Preface

Legal citations serve multiple purposes. Naturally, they record the sources selected by writers to support their statements concerning the law. They provide readers with the information they’ll need to access those sources. They give credit to the original authors of text and ideas. But they also underscore the weight, the relevance, and the influence that a particular source possesses. And they even tell us something about the legal writers who drafted them — including how current, how extensive, and how careful their research was — and consequently, the degree to which the writers’ work will be perceived as trustworthy, complete, accurate, and ethical.

The *ALWD Guide to Legal Citation* exists to assist legal writers in building citations to serve those purposes. From its inaugural publication in 2000 (under the title *The ALWD Citation Manual*), this book has prioritized the forms of citations used by the overwhelming majority of today’s legal writers. In the seventeen ensuing years, the *ALWD Guide* has found ways to improve its content and structure, while continuing to serve its users and their legal writing needs.

The *ALWD Guide to Legal Citation* has the following goals:

- To help beginners learn the conventions of legal citation, both for constructing their own citations and for understanding citations written by others;
- To explain the functions of the specific components for citations to various types of legal sources;
- To give its users a text that makes sense and that provides a step-by-step guide to constructing accurate citations;
- To offer legal writing and research professors a text that is easy to use, well organized, and self contained;
- To arrange its contents so that legal professionals can easily find what they need to construct the citations used in practice-based documents; and
- To identify and make easy to find the small changes needed to modify citations for the constraints of scholarly writing in academic journals.

The *ALWD Guide* places its greatest focus on the primary and secondary sources most often cited in practice-based and academic writing. Each primary or secondary source rule begins with a Fast Formats page that previews and refreshes understanding of essential components for both full and short citations. Rules for case law, statutes, and restatements feature Snapshots of actual pages, illustrating where to find essential components. The *ALWD Guide* features abundant Charts with abbreviations and other essentials, within the rules they relate to. Sidebars help students understand the “why” of legal citations and steer them away from common errors or misconceptions. Templates at the beginning of each source’s rule diagram the order and relationship of essential components. Each primary and secondary source rule features component-by-component
explanations and illustrations, including the use of red triangles ▲ to illustrate required spacing of components within the citation.

The *ALWD Guide* also aims to demystify certain features of legal citation. For example, it addresses curious features, such as star pagination; confounding features, such as whether, when, and why to provide a parallel citation or a public domain citation; confusing features, such as the geographic coverage of a regional reporter; and challenging features, such as determining whether to append subsequent history to a case citation, and if so, in what manner.

The sixth edition builds on the strengths of its predecessors, providing clear explanations and generous illustrations of each citation principle at work. In response to suggestions and inquiries by our users, and because the needs of legal writers are not static, we revisited the content and organization of each rule, appendix, and example. In particular, we reexamined the hierarchies and relationships of authorities, and where it made sense, reorganized the *ALWD Guide* to better reflect them.

To assist users in finding the content they need, we’ve expanded the appendices and the index, and throughout the book, we’ve added more cross-references to applicable and analogous rules. Even so, by means of stringent editing and new layouts, we’ve succeeded in shrinking the length of the *ALWD Guide* without sacrificing any of its coverage or content.

We reevaluated the nature of the sources relied upon by today’s legal writers, and as a result, the sixth edition provides greater and updated coverage of those sources. The proliferation of online materials plus the continual emergence of new electronic media prompted an increased degree of attention to the citation guidance writers need to make these sources more accessible to their readers. For example, Rules 7.1(d) and 20.4 advise writers about citing a footnote, endnote, or location number in an electronic source, and Rules 14.1 and 30.2 deal with the distinctions among official, authenticated, and unofficial primary authorities that are published online.

As was the case in the fifth edition, the sixth edition takes pains to ensure that writers do not confuse the citation formats of academic writing with those used by lawyers in practice. Each academic formatting rule number ends with the suffix ‡FN. The academic rule and its examples are further marked with unmistakable visual cues; they are set off by a vertical red line and accompanied by a warning icon.

Purchasers of the sixth edition receive an additional bonus — complimentary access to citation exercises in ALWD’s *Online Companion*. These online exercises guide and reinforce students’ mastery of the essential elements of legal citation. Check the first page in your new copy of the *ALWD Guide* to find a sticker with the access code.

We are confident that the *ALWD Guide to Legal Citation* will meet your needs for a legal citation reference work. Should you find any errors or omissions, or if you have suggestions for our next edition, please send them to the Association of Legal Writing Directors, alwd@alwd.org, or to Coleen Barger, cmbarger@ualr.edu.