Cost effective use of Westlaw & Lexis:

Getting the most bang for your research buck

1. **Use Free resources**
	1. Portal sites for state and federal links - will get links for statutes, courts and cases, regulations
	* Legal Information Institute - <http://www.law.cornell.edu/>
	* Findlaw - <http://lp.findlaw.com/>
	1. Sites for cases, legislation and regulations
* FDsys - (federal statutes and regulations) - <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>
	+ Google scholar (cases) - <http://scholar.google.com/>
	+ Regulations.gov ( proposed federal regulations) - <http://www.regulations.gov/>
	+ Thomas.gov (Federal Legislation) - <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.php>
	+ State government web site - *e.g.* <http://www.ny.gov/>
	+ Google search for your topic - *BE AWARE* of reliability and bias of whatever sites you find
1. **Strategies for cost-savings by using other subscription databases and resources**
	* Many areas of law have specialized databases which are not charged on a usage basis
	* Look for BNA, CCH, HeinOnline, RIA and many others
	* Ask librarian or whomever manages online resources
2. **Cost effective Westlaw & Lexis**
3. Before logging in to Westlaw or Lexis you should find out or know:
	* What databases are part of your “flat rate” contract. (This will usually be your state’s primary materials and maybe some federal)
	* If you are charged on a transaction or hourly basis for databases outside of your contract.
	* WestlawNext and LexisAdvance currently charge by document viewed, rather than transaction or hourly for materials outside of contract
	* Even for “unlimited” databases, firm’s annual charge based on usage
4. Tips for avoiding high cost searches
* For transactional plans, find smallest database (*e.g.* just your state’s cases, not all 50 state’s cases)
	+ BEWARE of RESULTS PLUS on Westlaw and of searching Secondary Sources generally - they typically are not in contracts and are VERY EXPENSIVE
	+ If available, use print Secondary Sources
	+ Use Focus or Locate - they do not cost anything
	+ Don’t use Westlaw and Lexis - use free sources or other subscription databases - see 1 & 2 above
1. Tips for running efficient searches
* “Create your own database” - run a very broad search, then narrow using Focus or Locate
* Plan your search strategy well before logging in
* Call the 1-800 numbers to ask for search formation assistance
1. **\*\*\*ASK YOUR FAVORITE LIBRARIAN\*\*\***
* **Get to know the librarian at your firm/organization**
* **You are always welcome to contact us at Hofstra** (see your keychain)
* **The only “stupid” question is the one you did not ask**

By Marin Dell, Reference/Electronic Services Librarian and

Lisa Spar, Assistant Director for Reference and Instructional Services

Last updated: 3/26/2012