For decades, electronic legal research was dominated by large, expensive legal research companies. More recently, a handful of smaller companies have focused on providing attorneys with a core set of basic legal resources at a much more reasonable price. Fastcase has emerged as the leading provider of these bargain-priced legal research services.

In 2017 Fastcase began releasing a new version of its legal research service: Fastcase 7. This was a complete overhaul and upgrade of Fastcase, with a new interface, new features, and new tools. Everything about this new version of Fastcase is designed to make it even easier to use. For example, it is now easier to search multiple legal resources across different jurisdictions if you want to do a broad search. Or, to do
a narrow, focused search, it is also easier to select just one resource from a particular jurisdiction. And new tools like Filters and the Tag Cloud give you additional ways to work with your search results. All these and other new features and ways to use Fastcase 7 will be discussed in detail throughout this book.

Fastcase is currently allowing state bar associations to give its members the option to switch between Fastcase 6 (the established version of Fastcase that most users are familiar with) and Fastcase 7. Users who have this option will see a slider switch on the toolbar when they log in to Fastcase. As shown in Figure 1-1, clicking this slider changes the interface from Fastcase 6 to Fastcase 7. You can always switch back to Fastcase 6, which will remain the default setting for the near future, but which will eventually be phased out.

FIGURE 1-1: Slider Switches to Change between Fastcase 6 and Fastcase 7
LEGAL RESEARCH RESOURCES ON FASTCASE

Fastcase provides its users with primary legal resources, such as cases, statutes, and regulations, for just about all state and federal jurisdictions. Current information about the coverage of federal and state case law, as well as Fastcase’s coverage of other types of legal materials, is available here:

http://www.fastcase.com/coverage/

Fastcase is always working to add additional resources, so you can check this page to see if anything has been recently added in your jurisdiction.

Fastcase also has a wide variety of secondary resources, like treatises, law reviews, and practice guides that can both help you understand areas of law that you are unfamiliar with and assist you with the nuts and bolts of your legal practice. As discussed in Chapter 10, Fastcase’s coverage of these secondary resources varies by jurisdiction. Also, some of these state-specific secondary resources are available only to Fastcase subscribers who are members of that state’s bar association, and some secondary resources require either an additional subscription fee or a separate account with a Fastcase partner company. As with primary legal resources, Fastcase is also constantly working to make more secondary resources available to its subscribers.

FASTCASE SUBSCRIPTION OPTIONS

Fastcase offers two subscription plans: Appellate and Premium. Both plans include cases from the U.S. Supreme Court, all federal appellate courts, and state supreme and appellate courts,
as well as federal statutes and statutes from all 50 states. Under the Premium plan, users also have access to cases from federal district and bankruptcy courts. As of this writing, the Appellate plan is $65 a month, or $695 a year if you pay annually, and the Premium plan is $95 a month, or $995 if paid annually. Current prices and details for these two individual subscription plans can be found here:

http://www.fastcase.com/pricing-plans/

FASTCASE AND BAR ASSOCIATIONS

Knowing the importance of legal research to attorneys, over 25 state bar associations, as well as over a dozen other local and specialty bar associations and other organizations, provide access to Fastcase as an included benefit to their members. You can see the current list of these associations and organizations here:

http://www.fastcase.com/bar-associations/

Some of these associations provide their members with state resources only from their own state (in addition to federal cases and statutes). For example, as of this writing the Nevada State Bar’s Fastcase access does not provide state cases from any other state besides Nevada itself, and the New York State Bar only provides access to New York statutes and cases. But in both these jurisdictions and in others with similar, limited access, members can upgrade to a full Premium plan for a bargain rate. On Fastcase’s list of bar associations, if an association has a link next to it that says “View Benefits” (see Figure 1-2), this indicates that the bar association provides some combination of Fastcase resources that are less than the full Premium plan: click on the “View Benefits” link for the details of what that bar association provides its members on Fastcase and the cost for those members to upgrade to the Premium plan.
Finally, if you don’t have access to Fastcase through your bar membership, but you’re not sure whether you want to subscribe yourself, Fastcase will let you access all of its resources for a free 24-hour trial period. Look for the Start Your Free Trial link on the Pricing Plans page at the address above and try Fastcase for a day. Also, anyone can use the Fastcase app for free on their mobile device, but only for cases and statutes (the Fastcase app is covered in Chapter 12).

**FASTCASE FREE TRIAL**

You do not need to read this entire book, cover to cover, in sequence. It is designed to be both easily readable, and easily accessible, so that you can either read a chapter straight
through or, after browsing the table of contents or the index, you can turn straight to the part of the book that discusses the particular resource that you need.

However, there are two chapters that are important and which you should consider reading before doing anything else on Fastcase. Chapter 2 explains how Fastcase organizes all of its resources into Libraries. As it shows you, Fastcase will let you search all of its resources at the same time if you want to get cases, statutes, regulations, law review articles, and possibly every other type of material that Fastcase has, all in one set of search results. Or, if you know you just need to find a statute, case, or other document from a certain jurisdiction, Chapter 2
will also show you how to search only the Library for a particular type of resource from a specific jurisdiction. (You'll also learn how you can combine Libraries to, for example, search for cases from multiple jurisdictions at the same time.)

The second important chapter is Chapter 3, about how to search on Fastcase. Fastcase will let you use a natural language search to just enter a plain English question, but this will often give you too many irrelevant results, and you might not be able to easily find what you need. This chapter will show you a better strategy and teach you how to use keywords and search connectors to conduct a very accurate, powerful search.

After you read those two chapters, most of the rest of the book covers specific types of legal resources: cases, statutes, etc. A few other chapters are also worth noting here. Chapter 6 covers Bad Law Bot, Fastcase's tool for checking whether a case has been overruled, reversed, or otherwise negatively impacted by subsequent proceedings. Chapter 11 shows you all the ways that you can work with your search results, including printing, downloading, and emailing them. Finally, Chapter 12 covers Fastcase's award-winning app so that you can use Fastcase on the go for all your mobile legal research needs.

**UPDATES AND MORE INFORMATION**

Fastcase is always working to add more legal research tools and resources, so updates to this book, as well as information about any new features of Fastcase 7 that were introduced after it was published, will be available at this book's companion website:

http://www.FastcaseGuide.com/

This site will also have additional materials, like guides to specific state resources, that are beyond the scope of this book.