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# Eight Reasons Solo Lawyers Should

## Use Law Libraries<sup>1</sup>

by Michael Whiteman<sup>2</sup>

### One: Librarians

Libraries employ people whose job is to help you use the library and figure out your research puzzles. Law librarians specialize in legal materials and the needs of legal researchers. Many are legally trained. We keep up with new sources and techniques and can often save you hours in your research. What's more important to you than your time?

Librarians help create order out of chaos. A helpful set of links for online information in your jurisdiction can easily save you hours in your research. For example see Chase's Law Library Research Links page at: <http://chaselaw.nku.edu/library/> or the Cincinnati Law Library Associations' Kentucky page at: <http://www.cincinnati.org/resources/kentucky.html>

### Two: Books

You've got a limited budget and limited office space, so you don't buy every practice manual, looseleaf service, formbook, or treatise that might come in handy. Your local law library is a great resource. (If you find the book or set is really useful, then you can order it for your office collection.)

Even if you are very comfortable using online research, some sources are easier to use in print. Many people find it helpful to use annotated codes in print because of their layout. Sometimes you might use a database to find a source, but sit down with the print when it comes time to skim the whole chapter you need.

This is especially true when trying to find information from outside your jurisdiction. For example if you needed to find information from Indiana, Chase's Law Library has the Indiana Digest, the Indiana Law Encyclopedia, the Annotated Indiana Code, and the Indiana Administrative Code.

And remember that not everything is online (and certainly not everything is online free!).

### Three: Databases

Many public and academic law libraries subscribe to databases that lawyers and often members of the public can use free. Say you subscribe to a thrifty Westlaw or LexisNexis package that gives you access to your own state's laws and cases. When you need to research some other state's law, wouldn't it be great to be able to use the law library's subscription?

-Chase's Law Library provides access to Westlaw Pro which gives users the ability to search through all 50 state cases and statutes as well as federal cases and statutes.

-The Cincinnati Law Library Association provides its members 24-hour remote access to Fastcase, an online research portal with cases from all 50 states as well as the federal judiciary.

Some of the databases popular with the lawyers who use the Chase Law Library include:

-LegalTrac, an index of legal periodical articles, 1980-present.

-Hein Online, a collection of pdf documents from a variety of sources. It includes hundreds of law journals (from the nineteenth century on!), Statutes at Large, the Federal Register, treaties, and federal legislative histories.

-KeyCite, the component of Westlaw that enables researchers to check the history of a case, statute, or other document and find citing references.

-CCH for tax and business research.

-BNA, a wide range of newsletters and databases, including BNA publications in tax, labor, and health.

**Nonlegal databases.** Ever need economics, business, scientific, or medical information? The law library might have access. If not, your public library or local university library is a great source for nonlegal information.

**You can test drive databases before you decide to subscribe.**

**Four: Audiovisual materials**

-Want a DVD on cross-examination? A refresher in research? Chase's Law Library has a whole host of Videos and DVDs that can help a legal practitioner review some of the fundamentals of legal practice.

**Five: Space**

-One attraction of solo practice is getting to work in your own special space and wear your bathrobe while you're drafting motions. But what if you want a change of scenery? The law library provides you with a fresh place to work – and maybe a fresh outlook.

-The Cincinnati Law Library Association has conference rooms that you can reserve for meetings with clients or colleagues. Pretty neat if you don't want them to see your ironing board and that lunatic cat in your home office.

-Location, location, location. The Cincinnati Law Library Association is located in the Hamilton County Courthouse. What a great place to gather your thoughts before you argue your motion. The Chase Law Library is located at Northern Kentucky University, a convenient escape from the hustle and bustle of the big city.

**Six: Networking**

-When you're in a firm or a government agency, you often pick up a lot at the water cooler. You can bounce ideas off your colleagues and hear what projects they're involved with. That's a little harder for solo practitioners. But at the law library, you'll run into law school classmates, former coworkers, and other acquaintances in the legal community.

-Who knows? The contacts you keep up might even lead to referrals for you.

**Seven: Services at a Distance**

-Law libraries also offer other services when you're away from the library, such as telephone or email reference (or even instant messaging reference). The law library can help you even when you're in your office or on the road.

-Many law libraries offer a document delivery service, and can send you copies of material for a fee. Both the Chase Law Library and the Cincinnati Law Library Association offer these types of services.

**Eight: Training**

-Many law libraries offer training, sometimes with CLE credits.

-For instance, the Cincinnati Law Library Association offers its members periodic training in legal research, as well as substantive CLE courses.

**Follow the librarian credo:** Just ask! You might be surprised what the law library can do for you!

**(Footnotes)**

<sup>1</sup> Liberally adapted, with permission, from an online article by Mary Whisner. The original is available at <http://www.llrx.com/extras/shorttakes12.htm>. Mary Whisner is assistant librarian for reference services at the Gallagher Law Library of the University of Washington and author of Trail Ad Notes.

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