Back to the Future of Legal Research

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Goals for 1st Year Legal Research

• Multiple sources for finding answers
• No “Best” source ever
• What is a “better” source will change

So they have to adapt and be very conscious of where (and how) they are searching.
We Stress Intentionality by:

• Requiring them to use sources other than Westlaw or Lexis

• Requiring them to justify their database and search string selections w/in WL and Lexis

• Use of reflection questions in assignments.
In Lectures we make a point to:

• Build in timely student focused issues / cases / events / to discussions (and again in the drills and assignments)

• Emphasize that more efficient research leads to helping greater numbers of clients

• Discuss potential lack of WL and Lexis in social justice jobs.

• Point out that not all information is on wexis
We Teach:

• Segments / fields, early and often. (using them creates intentionality)

• Database selection - often overlooked but creates better researchers.

• That outside sources often more efficient (and how to gauge that)
In assignments we:

• Require that they recommend one system over the other based on a specific type of material.

• Require that they compare hardcopy and online researching in a thoughtful way.

• Require that they chose and support choice of secondary sources
Conscious Choice

• Each step along the research path requires choices
• Well thought out choices lead to better research, which leads to:
  • Good practice - good lawyering skills
  • **Not** research by rote