



# Thomas M. Cooley Law Libraries' Research Guide Series

## American Law Reports: A Research Guide

- I. Overview and History
- II. American Law Reports
- III. ALR Federal
- IV. ALR International
- V. Finding Aids
- VI West's Total Client- Service Library® (TCLS)
- VII. ALR Online

This guide seeks to provide an overview of each ALR series. It also refers to additional resources which enhance the use of this important legal research tool.

### I. OVERVIEW AND HISTORY

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Lawyer's Co-operative Publishing Company began publishing the periodical *Lawyers' Reports Annotated (LRA)*. The *Reports* provided case annotations and synopses of trial briefs as well as the full text of selected court decisions. The publisher touted this periodical as "[a] complete working library of text, work and reports."<sup>1</sup> However, reviewers of the publication questioned the need for this particular type of publication in light of the West Publishing Company's established reporter system which "digested" cases and opinions. One reviewer noted that, although the LRA was a valuable collection and a useful addition to a practitioner's library, it did not provide the complete and comprehensive reference to *all* important cases on a legal subject as advertisements had promised.<sup>2</sup>

While this selective approach to case reporting eventually lost out to West's comprehensive reporting system, the type of annotation service provided by the LRA continued as a useful research tool. In 1919, the *American Law Reports* continued several independent publications, brought together by the merger of the Lawyers Co-operative Publishing Company, the Edward Thompson Company and the Bancroft-Whitney Company. These historical publications included *American decisions, containing all the cases of general value and authority decided in the courts of the several states, from the earliest issue of the state reports [1760] to the year 1869* (published by Bancroft & Company, 1878-1888), *American Reports*, (1869-1887), the *American State Reports*, (1888-1911), *American and English Annotated Cases*, (1906-1918) and *American Annotated Cases* (published by Bancroft-Whitney and Edward Thompson Publishing), the *Lawyers' Reports Annotated*, (1888-1906) and the *Lawyers' Reports Annotated: New Series*, (1906-1918) from Lawyers Co-operative).

<sup>1</sup> See Book Reviews. 42 Am. L. Reg. 166 (January to December 1894). (Available through HeinOnline).

<sup>2</sup> Id. at 168.



The early ALR service provided key cases on areas of law which had not been previously settled. The text of each selected case was followed by annotations which included case law and analyses from all jurisdictions.<sup>3</sup> Eventually, the importance of the key cases became subsidiary to the usefulness of the annotations and analyses. Starting with the ALR 5th Series, the full texts of the cases have been relegated to the end of each volume.

In 1969, the ALR Federal Series was begun to cover federal legal issues. At this point ALR 3d, which had covered both federal and state issues, began concentrating its coverage on state topics. The ALR 4th and subsequent series cover state topics only. In 1997, publication of the American Law Reports was continued by West Publishing which started to include references to additional West print publications and electronic resources.

The ALR series remains a valuable research tool, especially if one is researching the law across several United States jurisdictions. The articles provide an in-depth review of fact specific situations.

The latest addition to the ALR family is the ALR International which had its inception in 2010. This series covers legal issues of global interest and includes case law from multiple sovereign jurisdictions in its analyses.

## II. AMERICAN LAW REPORTS

### **American Law Reports, First Series (1919-1948). (Volumes 1 – 175).**

**Location:** [KF132 .A5](#)

Volume One of the American Law Reports Annotated is a continuation of LRA 1918F. It was not referred to as ALR 1st until publication of subsequent series. It includes a Table of Cases Reported, the full text of each included opinion, a discussion of the legal issues represented in each included case, and the annotations which are grouped under subject headings drawn from points of law discussed in the opinions. The annotations include references to rulings on these points of law in numerous jurisdictions. Starting with Volume 99, the Series includes an index to annotations and cases at the back of each volume in addition to the table of cases. Finding aids and updating services for this 1st Series include the Permanent Digest, the Complete Word Index of Annotations, The First Series Quick Index and the Blue Book of Supplemental Decisions, and the Parallel Table for the 1st and 2d series (these resources are discussed below under "Finding Aids.")

### **American Law Reports, Second Series (1948-1965). (Volumes 1 – 100).**

**Location:** [KF132 .A6](#)

Each volume of ALR 2d and all subsequent ALR series include an alphabetical list of the legal subjects covered in each volume, with pinpoint references to the relevant annotations, as well as a Table of Cases Reported in that volume. Finding aids and updating services for the 2d Series include the ALR 2d Digest, the ALR 2d Series Word Index to Annotations, the ALR Index, the Later Case Service, and the Parallel Table.

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<sup>3</sup> *How to find the law* by Morris L. Cohen, Robert C. Berring, Kent C. Olson, St. Paul, MN: West Group, 1989, at 116.



**American Law Reports, Third Series (1965-1980). (Volumes 1 – 100).**

**Location:** [KF132 .A7](#)

Finding aids and updating services for ALR 3d include the ALR Digest of Annotations, the ALR Index and the ALR Quick Index. The individual volumes of ALR 3d are updated by pocket parts and supplemental pamphlets. Subscribers to ALR 3d and subsequent series may have access to the West toll-free Latest Case Hotline where they can learn about new cases affecting a particular ALR article. The ALR Federal Series started publication in 1969; however, the ALR 3d Series continued to cover both state and federal case law. Volume 78 of the ALR 3d is the last volume which is formatted with the entire case opinion preceding each annotation or article. Starting with volume 79, the full opinions are placed at the end of each volume; summaries of each case are still included at the beginning of each subject annotation.

**American Law Reports, Fourth Series (1980-1992). (Volumes 1 – 90).**

**Location:** [KF132 .A8](#)

**American Law Reports, Fifth Series (1992-2005). (Volumes 1 – 125).**

**Location:** [KF132.A855](#)

**American Law Reports, Sixth Series (2005-present). (Volumes 1 – current).**

**Location:** [KF132 .A87](#)

There are no separate digests or indexes for the American Law Reports 4th through 6th series. The basic finding aids are the same as for the 3d Series which are listed above. However, there is a separate Table of Cases for the 5th and 6th series. Starting with the ALR 4th Series, each ALR volume includes an alphabetical list of subjects annotated as well as the list of annotations in that volume. ALR 4th is the first ALR Series devoted to state case law. The ALR 4th Series includes references to West's Total Client-Service Library® (TCSL), which is available for each subsequent ALR series. Starting with the ALR 5th, each annotation includes the related Digest Key Numbers and a terms-and-connectors query for online searching. This information is available in a supplemental volume for the ALR 4th Series.

### **III. AMERICAN LAW REPORTS FEDERAL**

**American Law Reports Federal, First Series (1969-2005). (Volumes 1 – 200).**

**Location:** [KF132.A47](#)

In 1969 the ALR Federal Series, devoted exclusively to federal issues, began publication to reflect the rapid emergence of federal law. Finding aids for the ALR Federal include the Federal Tables and The Federal Quick Reference.

**American Law Reports Federal, Second Series (2006 – present).  
(Volumes 1 – current).**

**Location:** [KF132.A472](#)

In the 2d Series, West includes references to the ALR Digest which corresponds to the Key Number System. References to various other print and online West publications were also incorporated into the newer series.



## IV. AMERICAN LAW REPORTS INTERNATIONAL

**American Law Reports International (2010 – present ). (Volumes 1 – current).**

**Location:** [KZ199.A44](#)

This series began in 2010. It includes analysis of cases from both English speaking and non-English speaking countries for what the editorial board considers to be issues which are of global importance. The contents include articles on the construction and application of international laws and conventions. The ALR Index and West's ALR Digest serve as finding aids for ALR International.

## V. FINDING AIDS

It is possible to search for ALR articles by subject, case, statute, rule or regulation using the finding aids listed below.

### **ALR Index**

**Location:** [KF132.2 .A47](#)

The **ALR Index** is the most comprehensive ALR finding aid, providing subject access to **ALR 1st through 6th Series, ALR Federal** and **ALR International**.

The **History Table** at the end of the **ALR Index** volumes should be consulted to make sure that the annotation being used has not been superseded.

### **ALR 2d Series Word Index to Annotations**

**Location:** [KF132.A616](#)

Volumes 1 and 2 of the **Word Index** cover the **ALR 2d** volumes 1 – 75 and a third volume covers volumes 76 – 100.

### **ALR Table of Laws, Rules and Regulations**

**Location:** [KF132.2 A47](#)

Use the **ALR Table of Laws, Rules and Regulations** to find references to federal and state statutes, rules and regulations. This finding aid is shelved with the ALR Index and the ALR Quick Index.

### **ALR Quick Index**

**Location:** [KF132.6 .A544](#)

The **ALR Quick Index** provides subject access to the **ALR 3d through 6th Series**.

### **ALR 5th and 6th Series Table of Cases**

**Location:** [KF132.A872](#)

The Table of Cases is an alphabetical list by party name of all cases which are cited in the **ALR 5th and ALR 6th**. Pinpoint citations to the ALR annotations are given for each case. A chronological list of all ALR articles by title is included at the back of each volume of the Table of Cases.

### **ALR Federal Quick Index**

**Location:** [KF132.A4723](#)

The **ALR Federal Quick Index** is used in conjunction with **ALR Federal 1st and 2d Series**.



## **ALR Federal Tables of Cases**

**Location:** [KF132.A4722](#)

This finding aid lists the cases from the articles in **ALR Federal 1st and 2d Series** by party name(s).

## **West's ALR Digest**

**Location:** [KF132.1 .A45 2004](#)

**West's ALR Digest** covers **ALR 1st through 6th Series** and **ALR Federal**. The Digest classifies the ALR articles by West's Key Number System and provides the case headnotes from the ALR family of annotations under each legal topic.

## **ALR Blue Book of Supplemental Decisions**

**Location:** [KF132.A515](#)

The **Blue Book** updates the list of decisions found in the **ALR 1st Series** articles.

## **ALR 2d Later Case Service**

**Location:** [KF132 .A613](#)

The **Later Case Services** supplements the annotations in **ALR 2d**; it includes references to **Am Jur® 2d**, **Am Jur Proof of Facts**, and **Am Jur Legal Forms** and it also provides cites to the **USCA**.

## **Pocket Parts**

Also remember to search the pocket parts of the separate volumes and any supplemental pamphlets for **ALR 3d** through **ALR 6th** and **ALR Federal**.

There is also a toll free number and email address to the **Latest Case Service** printed on the cover of each print supplement. The Service may be contacted for cases which have been decided subsequent to the publication of the supplement.

## **VI. WEST'S TOTAL CLIENT-SERVICE LIBRARY® (TCSL)**

**West's Total Client-Service Library** provides a comprehensive set of references from ALR articles to other relevant legal materials published by Thomson Reuters (formerly West). These include other ALR annotations, the American Jurisprudence and Am Jur 2d legal encyclopedias, West's state specific legal encyclopedias, dictionaries, case reporters, statutory codes, formbooks, practice oriented treatises, and procedural manuals.

## **VII. ALR ONLINE**

In Westlaw, the American Law Reports database is called **ALR** and it contains the full text of the annotations included in the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Federal, and Federal Second Series of the American Law Reports (ALR) and the ALR Index. The full text of example cases, which appear in the print ALR, are not included in this database; however, such cases can be accessed via hyperlink found in the body of the annotation. The ALR database also includes electronic annotations ("e-annos"). These annotations are not available in print. The ALR International is contained in a separate subscription database; access to the American Law Reports (ALR) database does not guarantee access to ALR International. Westlaw updates the online ALR annotations on a weekly basis.



In Lexis, the ALR database is named [LEDALR](#). This database is also updated weekly and contains electronic versions of all of the ALR annotations contained in Westlaw except for ALR International, which is available online only through Westlaw.

