The Process of Legal Research

1. Do you keep seeing same answers over and over?
   - No
     - Cases, Codes, Regulations
     - Federal vs. State vs. Local
   - Yes
     - "Good law" is still in force. A citation should point you to the law that is in effect.

2. Question am I trying to answer?
   - Yes
     - Use citations to make sure still "good law"
   - No
     - Determine format of answer and check for boilerplate form

3. Familiar with this area of law?
   - Yes
     - Brief vs. motion; Ask: who is the audience?
   - No
     - Familiar with keywords and concepts

4. Did you
   - Yes
     - Put citations in correct format so others can find your answers
   - No
     - Put citations in correct format so others can find your answers

DONE!
“We propose a new approach that relies on . . . the correctness of factual information provided by the source.”

From the *Washington Post*, March 11, 2015
Quick Overview

• What you’re missing when you search Google
• Reasons why you’re missing stuff
• Some helpful tips to not miss stuff
• Some helpful tips to avoid relying on stuff you’d rather have missed
• Questions
What You’re Not Seeing

• Info in databases/catalogs
• Password protected/subscription info
• Older info
• Info from poorly organized/maintained sites
• Info that people/organizations don’t want you to see
The Invisible Web

Image from "The Dark Side of the Web"
[http://www.softmachine.net/2013/05/the-dark-side-of-the-web/]
Other Invisibility Factors

• Search engine optimization (SEO) and paid links
• ‘Personalized’ searching
• Web ‘instability’/ ‘reference rot’
• Unrefined research techniques
Tips for Success

• Use more than one search engine
• Internet research often requires a two-step process
• If you believe that helpful info resides on a specific site, go there
• Advanced search features are your friends
• Internet subject directories will lead you to quality sites
A Few Helpful Sites

- Google Advanced Search
  - http://www.google.com/advanced_search
- The Wayback Machine
  - http://www.archive.org
- Internet Public Library Resources by Subject
  - http://www.ipl.org/div/subject/
- DuckDuckGo
  - http://www.duckduckgo.com
Evaluating Websites

“Much of the [free] Web is free for a reason: the information is not as comprehensive, value-added, valid, and useful to a high-level researcher as that available on a commercial Web site.”

Sabrina I Pacifici, *Law of the Super Searchers*
Website Evaluation Criteria

Factors to consider when deciding whether to rely on free online information:

• Authority – Who wrote this?
• Objectivity – Does that person (or organization) have a bias on this subject?
• Accuracy – Does this information fit with what I already know of the subject?
• Coverage – What is the scope of the information given here?
• Timeliness – When was this written and when was it last updated?
• For more complete information on each factor, see “Evaluating and Rating Websites and Other Information Resources,” by Diane Murley of the SIU Law Library: http://www.law.siu.edu/lawlib/guides/eval.htm