

Mindy Klasky is the author of nine novels, including the Jane Madison series (*Girl's Guide to Witchcraft*, *Sorcery and the Single Girl*, and *Magic and the Modern Girl*) all published by Harlequin/Red Dress Ink. Her latest work, the As You Wish Series, will launch in October 2009, with Harlequin/Mira's publication of *How Not to Make a Wish*.

Prior to writing full time, Mindy practiced trademark and copyright law at one of the largest firms in Washington, D.C. Ultimately, Mindy earned her Master's Degree in Library Science and became the Library Director for an international law firm with fourteen offices, where she supervised a staff of 26 and developed a comprehensive training program 1500 lawyers and staff. Mindy has been a featured speaker at the American Association of Law Libraries and the Law Librarian Society of D.C.

- I. Introduction – what types of authors need what type of legal and government information and where can that information be found?
 - a. What type of writers?
 - i. Romantic Suspense
 - ii. Contemporary
 - iii. Historical
 - iv. Science Fiction
 - v. Any author looking for realistic legal- or government-related details
 - b. What type of information?
 - i. Laws and regulations
 - ii. Titles and hierarchies of individuals
 - iii. Litigation (suits in court)
 - iv. Transactions (mergers, acquisitions, deeds, wills, trusts)
 - v. Business data
 - c. Who provides information?
 - i. Government
 - ii. Academics
 - iii. Trade associations
- II. Government – using United States (and Washington, DC in particular) as examples, but with side references to other legal systems
 - a. Civics 101 – Federal, state, and municipal jurisdiction
 - b. Civics 201 – Three branches of government (and the paper they generate)
 - i. Legislative (legislative history)
 1. Draft bills
 2. Reports
 3. Hearings
 4. Documents
 - ii. Executive (regulatory history)
 1. Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking
 2. Notice of Proposed Rulemaking
 3. Final Rule
 4. Adjudications

- iii. Judicial (litigation – bench or bar trial)
 - 1. Pre-trial documents (motions and memoranda)
 - 2. Orders and opinions
 - 3. Appeals
 - c. Finding government documents
 - i. Specific laws and regulations
 - 1. <http://law.justia.com>
 - 2. <http://lp.findlaw.com> ("legal professional" site)
 - ii. Specific legal cases
 - 1. PACER (need account)
 - 2. Specific court's website
 - iii. Specific executive branch activity
 - 1. Rulemakings (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov>)
 - 2. Adjudications (individual agencies' websites)
 - 3. Executive orders (<http://www.whitehouse.gov>)
 - d. Specific resources
 - i. Internet
 - ii. Public library, including county or local bar library
 - iii. Library of Congress – Law Library Reading Room (particularly, international law) -- <http://www.loc.gov/law/index.php>
- III. Academics and Professionals – who are they and why might they be helpful?
- a. Academics – Graduate course of study, equivalent of Masters' Degree
 - i. Examine theoretical issues not yet decided by government
 - ii. Highly specialized areas of expertise
 - iii. Highly specialized academic librarians
 - b. Professionals
 - i. Solo practitioners (tend to know local laws, including municipal law; generally focus on family law, small business law)
 - ii. Law firms
 - 1. Associates (employees who do grunt work, hoping to grow into ownership of firm; may be experts on specific legal issues, because they're the ones actually doing the research)
 - 2. Partners (co-owners of firm; tend to spend more time with clients and less time doing actual research; may be "experts" in field)
 - 3. Counsel (special working arrangements; often ex-government people with specialized knowledge or technical (not-law-related) knowledge)
 - c. Specific resources
 - i. Law reviews and journals
 - ii. Legal newspapers
 - iii. Martindale-Hubbell – <http://www.martindale.com>
- IV. Trade Associations – what are they and how can they assist writers?
- a. Membership organizations (like RWA), with common areas of interest and expertise

- b. Functions
 - i. Assisting members in business field (sometimes including FAQ information on website, specialized libraries, print publications designed for newcomers, etc.)
 - ii. Promoting field to public (including educating Congress)
 - iii. Networking opportunities for members
 - c. Specific resources
 - i. Internet (especially .org domains)
 - ii. *Encyclopedia of Associations*
- V. Verifying Internet Research
- a. Consider the source
 - i. Full-paid vendors (e.g. LexisNexis or ThomsonReuters)
 - ii. Partial-paid vendors (e.g., New York Times)
 - iii. Members-only sites (e.g., American Medical Association)
 - iv. Free sites
 - b. Consider the format
 - i. Website
 - ii. Blogs
 - iii. Listservs
 - c. Consider the quality of the resource
 - i. Stated purpose
 - 1. Is there an explicit stated purpose for site/blog/listserv?
 - 2. What is the intended coverage?
 - 3. What is the intended audience
 - ii. Coverage or resource
 - 1. How many subject areas?
 - 2. How deep within any one subject area?
 - 3. Do links on site extend coverage?
 - iii. Authority and reputation
 - 1. Identity and reputation of source, author, and sponsor
 - 2. Site address (did they invest in a "legitimate" site name?)
 - 3. Site counter (do they indicate how many users have come to site?)
 - iv. Accuracy
 - 1. For items where you know some facts, is the site factually accurate?
 - 2. Are their typographic, spelling, or grammar errors?
 - 3. Does the site indicate the basis for its claims?
 - 4. Does the site have some inherent bias?
 - 5. Are there contacts for sending corrections or updates?
 - v. Currency
 - 1. Does the site explicitly state when it was last updated?
 - 2. Does the site state the frequency of updates?
 - 3. Are links to external sites maintained?
 - 4. Are there contacts for sending corrections or updates?

- vi. Accessibility
 - 1. Does the site load quickly and reliably?
 - 2. Are there mirror sites to carry the load during heavy usage times?
 - 3. Are additional hardware and/or software required to use the site?
 - 4. Is registration required?
- vii. Presentation
 - 1. Is the site arranged clearly and logically?
 - 2. Is the site design consistent throughout?
 - 3. Is the site easy to read?
 - 4. Are there advertisements (which might go to bias)?
- viii. Compare Alternatives
 - 1. Other websites
 - 2. Print resources (in libraries or bookstores)
 - 3. Common sense