

Research Logs

by Helen Frazer, Law Librarian

Research logs record all the research you do on an issue or project and are useful because they:

- Document the searches you made.
- Record the results of your searches.
- Record unproductive searches.
- Illuminate your research plan.
- Reveal gaps in the research plan.
- Turn up additional issues or approaches.
- Support your record keeping of time spent.
- A tool/skill of professional researchers.

How to start your research log:

- Use a log template.
 - On paper, or
 - Make a table log online in Microsoft Word or other software.
- Make a log page for each issue.
- Keep your log as part of your research file.

Include in your log:

- Date you did the research.
- Source consulted (e.g., library catalog, database, index, encyclopedia, multi-volume treatise, etc.).
- Descriptive words and phrases or West topics and keywords used.
- Citations to materials found.
- Notations when the search turns up nothing (very important!).
- Comments about usefulness of material(s) found, e.g.:
 - Positive/helpful for the issue or topic.
 - Negative/not helpful for the issue or topic.
 - Useless or irrelevant for the issue or topic.
- Notes about things to follow up, e.g., update or monitor source, etc.
- Copies of important materials found.
 - Alternatively, cut and paste (but add quotation marks).
 - Pdf copies are required by law reviews for citation checks.

Sample Research Log

Question or Issue: _____

(Use a separate log sheet for each question or issue.)

Date	Source & Descriptive Words West Topic & Key #, etc.	Citation to Source	No Result	Comments re Usefulness Or not of Source	Follow-up Needed	Copy Made

Helen Frazer, 8-30-10, UDC-DCSL Mason Law Library