Common Law Research Flow Chart

1. **Formulate Search Words**
   - **T= Things**
   - **A= Actions**
   - **R= Relief**
   - **P= Parties**

2. **State specific materials**
   - (e.g., jury instructions and practice series).
   - Shepards model, pattern, or approved jury instructions.

3. **Am. Jur. 2d (Topic Outline) (Index)**
   - (Tables of Statutes) (New Topic Service)
   - Read applicable sections.
   - Check pocket parts.

4. **C.J.S (Topic Outline) (Index)**
   - Read applicable sections.
   - Check pocket parts.

5. **A.L.R. (Index) (Digest)**
   - Read applicable A.L.R. annotation.
   - Check appendix and pocket parts.

6. **Law Library web catalog for Treatises and other resources**
   - Read cases.
   - Note any other applicable West Topic and Key Numbers.

7. **Index Services for Legal Periodicals (ILP, CLI & LegalTrac)**
   - Read periodical article.

8. **West’s Digest (Descriptive Word Index) (Topic Outline) (Words & Phrases)**
   - Locate applicable digest topic & key number.
   - Read digests (synopses of cases).

9. **Index Services for Legal Periodicals (ILP, CLI & LegalTrac)**
   - Read applicable sections or paragraphs. Check pocket parts.

10. **Shepardize periodical article for cases and other law review articles.**

11. **Shepardize model, pattern, or approved jury instructions.**

12. **Shepardize the Restatement section.**

13. **Use looseleaf services if appropriate to monitor current developments in a particular subject area.**

14. **Update each case to validate it and locate more cases.**

15. **You may want to read commentary sources to validate your reading of the cases.**

16. **If not already done, check statutes to make sure that the common law has not been abrogated by statute.**

Adopted from chart by Aviva Meridian Kaiser, 1991
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