



# AMERICAN LAW REPORTS RESEARCH GUIDE

H. DOUGLAS BARCLAY LAW LIBRARY

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## **PURPOSE:**

This revised pathfinder is an introduction to the *American Law Reports (ALR)* series. It offers tips on how to use the series. It also shows how the *ALR* fits into the publisher's *Total Client-Service Library (TCSL)* research system. Please note that references to *ALR* 'articles' or 'annotations' in this pathfinder refer to the same thing, an essay on a topic of law.

## **OUTLINE:**

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## **I. GETTING STARTED:**

### **1. CALI at <http://cali.org/>**

CALI is a service that provides students with tools to advance their legal education. Students can learn how to use *ALR* Annotations while being tested by an online quiz. (Note: students need to register their email address and create a password in order to use the lesson.). The steps are as follows:

- Click on the Lessons Tab located at the top left hand corner of the page.
- Select the category Lessons by Subject.
- Choose Legal Research, which is located under the First Year section.
- Click on *ALR*.

### **2. Westlaw *ALR* at: <http://west.thomson.com/alr/> (as of 12/13/07)**

- Presents the different uses of the *ALR*.
- Explanation of how the *ALR* is formatted.
- Podcast available for download or listening.
- Presented by *ALR* expert Alan Cohen.
- Includes link to free *ALR* resources.

## **II. WHAT ARE THE AMERICAN LAW REPORTS?**

The *ALR* offers researchers annotations (articles) on a narrow point of law. The *ALR* is not a reporter in the sense that it collects the text of reported cases in a given jurisdiction.

Typical annotations start with the text of an entire appellate case and are followed by a discussion of the legal trend or doctrine that that case represents. These annotations also comment on related decisions from all jurisdictions on the points of law raised by the representative case. A *Table of Jurisdictions* directs the researcher to cases within specific states. A relevant annotation will also provide the researcher with prevailing policy arguments and legal doctrine for the issue covered in the annotation.

Additionally, a relevant annotation will provide the researcher with citations to cases, statutes, law reviews, and other *ALR* annotations. These citations typically found in an *ALR* annotation offer a useful starting point for research on narrow points of law.

Updating:

The *ALR* series continues to be updated. Updated commentary and case comments are found in the pocket parts. Also, *ALR* annotations are super-ceded by later, more current

annotations. To verify that an annotation has or has not been super-ceded, researchers should check in the *History Table* at the end of the *ALR Index* for any references to the annotation that they are consulting.

### **III. CONTENTS OF AN ALR ANNOTATION**

(**Note:** These features appear in *ALR 5th*, *ALR 6th*, and *ALR Federal*. Earlier series may differ.)

#### **Typical Annotation Contents**

1. Fully reported case at the beginning of the annotation that illustrates the point under consideration in the annotation, including a summary of the decision.
2. Scope statement – states subject matter of annotation and modifications of earlier annotations.
3. Related annotations - directs the researcher to related subjects for research.
4. Summary - provides overview of the discussions in the annotation.
5. Practice pointers – provides tips for case preparation and trial tactics.
6. Detailed case analysis - summarizes every case on point, organized according to the legal principles and factual situations involved.

### **IV. HOW THE ALR SERIES IS ORGANIZED**

The *ALR* series has six distinct sets of *ALR* annotations. Each set of volumes is augmented by various finding aids and updates. The series includes the following:

- ***American Law Reports: Annotated***  
**(1919 – 1948) Vols. 1 – 175 KF 132 Floor 4**  
 – *ALR First Series Quick Index* **KF132**
- ***American Law Reports: Annotated. 2d series***  
**(1948 - 1965) Vols. 1 – 100 KF 132 Floor 4**  
 – *ALR 2d Digest* (vols. 1-7) **KF 132**  
 – *ALR 2d Later Case Service Supplement* (vols. 1-100) **KF 132**  
 – *ALR 2d Series Word Index to Annotations* (vols. 1-75) **KF 132**
- ***ALR 3d* (1965 - 1980) Vols. 1 – 100 KF 132 Floor 4**  
 – See the *ALR Digests and Indexes* section below.
- ***ALR 4th* (1980 - 1992) Vols. 1 – 90 KF 132 Floor 4**

- See the *ALR* Digests and Indexes section below.
- ***ALR 5th* (1992 - 2004) Vols. 1 – 120 KF 132 Floor 4**
  - See the *ALR* Digests and Indexes section below.
- ***ALR 6th* (2004 - ) Vols. 1- KF 132 Floor 4**
  - *ALR 5th* and *6th* Table of Cases (vols. A-Z, 2006 ed.) **KF 132**
- ***ALR Federal* (1969 - 2005 ) Vols. 1- 200 KF 132 Floor 4**
  - *ALR Federal* Quick Index (covers Fed. and Fed. 2d, 2001 ed. w/updates) **KF 132**
  - *ALR Federal* Quick Index, Fed and Fed 2d (2006 ed.) **KF 132**
- ***ALR Federal 2d* (2005 - ) Vols. 1- KF 132 Floor 4**
  - *ALR Federal* Table of Cases (covers Fed. and Fed. 2d) **KF 132**
- ***ALR Digests and Indexes* KF 132 Floor 4**
  - *ALR* Digest of Annotations with “*Total Client-Service*” Library References (covers 3d, 4th, 5th, and Federal) **KF 132**
  - *ALR* Quick Index (covers 3d, 4th, 5th, and 6th) **KF 132**
  - *ALR* Index (covers 2d, 3d, 4th, 5th, and Federal) **KF 132.6**
  - *West’s ALR Digest* (vols. 1-20) **KF 132.1**

## **V. FINDING AN ALR ANNOTATION**

### • **ALR Indexes:**

Use the index to search for an annotation by topic or title. Looking for the legal term or descriptive word that most closely identifies your topic or issue. Indexes include:

- **Quick Indexes** include:
  - *ALR First Series Quick Index* (covers first series) **KF 132**
- **Combined Quick Indexes** are available for:
  - *ALR Quick Index* (covers 3d, 4th, 5th, and 6th) **KF 132**
  - *ALR Federal Quick Index, Fed and Fed 2d* (covers *Fed* and *Fed 2d*) **KF 132**
- **Combined Longer Index** is available for:
  - *ALR Index* (covers 2d, 3d, 4th, 5th, and *Fed*) **KF 132.6**

**Note:** Volume 6 of the combined index contains a history table which lists annotations that have been supplemented or superseded.

**This table should always be consulted when using the ALR.**

- **ALR Digests:**
  - Organize the law into more than 400 legal topics.
  - Separate sets of digest volumes are available for *ALR 1st* and *ALR 2d*.
  - *ALR 3d, 4th, 5th*, and *Fed* are combined in one set.
- **ALR Total Client-Service Library:**
  - Other units of the "Total Client-Service Library" (TCSL) often provide references to annotations (see below for more on the TCSL).
  - The TCSL is included in every annotation.

For more details about finding an annotation consult the beginning pages of any *ALR 4th* or *ALR 5th* volume. Each volume in the *ALR 4th & ALR 5th* series has an alphabetical list of subjects annotated as well as a list of annotations in each volume.

## **VI. ALR ON WESTLAW:**

\*Authorized Westlaw passwords required.

- The Westlaw database contains the following editions: *ALR 2d, 3d, 4th, 5th, 6th, Fed (1969- )*, *Fed 2d*, and the Index.
- Westlaw updates *ALR2d-ALR6th*, *ALR Fed*, and *ALR Fed 2d* on a weekly basis, which ensures that your research is current.
- The Westlaw database provides electronic annotations (“e-annos”), which are not available in print. Find them by year and # (i.e. 2005 *A.L.R.6th* 1).
- The *ALR* database can be searched in several ways, including the Table of Contents, the Index, or by West Digest Key Numbers.
- The following search fields will help ease your research:
  - TC for Table of Contents
  - IN for Index
  - TO for West Digest Key Numbers
  - CI for Citation
- Example. To limit your search to the *ALR* index, search using this format: **ci(index)** and your keyword or topic.

## **VII. UPDATING AN ALR ANNOTATION**

Check the “History Table” in the *ALR Index* to see a list of updated annotations from *ALR 2d, ALR 3d, ALR 4th, ALR 5th*, or *ALR Federal*.

In addition, each series has its own form of supplementation. For more details about “How is an *ALR* Annotation Updated” consult the beginning pages of any *ALR 4th* or *ALR 5th* volume.

### **VIII. THE "TOTAL CLIENT-SERVICE LIBRARY" (TCSL)**

The *Total Client Service Library* (TCSL) is found in each *ALR* annotation. The TCSL refers the researcher to an integrated package of West’s encyclopedias, case reporters, treatises, finding aids, and practice guides on a given topic. All of these resources are cross referenced to one another and allow the researcher to comprehensively research a given topic.

Resources typically referred to in the TCSL include:

- *American Jurisprudence 2d*; **Reference (Encyclopedias Wall); KF154 .A42.**
- *American Jurisprudence Pleading and Practice Forms Annotated*; **KF 8836 .A45.**
- *American Jurisprudence Proof of Facts*; **KF 8915 .A81.**
- *American Jurisprudence Trials*; **KF 8915 .A82.**
- *New York Jurisprudence 2d*; **Reference (Encyclopedias Wall); KFN5065 .N48 2d.**
- *United States Code Service*; **Floor 4; KF62.5 .L3.**
- *New York Consolidated Laws Service*; **Stack 1; KFN 5030 .A45.**
- *Federal Procedure*; **Floor 5; KF 8835 .F431.**
- *United States Supreme Court Reports. Lawyers’ Edition*; **Floor 4; KF101 .L38.**
- *Ballentine's Law Dictionary*; **Reference; KF 156 .B3.**

### **IX. VIDEO GUIDE**

*How to Use ALR*; **Reserves; KF 240 .H68**

- Discusses various techniques to successfully use the *ALR*.

## **X. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

The following titles have sections dedicated to a discussion of the ALR.

MORRIS L. COHEN ET AL., *HOW TO FIND THE LAW*, 115-134 (9th ed. 1989).  
**Reserves; KF 240. H68**

- Overview with illustrations of an ALR annotation

CHRISTINA L. KUNZ ET AL., *THE PROCESS OF LEGAL RESEARCH*, CHAPTER 6: ALR ANNOTATION 91 (6th ed. 2004).  
**KF 240 .P76**

- Tips for finding ALR annotations online.

ROY M. MERSKY ET AL., *FUNDAMENTALS OF LEGAL RESEARCH*, CHAPTER 7: ANNOTATED LAW REPORTS 115-132 (8th ed. 2002).  
**Reserves: KF 240 F86**

- Overview with illustrations of a typical ALR annotation.

LAUREL CURRIE OATES ET AL., *THE LEGAL WRITING HANDBOOK: ANALYSIS, RESEARCH AND WRITING*, CHAPTER 16: SECONDARY SOURCES 495-501 (3d ed. 2002).  
**Reference: KF 250.E57**

See § 16.2.1.

- Using the *ALR* as a secondary source, with illustrations of *ALR* indexes.
- Explains how an *ALR* is updated.

AMY E. SLOAN, *BASIC LEGAL RESEARCH: TOOLS AND STRATEGIES*, CHAPTER 3: SECONDARY SOURCE RESEARCH, 41-42, 56-57, 60-68 (3d ed. 2006).  
**Reference; KF 240.S585**

- Basic explanation of the *ALR* with illustrations.