Plan Your Research
Before you go anywhere near a database or catalog, answer the following questions:

- What are the legal issues? In a broad sense? In a narrow sense?
- What are the facts?
- What is the applicable jurisdiction?

Use the legal and factual issues to generate search terms. These will be the keywords you use to find relevant material. Don’t be too attached to a particular term or combination of words—you may need to try them alone and in various combinations to hit on a useful search.

Start with Secondary Sources
Don’t try to locate cases, statutes, or regulations as your first step. Look for scholarly sources about your topic to learn the important details and to find out the relevant primary law.

**Common types of secondary sources:**

- **Legal encyclopedias** (e.g., AmJur, CJS, Michigan Law and Practice) summarize hundreds of legal doctrines.
- **American Law Reports** (i.e., ALR) go into more depth than legal encyclopedias, with annotations on narrow topics.
- **Restatements** summarize the basic doctrine of an area of law as it stands at the time of publication.
- **Treatises** are texts that take a deep dive into a particular legal doctrine or area of law.
- **Law journal articles** tend to cover specific issues in narrow areas of law.

**Common locations of secondary sources:**

- Find legal encyclopedias, ALRs, and Restatements in the Reference Collection on Sub-1.
- Locate relevant treatises using Treatise Finder.
- Search for law review articles in HeinOnline’s Law Journal Library or on Westlaw/Lexis.

Find Primary Sources in Secondary Sources

- Does an ALR annotation refer to a specific code section?
- Does a treatise mention a particular regulation?
- Do multiple law journal articles cite the same case?
  → These are the primary sources relevant to your research.

Remember that cases, statutes, and regulations at the local, state, and federal levels can all have an impact on your issue.

Learn more about legal research strategy and locating reliable resources with the guide

Getting Started with Legal Research:
http://libguides.law.umich.edu/getting-started