

Oklahoma City University School of Law

From the Selected Works of Jennifer S. Prilliman

Winter 2015

Levitt, Carole A. & Judy K. Davis, Internet Legal Research on a Budget: Free and Low Cost Resources for Lawyers, Chicago: American Bar Association, 2014. 321p. \$89.95.

Jennifer S. Prilliman



Available at: https://works.bepress.com/jennifer_prilliman/3/

approach for situations with no predefined issues or law. Kossof states that one should always start one's legal research with primary sources. However, as another reviewer of this book pointed out, "complete legal research usually requires starting with secondary resources and cannot be finished without making sure primary sources of law are still valid."⁸ It is probably wise for researchers not to solely rely on Kossof's work when it comes to research strategies. By the same token, simply relying on a translated version of Chinese law is not always feasible. Researchers may still want to seek help from professional legal translators for cases or local regulations where no translated versions are available.

¶30 One good feature of this book is additional readings. Kossof provides a list of such material at the end of each chapter. Even though some of the readings are cross-listed under different chapters, those titles are carefully selected, valuable resources. Readers may want to refer to these additional resources since Kossof's book does not have footnotes.

¶31 Other less noticeable flaws of this book are typos and the inaccurate use of agency names and book titles. For example, the first paragraph of chapter 4 states that "Chapter Six will provide all of the information that a foreign legal research will need to understand the basics of administrative regulations" (p.21). This should be "researcher" rather than "research." Kossof provides abbreviated and translated names for many Chinese legal sources, but he fails to do this for one of them: the translated name for *Remin Fayuan Anli Xuan* (人民法院案例选) is *People's Court Case Selection*. The index of this book is not very useful. No subheadings (words or phrases) are provided under any main headings. Page numbers for specific headings are provided, but not all of them point readers to sections where useful material relating to those specific headings can be found. Many of the page locators send readers to sections where headings are merely mentioned.

¶32 Overall, *Chinese Legal Research* is a quick and fun read. The biggest advantage of this book is that the author keeps the targeted readers' needs in mind throughout the book. Some of the insights and tips that Kossof provides might resonate with some researchers, but this book should never be used as the reference tool or a definitive guide for conducting Chinese legal research for reasons discussed in this review. Selectors at individual institutions will want to critically evaluate this book before purchasing.

Levitt, Carole A. & Judy K. Davis, *Internet Legal Research on a Budget: Free and Low-Cost Resources for Lawyers*, Chicago: American Bar Association, 2014. 321p. \$89.95.

*Reviewed by Jennifer S. Prilliman**

¶33 In the opening pages of *Internet Legal Research on a Budget: Free and Low-Cost Resources for Lawyers*, Carole A. Levitt and Judy K. Davis express their hope that their book "empowers you [i.e., a lawyer] to become a more efficient and effec-

8. Xiaomeng Zhang, Book Review, *On Describing Chinese Legal Research*, 2014 CHINESE J. COMP. L. 1.

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tive researcher” (p.xix). The book proceeds to carefully walk readers through extensive lists and descriptions of websites and databases that provide free or very low-cost legal research materials. It certainly does empower readers to think outside the box and explore more cost-effective research tools.

¶34 The authors are clear that this book focuses on sources of law rather than fact finding or investigative research. It is not a legal research textbook. It does not provide in-depth background or history of the sources of law, and it contains little substantive basic research instruction. The authors expect readers to have a fair amount of knowledge about the structure and types of primary and secondary sources law. For example, blawgs are referenced throughout the book, but the role they play in legal research is not thoroughly explained. However, the authors do stop throughout the book and briefly explain technical terms that an attorney may not be familiar with, such as “apps” and “crowdsourcing.” There is also a nice short chapter covering how to use major social media networks, such as Twitter and Facebook, for research with or without having your own account.

¶35 The book is divided into concise and palatable chapters organized by subject and then by resource. Rather than read chapter by chapter, the book is best browsed or searched using the index. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction about the landscape of available resources in a given category. For example, part 3 on case law databases is divided into two chapters. One covers free commercial or proprietary databases, including FindLaw and Google Scholar, and the other provides information about government-sponsored online case databases. Unlike many other practical research books, the screenshots and accompanying captions are very crisp and well executed. The writing is clear and avoids librarian jargon. As with any book covering online and electronic search tools, some of the specific content may be outdated by the time the book hits the shelf. Levitt and Davis address this when possible by noting best practices and providing guidance for finding your way around and assessing an online legal research tool.

¶36 Practitioners looking for alternatives to expensive commercial databases are the intended readers. Therefore, librarians who serve public and attorney patrons will find this to be a valuable and accessible reference tool. Firm librarians may also want to add this title to their collections if they are trying to train associates to keep legal research costs down. For legal research instructors looking for a textbook, this is not the resource for you, but it would serve as an excellent recommended text and may provide you with some new ideas to share with your class.

Linder, Douglas O., and Nancy Levit. *The Good Lawyer: Seeking Quality in the Practice of Law*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 330p. \$24.95.

*Reviewed by Grace Feldman**

¶37 It is no secret that admitting at a cocktail party that you are a lawyer usually leads to jokes about the unsavory reputation of the legal profession. Quality in the practice of law can be difficult to identify, with countless reports of attorneys faced

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