

## § 2.3

**Cartwheeling: Word Association***Expanding Search Query and Index Research*

Before using the law library, *Westlaw*, or *Lexis*, a couple of foundational skills must be addressed. Specifically, the skill of index research (for law library materials) and search query formulation (for online legal research).

A researcher is often at the mercy of the quality of the index or online search engine being used since, unfortunately, some indexes and search engines are better than others. One method of overcoming these obstacles is called *cartwheeling*. This is a word association method of locating places in an index (or for developing a search query for online research) where a topic might be “hidden.” In other words, is there an alternate term or phrase that an editor used to place the searched-for material? (If you are researching “red,” perhaps the editor placed that word as a subtopic under the topic of “color.”)

To begin a search in court rules, for example, write out (or concentrate on) the research question. Look for any key words or terms. Read the following question:

*According to court rules, must the summons inform defendant of the time set to file an answer?*

Some key terms would be:

<i>summons</i>	<i>time</i>	<i>answer</i>
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The person who created the index, however, might refer to one of the terms under a different subject. For instance, while we may call the pleading which initiates a suit a complaint, some states might call it a motion for judgment or a petition. It may be helpful to draft alternatives.

summons	time	answer
<i>citation</i>	<i>response</i>	<i>defense</i>

In addition, look for alternative areas under which key terms might be covered. For instance, many indexes refer to discovery under the term ‘discovery,’ but some deal with it under the broad heading of “pretrial procedures.” This further broadens the key term list.

summons	time	answer
citation	response	defense
<i>return of service</i>	<i>deadline</i>	<i>pleadings</i>

By broadening the number of terms, we have dramatically increased the chances of finding on-point material.

**On-point**

When researching, the object is to find material relevant to the issue being researched. This is often referred to as locating “on-point” authority, or authority that is “on all fours.”

**EXERCISE § 2.3 | CARTWHEELING**

You are researching the following topics. *Cartwheel* them below to better access an index or website.

interrogatories	
summary judgment	
slip and fall	
fatal car accident	
conflict of interest	
drug overdose	
husband-wife privilege	
plea bargain	
hospital	
gerrymander	

**§ 2.4**

**Accessing Law Books: The Index**

*The Old-School Way Still Applies*

This section is focused on books and publications in the law library but will also be helpful in developing the skill of query formulation used in online research. When researching in the law library,