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Book Reviews: *Effective Legal Research*, by Miles O. Price and Harry Bitner, New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1953

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BOOK REVIEWS

Effective Legal Research. By Miles O. Price¹ and Harry Bitner.² New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1953. Pp. xii, 633. \$10.00.

While books on legal research differ as to aim and purpose, most can be classified and judged in terms of how they function as a teaching tool, a ready reference manual, or a comprehensive treatise. It is in this last function, that of being a comprehensive treatise on the subject of law books, that this work is most successful. One might well expect such men as Miles Price and Harry Bitner to utilize their long experience as librarians of Columbia University Law Library to produce a fine treatise. They have exceeded such expectation and produced a work that is accurate, complete, and current. The lists found in the 239 page Bibliographical Manual alone will make it a work welcomed by every law librarian in the country.

As a comprehensive treatise, however, the section devoted to government documents needs expansion and reconsideration. It is difficult to agree with the statements: "Government publications . . . are treated in a law library just as those of any other publisher. . . ." and ". . . in any organized library, the use of government publications presents no different problems than those of periodicals or treatises generally." This may be true at Columbia, but it is not the case in many other libraries. There are a number of excellent and organized libraries that do not catalog and shelve government documents like other periodicals, pamphlets, and books.

As a teaching tool, a text for a course in legal research, this work has two important drawbacks: its size and its price. The average law student would view this book much like the reviewer of a child's book who wrote, "This book tells more about penguins than I'm interested in knowing." The authors attempt to deal with this problem by having the essential material printed in larger type. Unfortunately, the student who reads only the large type must still pay the large price. The student will be little interested in the Bibliographical Manual which is more than a third of this book.

As a teaching device this book has, on the other hand, several features to recommend it. It is clear, accurate and scholarly. It uses more than seventy-seven exhibits and a good number of problems worked out step-by-step to exhibit different research techniques. The book's thirty-two chapters amply, perhaps too amply, cover the field. It should be remembered, however, that it is extremely difficult for a teacher to approve without qualification a text book written in his field by another teacher.

¹ Librarian, Columbia University Law Library.

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This book's organization, comprehensiveness, accuracy, and fine index make it a very useful ready reference work. As such it would be a useful addition to any lawyer's office collection. The chapter on Standard Citation Forms, along with the Bibliographical Manual, does much toward simplifying the problem of producing accurate, usable citations. Although this book is published in the Prentice-Hall Law School Series, it is sure to find much wider acceptance in the profession as a practical and scholarly contribution of real value to the practicing lawyer.

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