



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 the UMich Law Library Catalog

- Always start with **MLaw**: <http://umil.iil.com/>
 - 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 MLaw: <http://umil.iii.com/> (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 MLaw (<http://umil.iii.com/>):
[*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 the Mlaw Catalog (<http://umil.iii.com/>) 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