

## Legal Research Glossary

This guide provides brief definitions of some of the more frequently used terms, especially in the Hong Kong context, which you will come across as a law student. Where there is a Chinese equivalent to the term, this is provided next to the English heading. If no mention is given to any specific jurisdiction, the definition given refers to the term as it is being used in Hong Kong. If an item is available, its HKU Libraries/Law Library call number is given in brackets.

For legal definition of terms, please refer to standard legal dictionaries, reference books or your professors. Books and Internet sites on legal research are listed in the library pathfinder [Legal Research Tools](http://lib.hku.hk/lawlib/pdf/legResTool.pdf) < <http://lib.hku.hk/lawlib/pdf/legResTool.pdf> >.

Please let us know if this glossary is helpful and if there are other terms that you suggest we include. E-mail your comments to us at [lawlib@lib.hku.hk](mailto:lawlib@lib.hku.hk).

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### Abstract 摘要

A finding tool to locate journal articles. In addition to bibliographical information, abstracts include summaries to help you decide whether the articles are relevant to your topic. Common legal abstracts include *Index to Legal Periodicals & Books*, *Current Legal Information*, *Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals*.

### ALWD Citation Manual

*ALWD citation manual: a professional system of citation* (K114 A47) is published by the [Association of Legal Writing Directors](http://www.alwd.org/cm/) <<http://www.alwd.org/cm/>>. Like the [Bluebook](#), it is a professional system of citations for legal materials and is widely adopted by law schools, some law reviews, moot court competitions and courts in the US. See also [Bluebook](#), *The*

### Bill 草案, 法案

A draft of a proposed piece of legislation presented to the Legislative Council. Bills are published in the Legal Supplement No. 3 of the Government Gazette (KT4351 H7 S3). Selected bills and related documents are also available on the [Legislative Council home page](http://www.legco.gov.hk/english/index.htm) <<http://www.legco.gov.hk/english/index.htm>>.

### [BLIS \(Bilingual Laws Information System\)](http://www.justice.gov.hk/Home.htm) 雙語法例資料系統

<http://www.justice.gov.hk/Home.htm>

The online version of *Laws of Hong Kong*, maintained by the HKSAR Dept. of Justice. BLIS captures the law as it was at 30 June 1997 and changes thereafter.

**Blue book**

A form of British government publication, such as a report of a committee, inquiry, or royal commission, usually bound in blue covers.

**Bluebook, The**

*The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (Law Reference K114 B65) is published by the Harvard Law Review Association and other leading US law reviews. It sets forth abbreviations and rules of citation in legal materials and law journals, and is the definitive standard in legal writing and research particularly in the US. The most current edition is the 17<sup>th</sup> edition published in 2000. Read the [Bluebook Introduction at its homepage](http://www.legalbluebook.com/) <<http://www.legalbluebook.com/>>. See also [ALWD Citation Manual](#)

**Call number** 索書號

A series of numbers or alpha-numeric code assigned to library materials and used to indicate where they are to be shelved.

**Case** 案件, 案例

A legal dispute. Also refers to the judgments delivered by courts and tribunals in legal proceedings. Sometimes used interchangeably with judgment, ruling, opinion, and decision.

**Catchwords**

A series of words in a reported case that appear after the case title and dates of hearing. These keywords, usually separated by dashes in between, indicate the subject matter of the case and the issues that are addressed, e.g. *Tort – Negligence – Horse racing – Injury to horse – Liability of jockey to horse owner – Standard of care*.

**Citation**

The reference which helps identify a particular case, law review article, book, statute or other resource, whether primary or secondary. For example, one of the citations for *Wong Tung Ming v Kwok Chu Hung & Others* is [2001] 1 HKLRD C16. The case appears in year 2000 volume 1 of the *Hong Kong Law Reports & Digest* beginning at page C16. A law journal article citation looks like this: 17 UCLA PAC. BASIN L.J. 125. The article is published in volume 17 of *UCLA Pacific Basin Law Journal*, beginning at page 125. Use a dictionary such as *Index to Legal Citations and Abbreviations* (K110 R1) to check the full form of a citation. See also [Parallel citation](#)

**Citator**

A tool to trace the judicial history of a case, whether it has been “referred to”, “considered”, “followed”, “approved”, “applied”, “distinguished”, “disapproved” or “overruled”. To trace UK cases, use *Current Law Case Citator* (KF85 C94), also available in *Current Legal Information*. For Hong Kong cases, use *Hong Kong case citator, 1905-2002* (KT4358.2 H7) or in Westlaw, use the [KeyCite™](#) feature. Citators are also useful for checking whether a case has been reported in any other series of law reports. Such [parallel citations](#) can be used as an alternative to retrieve the case if the cited report is not available in the library.

**CiteIt!**

A reference management software which helps automate legal citation and organize citations and references found on databases. [CiteIt!](http://www.citeit.com/product/default.htm) <<http://www.citeit.com/product/default.htm>> supports either the [Bluebook](#) or the [ALWD](#). This software is available on the library's Project Workstations. See also [LegalCitation](#)

**Command Papers**

Documents that the British government, by royal command, presents to Parliament for consideration. They include white papers (白皮書) and green papers (綠皮書). White papers contain statements of government policy or explanations of proposed legislation. Green papers are essentially discussion documents. Command papers have serial numbers for reference purpose: 1-4222 (1833-69); C1-C9550 (1870-99); Cd1-Cd9239 (1900-18); Cmd1-Cmd9889 (1919-56); Cmnd1-Cmnd9927 (1956-86); Cm1- (1986- ). Command papers from 1999 are available on the [Stationery Office](http://www.official-documents.co.uk/menu/sitemap.htm) <<http://www.official-documents.co.uk/menu/sitemap.htm>>

**Delegated legislation** See [Subsidiary legislation](#)

**Dewey Decimal Classification** 杜威分類法

The most widely used library classification system in the world. The Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) uses a three-digit number followed by a decimal point and further figures to indicate classes and divisions of topics. Materials in the Main Library are classified by DDC ([DDC Summaries](#)). The DDC class for law is 340. See also [Moys Classification](#)

**Digest** 摘錄

Finding tools which provide subject access to cases. They are useful for identifying relevant cases through an organized subject approach.

**Dragon**

[Catalogue of the HKUL Libraries](http://library.hku.hk/) <<http://library.hku.hk/>>.

**Gazette** 憲報

In Hong Kong, refers to the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Gazette (香港特別行政區政府憲報) (KT4351 H7), in which all official notices must be published. Its supplements are important legal sources, e.g. Legal Supplement No. 1 (Ordinances), No. 2 (Subsidiary legislation), No. 3 ([Bills](#)), etc. Also available on the [Government homepage](http://www.info.gov.hk/eindex.htm) <<http://www.info.gov.hk/eindex.htm>>.

**Gecko**

[PDA version of the catalogue of the HKUL Libraries](http://gecko.lib.hku.hk/) <<http://gecko.lib.hku.hk/>>.

**Green Papers** See [Command Papers](#)

**Hansard** 議會記錄

Refers to the Official Report of Parliamentary Debates in the UK. It contains a verbatim record of debates and all other proceedings. In Hong Kong, this refers to the Legislative Council's Official Record of Proceedings (會議過程正式紀錄), also often called *Hong Kong Hansard* (KT4351 H2). Also available on [Legislative Council homepage](http://www.legco.gov.hk/index.htm) <<http://www.legco.gov.hk/index.htm>>, under <Council Meetings>.

### **Headnote**

The headnote, located at the beginning of a case, is editorial enhancement prepared by the law reporter not by the judges, and is not part of the case proper. It summarises the major legal issues of the case.

### **HKLI (Hong Kong Legal Information Institute)**

[www.hklii.org.hk](http://www.hklii.org.hk)

The first comprehensive portal providing free access to public legal information in Hong Kong. It comprises 13 Hong Kong databases including Judgments from most Hong Kong courts and tribunals; Practice Directions; Current Ordinances and Regulations; Law Reform reports; Historical laws, supplied by the HKU Libraries; Domain name arbitration decisions under the .hk domain; and the Hong Kong Treaties Index. *See also* [WorldLII](#)

### **Hong Kong White Book** See [White Book, The](#)

### **Hornbook**

These are books written for law students that explain the basic principles of a particular legal topic but do not provide the critical analysis often found in scholarly treatises or journal articles. Hornbooks are good starting points for research or for background study. West Group publishes an extensive series of hornbook on various aspects of US law. *See also* [Nutcases](#), [Nutshells](#)

### **Index** 索引

A finding tool to locate journal articles or books. Usually includes bibliographical information such as author, title, imprint, source, etc. Major legal indexes include *Index to Legal Periodicals & Books*, *Legal Journals Index* (available in *Current Legal Information*).

### **Judgment** 判決

A decision made by a court. If the judgment contains rulings on important questions of law, it may be reported in the law reports. In Hong Kong, court judgments, in English and Chinese, are available on the [Judiciary homepage](http://www.judiciary.gov.hk/en/index/index.htm) <<http://www.judiciary.gov.hk/en/index/index.htm>>.

### **Judicial interpretation** 司法解釋

In PRC courts, these are detailed rules for implementing law and regulations, judicial guidance to resolve issues encountered in the process of application of law, answers by the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate to specific questions raised by lower courts and procuratorates. See *Judicial interpretation of the Supreme People's Court of the P.R. China* (348.87305 5048)

**KeyCite™**

A function in Westlaw to trace the history and subsequent treatment of a case, whether it has been “distinguished”, “overruled” or “applied”, etc. It also looks for citations to the case and secondary source materials on the case. *See also* [Shephard's](#)

**Law Report 法律匯報**

Reports of cases decided by the courts. In Hong Kong, the two major series are *Hong Kong Cases* and *Hong Kong Law Reports and Digest*. *See also* library pathfinders [United Kingdom Law Reports and Sources of Hong Kong Law](#) <<http://www.lib.hku.hk/lawlib/guides.html>>

**Law review**

A type of legal periodical or journal put out by a law school. It consists mostly of scholarly articles on narrow topics of law and may also include student works, e.g. *Adelaide Law Review*, *Harvard Law Review*.

**LegalCitation**

Reference management software for legal writing and research. [LegalCitation](#) <<http://www.citationonline.net/products.asp>> provides support for materials used in legal research and writing (statutes, cases, etc.), as well as support for [Bluebook](#), [ALWD](#), and a number of additional rulebooks for legal citation. This software is available on the library's Project Workstations. *See also* [CiteIt!](#)

**Legal notice**

In Hong Kong, refers to delegated legislation as published in the [Gazette](#). Abbreviated as LN.

**Legal supplement 法律副刊**

In Hong Kong, refers to the supplements of the [Gazette](#). These are important legal sources: Legal supplement No. 1 contains Ordinances (條例); No. 2 Regulations (規例) made under Ordinances (subsidiary legislation 附屬法例); No.3 Bills (法案); No. 4 Directories & lists; No. 5 Treaties (條約) and international agreements (協定); No. 6 Public notices under the Companies Ordinance or notices relating to trademarks.

**Library of Congress Classification 美國國會圖書館分類法**

A classification scheme widely used in academic libraries in North America. [Moys](#) Classification is similar to the Library of Congress Law schedule (Class K). Current materials of the library's Chinese law collection are arranged using the LC classification scheme ([LCC Outline](#) at [http://lcweb.loc.gov/catdir/cpsolcco/lcco\\_k.pdf](http://lcweb.loc.gov/catdir/cpsolcco/lcco_k.pdf), laws of Asia under subclass KN)

**Loose-leaf/Looseleaf service 活頁**

A common form of publication found in a law library. Because of the need for currency and the amount of time involved in publishing books, legal publications take the form of looseleaf format widely. These come in two major types: those in which additional pages are added at the end of the set as new materials are developed; binders of pages in which new pages are inter-filed in the set where the changes have been made, e.g. *Laws of Hong Kong* (Authorized loose-leaf ed.).

This allows for materials to be updated on a regular basis. Looseleaf sets may provide secondary source material or they may contain primary materials such as cases, regulations and statutes.

### **Moys Classification**

A classification system for law books devised by Elizabeth Moys (1928-2002) and widely used by academic law libraries in the UK. The western language materials in the HKU Law Library are classified using the Moys scheme. The complete schedule is found in *Moys classification and thesaurus for legal materials*, 4th ed. 2001 (K85.C5 M93). For a [synopsis of the schedule](http://lib.hku.hk/lawlib/pdf/class.pdf), see <<http://lib.hku.hk/lawlib/pdf/class.pdf>>

### **Nutcases**

Student revision aids that approach case law in a style similar to [Nutsell](#). They lay down the basic facts and key principles of important cases in each area of law in clear, straightforward language.

### **Nutshell**

Refers to a series of books written for law students for revision purpose published by Sweet & Maxwell. Nutshells explain the essentials of law in straightforward language, illustrated with key cases and statutes, but are not scholarly works. They usually include model questions and answers. *See also* [Hornbook](#)

### **Opinion 意見**

A judge's written statement of the law as applied in a particular case. In the UK, refers to a judgment by the House of Lords.

### **Ordinance 條例**

In Hong Kong, legislation is known as ordinance. These are passed by the Legislative Council, signed by the Chief Executive and published in Legal Supplement No. 1 (Ordinances) of the Gazette. Every piece of ordinance has a long title and short title, and is numbered as Chapter (章), abbreviated as Cap., e.g. Cap 528 Copyright Ordinance (第 528 章 版權條例). The statute book which contains the law is *Laws of Hong Kong (Authorized loose-leaf ed.)*, also available on [Bilingual Laws Information System](http://www.justice.gov.hk/Home.htm) <<http://www.justice.gov.hk/Home.htm>>.

### **Oxford Standard Citation of Legal Authorities**

<http://denning.law.ox.ac.uk/published/oscola.shtml>

A system of citation and presentation style for use in legal writing, developed by the Oxford University Law Faculty and serves as the style guide for the Oxford University Commonwealth Law Journal, and is a quasi-Bluebook for the UK. It covers abbreviation, punctuation, cross-referencing, the use of headings, and other topics, and has an OSCOLA-Lite style for use with [EndNote](#). *See also* [ALWD Citation Manual](#); [Bluebook](#), [The](#)

### **Parallel citation**

Cases are often published in more than one report series. In Hong Kong, the same judgment may be found in *Hong Kong Cases*, *Hong Kong Law Reports & Digest*,

*Latest Judgments Alert Service*, *Westlaw*, *LexisNexis*, or *HKLII*, each with its own unique citation. The text of the judgment delivered by the court will be the same but editorial enhancements such as headnotes or catchwords will be different with each publisher. For example, the case *Green Park Properties Ltd. v. Dorku Ltd* has these parallel citations, each referring to the source from which the same case can be found: [2001] HKCFA 58; [2001] 4 HKCFAR 448; [2001] 3 HKLRD 760; [2002] 1 HKC 121; [2001] HKEC 1481

See also [Citation](#)

**Periodicals** 期刊 See [Serials](#)

### **Practice manuals**

Books written specially for legal practitioners. These are held in the Law Library's Textbook collection on the 2/F.

### **Primary materials/sources**

In legal research, refers to materials which contain the law itself, statute books, acts of parliament, law and legislation, law reports, cases, etc. These are located on the library's 2/F.

**Regulations** 規例 See [Subsidiary Legislation](#)

### **Secondary materials/sources**

In legal research, refers to materials that explain and analyses the law (primary sources), such as treaties, practice manuals, commentaries, books, encyclopaedias, law review and journal articles.

### **Serials**

Publication that is published on a continuous basis, typically daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually. This includes materials such as magazines, newspapers, journals, periodicals, law reviews. Law serials are located on the 1/F of the library, classified under call no. K1.

### **Shepard's®**

The Shepard's Citations Service is a function in Lexis.com. It is a tool to trace the history of a case and to find additional supportive documents. Shepard's is available for citations reported in the US Federal, State, and National Reporter System publications. When you *shepardize* a case, these are available: parallel citations to a case; case history; citations to a case; editorial analysis of a case; treatment of a case; citations from law reviews, bar journals, annotations, and legal treatises. See also [KeyCite™](#)

### **Statute** 成文法, 法規, 法令

In the UK, an act of Parliament. In Hong Kong, an [ordinance](#).

### **Statutory Instrument** 從屬法例

In the UK, refers to delegated legislation, abbreviated as SI. SIs are printed and published by the Stationery Office. They are numbered consecutively for each calendar year in the order in which the printer receives them, e.g. the first statutory instrument received in 2003 would be cited as *S.I. 2003 No. 1*, or simply

2003 No. 1. The full text of all published SIs from 1987 are available on the [HMSO homepage](http://www.hmsa.gov.uk/) <<http://www.hmsa.gov.uk/>>. See also [Subsidiary Legislation](#)

### **Subsidiary Legislation 附屬法例**

Legislation made under powers conferred by an [Ordinance](#) (or in the UK, an Act of Parliament). Also called delegated legislation, it is mostly governmental or is made by a variety of statutory bodies, and deals with the technical rules required for implementation of an ordinance. Subsidiary legislation is usually found following its parent ordinance, with an alpha-numeric numbering and consisting of instruments of various names, e.g. orders (令), regulations (規例), rules (規則), by-laws (附例).

### **Treatises**

In legal research, secondary sources (often books) devoted to the scholarly and critical analysis of an area of law.

### **White Book, The or Hong Kong White Book**

Refers to the *Hong Kong Civil Procedure* (KT4397 H7), so called for its white covers (after *Civil Procedure*, or the *White Book Service* in the UK). An authoritative work for legal practitioners, with annotated commentaries on common and important areas of civil practice and procedure in Hong Kong. Also available in Westlaw.

### **White paper 白皮書 See [Command papers](#)**

### **WorldLII (World Legal Information Institute)**

A free global legal research facility developed collaboratively by several Legal Information Institutes and other organizations: Australasian Legal Information Institute ([AustLII](#)), British and Irish Legal Information Institute ([BAILII](#)), Canadian Legal Information Institute ([CanLII](#)), Hong Kong Legal Information Institute ([HKLII](#)), Legal Information Institute (Cornell) ([LII \(Cornell\)](#)), Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute ([PacLII](#)), South African Legal Information Institute ([SAFLII](#)), and the Wits University School of Law ([Wits Law School](#)).