OER Textbook Review

For each category, assign 1-5 stars (with 5 being best) and provide written details. There’s also space at the end for general comments. Please fill out electronically, then print the final product and have it signed by your department chair. You can either drop the printed and signed copy off to me in the library or send it through the inter-campus mail.

Comprehensiveness = 2 Stars
The text covers all areas and ideas of the subject appropriately and provides an effective index and/or glossary.

The text covers all aspects of legal research (primary and secondary sources, digests, electronic research, and the research process) but does not cover them in the depth or breadth that an introductory level text should. Sources are discussed very generally, but there is no detail on how the sources are organized, how to navigate through them, etc. For example, the text discusses secondary sources, but does not explain how to use them. There is a presumption that this information has been gleaned or learned from another source. This text seems to be a supplement to CALI exercises.

I anticipated that the text would have a more robust discussion of online/electronic research since legal research is moving in that direction. However, the amount of discussion on this topic was less than the print textbook that I currently use for this course.

There is no index or glossary to the text. The Table of Contents is thorough. The only way I could locate information on a topic was to go to the Table of Contents and move from there into the body of the text and “look around.”

The assignments were good, but I would have expected there to be some assignments that permitted the student to learn how to use the sources discussed in the text. It appears that some of this may occur in the CALI lessons. I was unable to investigate this because a subscription to CALI is necessary to access this material.

I anticipated a more robust treatment of the topics.

Content Accuracy = 5 Stars
Content is accurate, error-free, and unbiased.

The content is accurate. The discussion of the sources of law is accurate. The content is unbiased. The exhibits used are accurate in their depiction and convey the information accurately.
Relevance/Longevity = 4 Stars
Content is up-to-date, but not in a way that will quickly make the text obsolete within a short period of time. The text is written and/or arranged in such a way that necessary updates will be relatively easy and straightforward to implement.

*For the most part, the content is up to date. Discussion of Westlaw seemed a little dated, but Westlaw is constantly changing its interface. The lack of a more robust discussion of electronic research was disappointing. The amount of text dedicated to print research was surprising. While students certainly need to know how to do this, I anticipated the same amount of space to be dedicated to electronic research (how to construct a good search, etc.); that was not the case.*

*The way in which the text is organized allows for content to be updated easily.*

Clarity = 5 Stars
The text is written in lucid, accessible prose, and provides adequate context for any jargon/technical terminology used.

*The text was easy to read and understand. The pages had visual appeal (no single-paragraph pages). The use of exhibits enhanced the text greatly. The exhibits that are used are extremely helpful and add greatly to the textbook.*

*While I am familiar with all of the professional language used in the text, I am not sure if all students are. Without a glossary or index, some students might be at a loss with the vocabulary.*

Consistency = 5 Stars
The text is internally consistent in terms of terminology and framework.

*The text is consistent in terms of terminology and framework.*

Modularity = 5 Stars
The text is easily and readily divisible into smaller reading sections that can be assigned at different points within the course (i.e., enormous blocks of text without subheadings should be avoided). The text should not be overly self-referential, and should be easily reorganized and realigned with various subunits of a course without presenting much disruption to the reader.

*The text can be divided into smaller parts and used throughout a term. Since it seems that the text is intended to be used as a supplement, the chapters can be used in any order and at different points in a term.*
Organization/Structure/Flow = 2 Stars
The topics in the text are presented in a logical, clear fashion.

The topics are presented in an atypical order in which legal research topics are usually presented in a textbook. Typically, primary sources are covered first, with secondary sources following, and then electronic research is covered after the sources of law have been discussed. This text discussed primary sources first, then electronic research, and then secondary sources. That order is a little odd when I consider that when we research, we are using primary and secondary sources; it makes more sense to discuss the sources of law and then how to conduct research.

I was surprised at the amount of text devoted to topics that I would not typically cover in a legal research course (federalism, and separation of powers).

All topics that are covered are covered clearly.

Interface = 4 Stars
The text is free of significant interface issues, including navigation problems, distortion of images/charts, and any other display features that may distract or confuse the reader.

I did not experience any navigation problems. The exhibits that showed Westlaw screenshots were very difficult to read. The screenshots were small and some of the detail was lost. I am not sure if that is an issue with the device on which I viewed the textbook, or if it is an issue that translates across all devices.

I did not note any display features that were distracting or confusing.

Grammatical Errors = 5 Stars
The text contains no grammatical errors.

I did not note any grammatical errors.

Cultural Relevance = 5 Stars
The text is not culturally insensitive or offensive in any way. It should make use of examples that are inclusive of a variety of races, ethnicities, and backgrounds.

I did not note any offensive or insensitive material. Hypotheticals used for assignments were neutral.

General Comments
A number of each of the chapter assignments are tied to CALI exercises which require a subscription. As stated previously, this text appears to be a course supplement or a supplement to CALI.
Unfortunately, this is not a text that I could use in my Legal Research & Writing I (LAH 250) course. The text is not robust enough to support the weight of the course. To be an effective textbook for the course, the text must have a broader foundation: explain the sources, show how to use them, show how they are organized, show how they interact with other sources.

As a standalone textbook, I would give this text 1 star. As a course supplement to CALI, I would give this text 4 stars.

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I have read the above review and shared it with the department.

_____________________________________                                            __________________________
Department Chair                                                                                          Date

_____________________________________                                            __________________________
Reviewer                                                                                     Date