Developing an Ontology of Legal Research

Amy Taylor, Access Services Librarian, Pence Law Library

1. What is an ontology? It is a classification system for a group of entities that expresses relationships among them and explores and cross-references their differences and similarities.

2. Why do we need an ontology of legal research? One reason is because electronic databases are changing the way they present the organization of the law. The underlying organizational structure is no longer front and center.

3. How would a legal research ontology aid legal research? By combining the classification of the law with the process of research.

This chart is a rudimentary beginning. A complete ontology would require much more substance and the use of the OWL web ontology language.

Westlaw Classic

The traditional display of the West Key Number System for legal classification and informational retrieval.

Westlaw Next

The updated display of the West Key Number System. Note that the classification outline has been removed.