Order Adopting Proposed Statewide Rules Governing Electronic Filing in Criminal Cases**. These rules become effective on September 1, 2015, for Hidalgo County and on November 1, 2015, for all other counties, including Collin County. Public comments about these rules may be made up until August 30, 2015, so it is possible that the rules may change based on these public comments.

The National Association for Court Management recently awarded the Texas Judiciary for being one of the top ten court websites in the nation. David Slayton, the administrative director of the Texas Office of Court Administration said that the website was redesigned last fall with the purpose of making the website more streamlined and user friendly. The full article may be read in the July 27th, 2015 edition of the *Texas Lawyer*. The award winning website is: <http://www.txcourts.gov/>.



Library Reminders

Attorney IOUs— While smaller, the library still has an uncollected balance from Attorney IOUs. Thank you to the attorneys who consistently pay their IOUs every month. If outstanding amounts remain uncollected, IOUs will be discontinued. Please ensure that any outstanding balances are paid immediately. The IOUs are emailed around the 15th of every month so please be sure to be on the lookout for emails from the Curt B. Henderson Law Library.

Contact Information:

Diane L. Roberts
Law Librarian
Email: droberts@co.collin.tx.us

Bethany Fansler
Assistant
Law Librarian
Email: bfansler@co.collin.tx.us

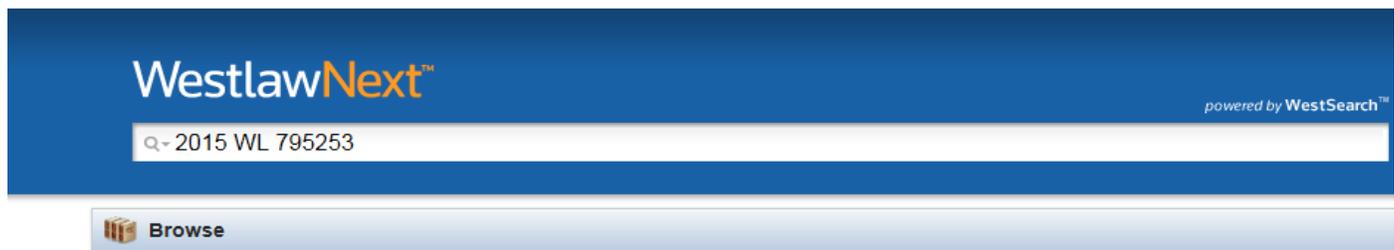
Hours of Operation:
Monday–Friday
8:00 am–5:00 pm

WestlawNext Tips

Federal Notice of Appeal KeyCite Flag

KeyCite allows the WestlawNext user to determine whether or not the case or statute being searched is still good law by using a red flag for laws that are no longer good laws or a yellow flag to warn the user that even though that law has not been overturned there is negative history associated with it. KeyCite now has a brand new blue and white striped flag which means that the case has been appealed to the United States Court of Appeals or to the United States Supreme Court. If the case has such a flag, it will appear in the results list after a search and at the top of the case. The following is an example of how a case will look if it's been appealed.

First, enter the citation of the case or statute being researched and hit search:



Once the case is pulled up, if the case has been appealed the user will see the striped flag at the top of the page and next to the name of the case:



Tech Tips: More Useful Apps and Law Blogs

- <http://www.thecyberadvocate.com/> - The Cyber Advocate is a website dedicated to any and all technology that affects the legal profession, from the latest apps to tips on designing a law firm website.
- <http://www.blogmetrics.org/law> - A list of what this website considers to be the best law blogs, using various factors to rank each blog. There are some well known blogs listed as well as some specialized blogs, like the China Law Blog.
- Wild About Trial—a free app that provides breaking news and insider analysis of the nation's top criminal trials. Available free on both Android and Apple.
- Legal Newsance—This free app contains legal news, legal research databases for state statutes and rules, access to on-line CLE programs, information on live CLE sessions; and, listings for attorney, paralegal, and legal professional jobs. Available on Android and Apple.



The Law Library

will be closed

on Monday,

September 7th

for Labor Day.



New on the Shelf:

- Navigating the Federal Trial, 2015 Edition
- West's Federal Sentencing Guidelines Digest, 2015
- O'Connor's Federal Civil Forms, 2015
- O'Connor's Federal Employment Codes Plus, 2015-2016
- Federal Postconviction Remedies and Relief Handbook, 2015
- Texas DWI Law and Practice Handbook, 2015
- Texas Written Discovery, 2015
- O'Connor's Texas Civil Forms, 2015
- O'Connor's Texas Civil Appeals, 2015
- Courtroom Handbook on Texas Evidence, 2015
- O'Connor's Texas Family Code, 2015-2016

A Little Legal Humor

Stu's Views

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Nice try, but Grandma spoiling you on candy and toys doesn't obligate me to "keep you in the manner to which you have become accustomed".