

Drafting Legal Documents: Practical Resources for the Urban Communities Clinic

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We will discuss:

- Methods for finding general sources related to drafting legal documents in the Law Library
- Methods for finding Michigan sources related to drafting legal documents in the Law Library
- Where exactly the relevant sources are located in the Law Library



“Just Show Me...”

- Best guidance for legal drafting is usually seeing an example or form
- Not perfectly tailored to your unique situation, but great help to get started
- Forms are available from:
 - ◆ Commercially published formbooks – general drafting info and subject, jxs, & document-type forms
 - ◆ Court-prepared forms – standardized by courts
 - ◆ Institutional in-house databank – archive of forms



Finding Books in Law Library - Lexcalibur

- Always start with **Lexcalibur**:
<http://lexcalibur.lib.law.umich.edu/>
- ◆ Keywords
 - ☞ E.g., Michigan and Forms
- ◆ Subject Headings
 - ☞ E.g., Real Property -- Michigan -- Forms



Finding Books in Law Library – Call No. Locator

- Before going to the shelf - Always use a **Call No. Locator** to determine exactly where in the Library material are located and to ensure that the material is on the shelf
 - ◆ <http://www.law.umich.edu/library/libserv/pdf/callnoloc.pdf>
 - ◆ Note Location, Call Number and Status (See attachment “A”)



Formbooks

- Contain sample legal forms
- Multi-volume sets, arranged by topic
 - ◆ Accessed by index and/or table of contents
- Usually include multiple versions, optional clauses



General Forms

- Run the gamut of legal topics, from “Abandoned Property” to “Zoning”
- Not jurisdiction-specific
- E.g., *AmJur Legal Forms*, *West’s Legal Forms* (related to business issues)
 - ◆ Title search in Lexcalibur:
<http://lexcalibur.lib.law.umich.edu/>
(See attachment “B”)



Subject-Specific Forms

- Forms related to a specific subject or area of practice
- Often also function as secondary sources
- To locate, do a Keyword search in Lexcalibur(<http://lexcalibur.lib.law.umich.edu>): *[business]* and *forms*
 - ◆ For example,
 - ☞ ***Legal forms for starting & running a small business*** (See attachment “C”)
 - ☞ *Fletcher Corporation Forms, Annotated*



Jurisdiction-Specific Forms

- Forms related to a specific jurisdiction, either federal or state
- *Bender's Federal Practice Forms; West's Federal Forms*
- To locate formbooks in Lexcalibur(<http://lexcalibur.lib.law.umich.edu/>) for a state, do a Keyword search: [*Michigan*] and *forms*
 - ◆ *Michigan Real Estate Practice and Forms* (See attachment "D")



Jurisdiction-Specific Forms

- Conduct Advanced Keyword search with author: *Michigan* and forms and author: *Institute of Continuing Legal Education*
 - ◆ *Michigan Business Formbook* (See attachment “E”)



Forms Online – Michigan

- **Institute of Continuing Legal Education (ICLE) – Michigan:**
<http://www.icle.org>
- View “Partnership” section, which includes a Formbank, “How-to Kits,” MI law updates, webcasts, and ICLE seminar materials
 - ◆ Business
 - ◆ Real Property



Forms Online - Generally

- LEXIS and Westlaw
- *'Lectric Law Library* –
<http://www.lectlaw.com/form.html>
- *FedForms* –
<http://www.fedforms.gov>
- *Findlaw Forms* –
<http://forms.lp.findlaw.com>



Court-Prepared Forms

- Courts prepare forms for frequently used pleadings and other filings
- “Check-the-box” and “fill-in-the-blank”
- Failure to use court forms may be cause for dismissal, default or discipline
- Court’s website is a good place to check



In-House Forms Resources

- In-house databanks
 - ◆ Even if you think you know, check an in-house form the first time
- The matter file
- Your colleagues
- Your own forms file!



Finals Tips

- Keep a research log!
- Stop by the Reference Desk for further help:
 - ◆ Staffed 9am-midnight, 7 days/week
 - ◆ Librarians available Mon-Wed, 10-8pm; Thur-Fri, 10-5pm, and Sunday, 2-6pm

