Legal Research Skills
The aim of this session

To help you find good quality information

By the end of this session you will:

• Be familiar with common legal materials and where to find them
• Be able to search the legal and academic databases
• Be able to identify where to find information on referencing your work using OSCOLA
Sources of information: Textbooks

- May not find books that focus just on area of law you are interested in
- Look at table of contents and index
- Look at chapters on defamation
  - articles at end of chapters
  - cases mentioned
  - footnotes
  - comments in text
  - “Thinking points” sections
  - bibliography
Halsbury’s Laws of England

• Multi-volume legal encyclopaedia (roughly 100 volumes)
• Covers all areas of English law
• Helps you find most important cases, legislation and commentary in an area of English law
• Topics are arranged by subject
• Usually 1-2 pages long
Sources of information: **Websites**

Make sure they’re good quality sites!

- Official sites
- Follow up recommendations from lecturers or books/journal articles

Leveson inquiry
http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/

Human Rights blog
http://ukhumanrightsblog.com/

Guardian newspaper law page
http://www.theguardian.com/law
Current awareness

- Keep track of recent developments in area of law
- Current awareness tabs in Westlaw, LexisLibrary and Lawtel
- Updates on cases, legislation, official and non-official publications, press releases, newspaper and journal articles
- Search by topic area or keyword

- Practitioner Magazines!
  - New Law Journal
  - Legal Week
  - The Lawyer
  - Lawyer2B
  - The Legal Executive (CILEX) Journal
Sources of information: Law Reports

Use Westlaw and LexisLibrary to find law reports
– by subject
– by party name
– by cases cited
– by cases citing
– that refer to a particular piece of legislation
– of cases that were heard in a particular court
What is a law report?

“A law report is a published report of a judgment, with additional features such as a headnote summarising the facts of the case and the judgment, catchwords used for indexing, and lists of cases considered”

Definition from Oxford Standard for the Citation of Legal Authorities (OSCOLA), 4th ed.
Sources of information: Journal articles

Journal
• an academic magazine
• usually focused on a specific subject such as law or an area of law

Article
• an essay or piece of writing that has been published in a journal
• usually written by an academic or researcher

Scholarly/peer reviewed journal
• high quality journal
• article has been scrutinised by experts (‘peers’)
Finding a specific journal article

Joe Purshouse, ‘The reasonable expectation of privacy and the criminal suspect’ (2016) 79 MLR 871
Deciphering Legal Abbreviations

Joe Purshouse, ‘The reasonable expectation of privacy and the criminal suspect’ (2016) 79 *MLR* 871

Need to know what *MLR* is an abbreviation of?

– Use [Cardiff Index for Legal Abbreviations](#)

Cardiff Index will show

• what an abbreviation stands for
• which is the best abbreviation for a journal title or law report series
Law LibGuide

https://libguides.lsbu.ac.uk/law

• Library catalogues
• Databases
• Training materials
• Contact details
• Current awareness

Bookmark for quick access
Finding information on your research topic

What is your topic?

Identify alternative terms
  • synonyms (similar/identical meanings)
  • alternative spellings

Keep a note of every search you do
  • adjust key words as you go along
Focussing and broadening your search

Use **AND** to focus your search
eg principal **AND** agency
   not needed in Westlaw which puts ‘and’ between all words

Use **OR** to broaden your search
eg consent **OR** agreement **OR** assent

Use **NOT** to exclude a topic
eg contract **NOT** housing
Truncation and phrase searching

Use ! to find different possible endings to a word in Westlaw/Lexis

E.g.: discriminat! would find discriminate, discriminated, discrimination, discriminating etc

Use a * in academic journal databases

Use “” [quotation marks] to search for a phrase

E.g.: “contract law” and “third party”

not needed in Lexis Library which treats everything as a phrase
Accessing other libraries

SCONUL Access
– Access other university libraries around the UK
– May have borrowing rights
– Generally access to print resources only
– Eduroam allows laptop Internet access at some institutions

Law Libguide Home Page – Key Links – Library Services – Visiting other Libraries
Referencing
Why reference?

• To acknowledge other people’s ideas

• To enable your reader to trace your sources

• To prove that you have done research and that you have included others’ ideas

• To support your ideas and arguments

• To avoid charges of plagiarism which is a serious academic offence
Footnotes

Footnotes at the end of sentences in superscript (little number above the text)

If the name of a case or the name of piece of legislation is named in the text, it is not necessary to repeat it in a footnote (though you can if you want to)

Still need to add the details of case in footnote, however

“Pinpoints” are the page numbers where the quotes can be found
Example

Text:
It is well represented in the case law, perhaps most notably in the expression of the no conflict rule advocated by Lord Upjohn in *Phipps v Boardman*,\(^{31}\) and in the earlier Court of Appeal decision in *Boulting v Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians*.\(^{32}\) In *Boulting* [or in the *Boulting* case], Upjohn LJ said that the rule ‘must be applied realistically to a state of affairs which discloses a real conflict of duty and interest and not to some theoretical or rhetorical conflict’.\(^{33}\) In *Phipps*, Lord Upjohn developed his view of the rule further by adding that there must be a ‘real sensible possibility of conflict’.\(^{34}\)

Footnotes:
\(^{31}\) [1967] 2 AC 46 (HL).
\(^{32}\) [1963] 2 QB 606 (CA).
\(^{33}\) *Boulting* (n 32) 638. OR \(^{33}\) ibid 638.
\(^{34}\) *Phipps* (n 31) 124.

Source: OSCOLA, pp 3-4
OSCOLA

Referencing resources on https://libguides.lsbu.ac.uk/law/oscola

Official OSCOLA guidance, ‘Citing the Law’ online tutorial, LSBU
Quick Guide to OSCOLA

Ask for one-to-one help
Where to get Help
Library and Learning Resources

Academic Liaison Team (ALT)

Law and Social Sciences
LLRLss@lsbu.ac.uk

Research Helpdesk, 3 Bridge
Mon-Fri 11.00am-4.30pm
Any questions?