Hello, RAs! After a month of intense research using HeinOnline, LexisNexis, and Westlaw, you may want to consider using some of the other electronic legal resources that are available to you. As a law student, you have access to many subject specific databases (e.g., business, environmental law, poverty law, terrorism, etc.) and current awareness services via the Electronic Resources link on the Kresge Law Library homepage. The “Electronic Resources” page includes twenty-seven subject headings (from Banking to Transportation) which you can click on to identify associated online resources. If you already know the name of the resource that you want to use (e.g., LegalTrac) you can “Find Legal Resources by Title” by clicking on the appropriate letter in the alphabet for quick access instead of locating the database in the library catalog. Most of these databases are IP-authenticated, but some of them require a password. If you see a PW icon next to the name of an electronic resource, click on the icon and enter your NetID and password in order to discover the database password.

Other helpful law library web pages for RAs are Law Library Services for Research Assistants, which includes an overview of relevant library procedures (e.g., borrowing and copying library materials, carrel assignments, document delivery, interlibrary loan, obtaining court documents, etc.), and the ever-popular Cite Checker Resources page, which helps you locate documents in print and electronic format.

If you are doing interdisciplinary research, you should also consider exploring the resources available to you through Hesburgh Libraries. Kresge Law Library is autonomous, so when you search our catalog, you are only searching the law library’s holdings. However, when you search the Hesburgh Libraries catalog you are searching every other library (Business, Chemistry/Physics, Engineering, etc.) on campus. Just like the law library has an “Electronic Resources” page which identifies legal resources by topic, Hesburgh Libraries has a Research by Subject page which identifies relevant databases, journals, and books for research in economics, history, medicine and health, peace studies, and sixty-one other disciplines. Many of the librarians on campus have advanced degrees in the sciences and humanities, making them subject specialists in various fields. Be sure to take advantage of the opportunity to schedule a Research Consultation with them if you are pursuing research in one of those areas.

Hesburgh Libraries’ guides are primarily designed to support undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs at Notre Dame. Consequently, Hesburgh Libraries’ “Research by Subject” page does not cover every possible topic. However, many of the databases to which Hesburgh Libraries subscribe include fields of study outside of Notre Dame’s curriculum. Therefore, if you cannot find a guide for a particular subject at Hesburgh Libraries, you can look at other colleges and universities’ guides in order to identify relevant resources available to you at Notre Dame. Last, but not least, Hesburgh Libraries’ virtual Reference Shelf provides access to a variety of general resources (e.g., biographies, dictionaries, directories, encyclopedias, etc.) that allow you to answer many questions more authoritatively than either Google or Wikipedia.

Gosh, those are a lot of different possible starting points! If they don’t pan out, or if the number of choices seems too overwhelming for you to decide where to begin, remember that the research librarians are here to help you! For further assistance, drop by their offices (Suite 1110, Eck Hall) or contact them by phone, e-mail, or via askus@nd.edu.

-Chris O’Byrne

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