



Finding Books at the Tulane Law Library

The online catalog includes information on materials or items located in the Tulane Law Library. With a few exceptions, notably part of the U.S. government documents collection, information about all materials held by the library is found in the catalog. For information about government documents, check with the Government Documents Librarian on the fifth floor.

Individual journal articles are not found within the catalog; for these, it is necessary to search an index or full-text database. See **Finding Journal Articles at the Tulane Law Library** for more information.

Searching the Catalog

The catalog can be searched by Author, Title, Subject, Keyword, or Call numbers.

How to Start:

- Check your spelling.
- Use Black's Dictionary or Burton's Legal Thesaurus to check the meaning of legal terms.
- Capitalization and punctuation are ignored
- When in doubt, ask a reference librarian.

Searching by Author

An author can be a person, an organization, a corporation, a country, or a conference. When searching by author, you can also search for editors.

Put the last name first. You can try using first names. If you do there is no need to put a comma after the last name. Examples of author searches:

wright
wright charles
wright charles alan
american bar association
association of american law schools
united states congress

A successful search will give you a list of the items in our collection by that particular author. Sometimes the search will show you a list of authors with the same last name and you will have to go through the list to determine which author with that last name is the one you want.

An unsuccessful search results in the message “your entry would be here.” If none of the displayed choices (usually names with spelling that are alphabetically in order to the one you chose) is useful, try the following:

- Check your spelling
- Shorten the author’s name e.g., from **wright charles alan** to **wright**
- Try variant spelling e.g., **mcdonald** to **macdonald**
- Take out or change prefixes that are normally part of a name

Searching by Title

Title searches will retrieve both individual titles and the titles of series. Initial articles can be ignored. If you are unsure of the exact title, try the Keyword search.

A successful search will give you a list of the items in our collection by that particular title (there might be several editions of the same item--e.g., there are four editions of *Handbook of the Law of Federal Courts*). If you only know the first word in the title, the search result page will show you a list of titles that start with the same first word e.g., search for the word “handbook” and you will get a list of 231 titles that begin with that word.

An unsuccessful search results in the message “your entry would be here.” If none of the displayed choices are useful, try the following:

- Shorten the title e.g., from **handbook of federal courts** to **handbook**. You will get more results but you can browse through the results to find the one you want.

- Spell out numbers that appear in the title e.g., from **manual for complex litigation 2nd** to **manual for complex litigation second**.

Searching by Subject

Searching by Subject is not searching by Keyword. Subject headings are based on the Subject Headings of the Library of Congress, an organizational scheme imposed on all informational materials. Think of the Dewey Decimal System on steroids. Unless you know the correct subject heading this is generally not a good way to begin a search. If you do know the subject heading your results will be a list of books that are similar in subject matter, e.g., books that are about the jurisdiction of the federal courts are compiled under the heading Jurisdiction – United States.

Searching by Keyword

Searching by Keyword or Word is the most common type of searching. A Keyword search looks for your words *anywhere* in the item record. If your word is not in the record your search will not retrieve that record. This means that you will sometimes need to use different words to retrieve records on a particular subject.

Here are some possible ways to search by Keyword with examples:

BOOLEAN OPERATORS	Use "and" or "or" to specify multiple words in any field, any order. Use "and not" to exclude words. Parentheses group words together when using Boolean operators.	annotated bibliography and child* (alaska or canada) and (adventure not vacation)
TRUNCATION	Words may be truncated using an asterisk. Use a single asterisk * to truncate from 1-5 characters. Use a double asterisk ** for open-ended truncation.	environment* polic* fyodor dost**

PROXIMITY	Use "near" to specify words close to each other, in any order.	California near university
	Use "within #" to specify terms which occur within # words of each other in the record.	america within 3 econom*
FIELDS	Specify fields to search, using field abbreviations. Fields available for this database are a: (author), t: (title), d: (subject), and n: (note.)	a:twain and t:huck* a:united and a:states and (d:handicapped or d:disabled)

Keywords can be single words or a combination of words in titles, alternate titles, the author or publisher fields, subject headings, contents notes, and any other notes that are in the record.

When you enter more than one word, the catalog assumes that you want all of the words you entered to be found; i.e., there is a default “and” between the words you enter. If it does not find a record with all of the words you want it will assume an “or” between the words. Your results page will show how successful your search has been. For example, if you enter the search terms **covenants not to compete** you will get the following notation in the upper left hand part of the results screen:

Tried: (covenants not to and compete) no records found
Tried: (covenants or compete) 38 records found

You will also retrieve a list of the 38 books that have the words covenants or compete in their records.

Keyword searches can return lengthy results pages. Avoid searching for words or phrases likely to have many entries, e.g., “united states.” If you are presented with a lengthy list you can limit your initial search by limiting your search by language or years of publication, or by adding more words from the title, author, publisher or subject.

Searching by Call Numbers and Other Numbers

In addition to Library of Congress call numbers, other numbers may be searched in the catalog. See the online help provided on the call number search screen for details.

Some Variations

Using the Subject Headings. Once you have found an item that appears to be relevant to your search, you should click on the hypertext in the Subject portion of the record. This will lead you to other books that are in the same subject classification as the one you are looking at. You can also look at a list of other similar subject headings to see if there might be relevant materials that have different headings.

Directed browsing. If you know the Library of Congress Call Number of a particular book you can simply shorten the call number and your search results will show a list of books in call number order. This will allow you to “browse” the shelf for other similar materials without leaving your computer screen. For example, the call number KF8840 .W7 will help you find Wright’s Handbook of the Law of Federal Courts; by shortening this number to KF8840 you will retrieve a list of 70 books in call number order on trials, trial advocacy, and federal procedure.