

## FINDING STATE STATUTES AND SESSION LAWS

*Kay Rudolph*

*<http://www.pastinsight.com>*

1. What were the compiled state statutes called in your state in that time period?
  - a. WorldCat
    - i. search Keywords *compiled statutes* with your state as the Author (eg. Arkansas) and Year loosely bracketing your period of interest
      1. goal is to ID what the title of the state's compiled statutes is in this time-period and get a sense of how frequently the compiled code was published in this period
2. Search for the title and years of interest (it's usually a good idea to bracket your event with the code prior and subsequent to your event)
  - a. if you're lucky, WorldCat will give you a link directly to online copies of the code in effect at your event of interest
    - i. Always check the frontispiece to confirm that you are looking at the item described in the catalog entry (mistakes happen)
  - b. Hathitrust, google books, internet archive
    - i. search for a term of interest (divorce, dower, land, married...)
      1. keep it simple to get more results; be more precise ONLY if necessary
    - ii. note: to find the Advanced Search options for searching google books, google search *advanced search google books*
      1. of especial value: search by title and bracket by years (note, you must also select a month if you want to narrow to a period of years)
3. If necessary, follow the legislative history to locate the session act that created the law
  - a. may be listed at the end of a section, or at the end of a paragraph, or as footnotes
  - b. What was the publication title used for the annual session acts in your state in the time period of interest?
  - c. WorldCat
    - i. search for Keywords *session laws* and Author *state* (ex., Arkansas) and publication Year bracketing your event (ex., 1870 to 1875)
    - ii. if you're lucky, WorldCat will give you a direct link the online copy of the session acts you're looking for; otherwise:
  - d. Google search
    - i. use the terms listed in the legislative history *as a guide*. but prepared to be flexible

1. Example: start with *“Arkansas” “civil code” “1873”*
  - a. Ah! That’s just the compiled state statutes that I’ve already found!
2. WorldCat search results suggest the term *“acts of arkansas” “1873”*
3. subsequent search results suggest revising the search to *“acts of the general assembly of the state of arkansas” “1873”*
  - a. if you don’t immediately see a result from hathitrust, google books, or internet archive, append the following to your previous search to filter to only these sites:  
(site:hathitrust.org OR site:books.google.com OR site:archive.org)

full search term:

*“acts of the general assembly of the state of arkansas” “1873”* (site:hathitrust.org OR site:books.google.com OR site:archive.org)

4. check for *“Related Books”* and *“Other Editions”* on google books or *“Similar Items”* on hathitrust or archive.org to locate the earlier or later versions of the state’s compiled code