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What are the sources of Law.

Law is an abstract term. In order to know what law is made up of you have to derive it from all sorts of places, the places which law are derived from are called the sources of law. Sources of law can be defined as a place to which a legal practitioner or judge turns to in order to answer a legal problem. The sources of law can be divided into two, high are the primary sources and the secondary sources. Secondary sources of law are background resources. They explain, interpret and analyze. They are a good way to start research and often have citations to primary sources. Some secondary sources of law are:

- *Law reports
- *Textbooks and treatises
- *Periodicals, journals and legal digests
- *Casebooks
- *Legal dictionaries
- *Newspapers

Law reports: Law reports are series of books that contain judicial opinions from a selection of case law decided by courts. Law reports fall into two broad types, full text law reports which incorporate the full judgements given by the court, together with a summary of the case known as the head note and a number of other elements and the summary reports which are also known as case summaries, digests, case notes etc, consists of summaries or abridgements of the judgement, and are presented in a less formal way than full law reports. Law reporting is essential for the growth of the case law system. There have been private, government's initiative towards this direction. The Nigerian Weekly Law Reports (NWLR) by Chief Gani Fawehinmi and all the Nigerian Law Reports by the Federal Ministry of Justice amongst others are some of the well compiled and edited series.

Textbooks and treatises: Textbooks may serve as a secondary source of law due to the fact that they contain information on the way law works, if the position of the law on a point is not clear, the court may turn to Textbooks by notable authors for assistance and guidance. Treatises are single or multi-volume works dedicated to the examination of an area of law. They tend to be very good at describing the law, they are good law finders and many of the classic treatises are persuasive. Treatises tend to provide an in-depth discussion of a particular area of law and will provide the researcher with references to a few cases and statutes.

Periodicals, journals and legal digests: Legal periodical articles are in-depth discussions of narrow areas of the law and legal issues. Articles in academic journals tend to revolve around

very theoretical and cutting-edge legal issues. Articles in practitioner-oriented journals tend to be more practical. Periodical articles can be very good law finders; they tend to have a great many footnotes with a lot of legal citations. Some articles by eminent scholars can be persuasive. Occasionally, legal periodical articles can be useful for explaining the law, but often they are too theoretical for that. A law journal is a scholarly or academic publication presenting commentary of emerging or topical developments in the law, and often specializing in a particular area of the law or legal information specific to a jurisdiction. Law journals are usually published by one of the following sources:

- *Those edited and published by students at a law school such as the Harvard Law Review;
- *Those edited and published by a commercial law publisher
- *Those edited and published by a law association such as a bar association or law society, such as The Advocate (published by the Vancouver Bar Association).

Historically law journals have been presented in newspaper format. Law journals are critical to the proper functioning of legal systems. They contribute invaluablely to the development of the law by influencing statutory law reforms and case law. Law reviews, it may be added, also perform the important function of facilitating access to the law. Finally legal digests, a digest is essentially an index to case law; it takes the headnotes that summarize the points of law discussed in each case and organizes them by subject. Determine the jurisdiction for which you need to find cases, then consult a digest that covers that jurisdiction. Always work with the narrowest jurisdiction possible so you don't waste time weeding out jurisdictionally irrelevant information.

Casebooks: A casebook is a type of textbook used primarily by students in law schools. Rather than simply laying out the legal doctrine in a particular area of study, a casebook contains excerpts from legal cases in which the law of that area was applied. It is then up to the student to analyze the language of the case in order to determine what rule was applied and how the court applied it. Casebooks sometimes also contain excerpts from law review articles and legal treatises, historical notes, editorial commentary, and other related materials to provide background for the cases. Most casebooks are authored by law professors, usually with two, three, or four authors, at least one of whom will be a professor at the top of his or her field in the area under discussion. New editions of casebooks often retain the names of famous professors on their covers decades after those professors have died. Updating of the books, then, falls on the shoulders of a younger generation of their colleagues.

Legal dictionaries: A legal dictionary contains the definitions of legal terms taken from a variety of sources. They are the first place you should look when you do not understand what a legal term means. The two most commonly used legal dictionaries are Black's Law Dictionary and Ballentine's Law Dictionary. In addition to providing a general definition of the legal term in question, legal dictionaries may also provide references to applicable primary law and other secondary sources containing more in-depth discussions of the term.

Newspapers: Contain articles discussing various laws, regulations and various related issues. They are easy to find, provide terminologies and are the best place to start your research. Seeing as they keep up with the times and are updated everyday, they will be up to date and if you're looking for something that happened in the past they are the easiest to fall back on.

Footnotes

library guides.oswego.edu

guides.II.georgetown.edu

libguides.law.drake.edu

www.duhaime.org

library.law.yale.edu

www.icrl.co.uk

djetlawyer.com