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Book Review of The Boulder Statements on Legal Research Education: The Intersection of Intellectual and Practical Skills

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Nevelow Mart, Susan, ed. *The Boulder Statements on Legal Research Education: The Intersection of Intellectual and Practical Skills*. Buffalo: William S. Hein, 2014. 280p. \$99.

*Reviewed by Leslie A. Street**

¶69 In recent years, law libraries have devoted increased attention to the need for a more uniform and robust legal research curriculum with learning outcomes that could be shared across the academic law librarian profession. Law librarians have also recognized the need to connect legal research instruction to wider curricular goals and place research skills on higher footing with other skills taught in the law school classroom. The Boulder Conference, its statements, and now its first published compilation of essays, *The Boulder Statements and Legal Research Education: The Intersection of Intellectual and Practical Skills*, edited by Susan Nevelow Mart, reflect a significant step toward these goals. The book is comprised of individual essays devoted to different aspects of teaching and understanding legal research. The introduction, by Barbara Bintliff, discusses a brief history of the development of legal research instruction and the general lack of attention to it from the rest of the legal profession. Against this background, she describes the development of the Boulder Statements on Legal Research Education, which were designed “to identify the theoretical foundation for a pedagogy of legal research instruction, and to describe in concrete terms the elements of the pedagogy” (p.xii).

¶70 Legal research instructors and other readers may find some chapters more directly useful and easily applicable than others. For example, Shawn Nevers’s chapter, “Assessment in Legal Research Instruction,” offers useful, practical considerations for successful formative and summative assessment in the legal research classroom. Sarah Valentine’s essay on integrating legal research into the law school curriculum also offers many useful considerations in how law librarians can advocate at their institutions for wider legal research instruction across the legal curriculum. She importantly points out the need for such wider inclusion of legal research across the law school curriculum because “[o]ne’s understanding of the research process directly affects problem-solving success” (p.9).

¶71 Other chapters, more theoretical in nature, give the legal research instructor the opportunity to reflect at a higher level regarding teaching goals and learning

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outcomes for students. For example, Julie Krishnaswami's chapter, "Critical Information Theory: A New Foundation for Teaching Regulatory Research," discusses applying a more theoretical approach to teaching regulations to students. Other chapters devote discussion to Bloom's Taxonomy and its application to legal research instruction, as well as broader questions about the classification of legal information. These chapters may seem less accessible and immediately applicable in a legal research classroom, but they offer instructors the ability to see how legal research task management and problems can relate to broader ways of thinking about information organization, categorization, and problem solving.

¶72 Although this collection of essays does not represent a holistic and complete discussion of all of the curricular issues surrounding legal research education, it can be helpful in considering many of the important aspects of legal research education, particularly given the current technological context. This book should not be viewed as a how-to guide for setting up a legal research curriculum, and in fact, scant attention is paid to different considerations an instructor might have in a first-year legal research course as opposed to an upper-level advanced research course. However, readers will find many of the essays useful in considering how they teach and evaluate legal research in their own classrooms. Many of the suggestions offered can be easily adapted to a variety of classroom situations. The book offers important considerations for an instructor deciding on what to include in a legal research class and how to relate legal research tasks to higher concepts. More important than the usefulness or practicality of the individual essays, this book represents an important addition to the body of scholarship, both practical and theoretical, discussing legal research instruction for new lawyers and the need to make it a more central part of any law school curriculum.
