Appendix G

PATHFINDER TEMPLATE

Example of an appropriate topic for a pathfinder: Numerous requests from pro ses result in a great deal of staff time spent walking different people through the exact same research process. The purpose of the pathfinder is to alleviate much of the repetitious reference work by providing a general research outline for those self-starting patrons willing to work on their own with minimal assistance. Select a topic (i.e. divorce) within a legal practice area such as family law to create an outline that a self-represented litigante can use to identify and locate those basic resources he is most likely to need. Use primary source materials, books, web sites, vertical file, and any form packets available in the law library.

Pathfinder Title

Introduction and Scope: Introduce the topic and discuss the scope of this pathfinder. For whom is this guide designed? Self-represented litigants? Students? Legal professionals? Government officials and employees? Will it be focused on a particular patron group such as pro ses? Will it be limited to a specific state? How comprehensive will it be?

General Advice for the Researcher: Are there specific starting places most researchers must see before doing further research?

Identify Resource Location: Shelf location for the general subject and any specific titles listed in the pathfinder, Internet resources and their specific URLs, full titles of subscription databases including the vendor’s name if the library uses more than one vendor, e-book access method including any URLs. If the library uses a classification system, list the appropriate call numbers and the subtopics with which they are associated. Annotate any titles that are critically important. If a work is truly not-to-be-missed, consider identifying it as a critically important resource. If the library circulates materials, indicate circulation, reference, remote access or in-house access restrictions in the annotation.

Print Indexes: Does the library offer any print indexes that lead to journal articles or other media on the topic? (Examples might be the print version of the Current Index to Legal Periodicals Index)

Online Databases: Which subscription services would be best for this research? List specific CALR databases such as law reviews and journals or the attorney general opinions; NetLibrary and EBSCOHost.

Gateway sites on the Internet: Are there any major guide sites (Web subject directories) about your subject on the Web? If so, annotate the best so users will know why they should be visited first. Some examples of gateway websites for legal information may include IPL.org, Cornell’s Legal Information Institute (LII), and the Public Library of Law (PLoL).
Specific Web Sites: List any specific Web sites that may be important. Annotate the very best. If the topic is controversial select a balanced group of sites. If there are a good number of sites to suggest, consider arranging them by category. Include reference, primary law, legal forms, and dictionary-type Web sites.

Primary Sources: For the general public, this is most likely going to consist of the state or federal code (i.e. Tex. Fam. Code §§6-9).

Image Resources: Are there particular sites that will provide researchers subject-specific images? For instance, one of NASA’s image databases may be appropriate for a pathfinder on aeronautics or the images in Bergman’s Anatomy Atlases may be a good fit for a medical malpractice pathfinder.

Online Journals: List any accessible, full-text journals along with the appropriate URL that would be helpful to researchers.

Organizations, Associations: When appropriate, list the official sites and phone numbers of any major organizations, support groups, etc. involved in the topic. If the topic is controversial, attempt balance it by including representative groups on all sides of the issue.

Blogs and Lists: Who is talking about this issue? Do the well-established blogs or email mailing lists offer clues to trends that may lead the researcher to identify key players? Would a fellow researcher benefit by knowing about these less traditional research avenues?

Audio and Video Resources: Does the library have any audios, videotapes or DVDs that will add understanding of the topic? Are there any exceptionally useful You Tube or internet videos that warrant suggestion?

Microfiche: Especially for historic topics, microfiche offering old newspapers and magazines might be an appropriate lead.

Keywords/Phrases/Subject Headings: Suggest particular keywords or related terms that would be helpful to use in searching. Consider synonyms, names of noted experts, organizations, etc. When appropriate illustrate use of searching syntax, for instance, include phrases in quotation marks or present a Boolean search strategy that works well in a specific website or database.

Additional Advice to Researchers: If appropriate, summarize the most appropriate research strategies or offer advice.

Additional Categories: This is useful when non-legal resources are important to the research process. For instance, a pathfinder on medical malpractice should include a source for medical coding references such as the ICD-9, CPT-4 and HCFA coding systems and an anatomy atlas.

Sign and date the pathfinder.
Three sample pathfinders can be viewed at the following websites:


**ENDNOTE**