

# Digital Legal Authority

Accuracy, Authentication, and Preservation

By Randy Foreman

The State Bar Committee on Libraries, Legal Research, and Legal Publications is privileged to provide the articles for this theme issue of the *Michigan Bar Journal*. The meaning of the theme—digital legal authority—and its subtopic—accuracy, authentication, and preservation—may not be intuitive to our readers, so allow me to introduce our topics and authors.

Ruth Stevens is an assistant professor of legal studies at Grand Valley State University and Jane Edwards is the head of research services at Michigan State University College of Law. In their excellent article, “State Primary Law Materials in a Digital Era: Where Do We Go from Here?,” they explain that an “authenticated” document is one that the issuing agency can guarantee to be every bit as reliable as the print version. However, as disclaimers on Michigan’s various government and court websites reveal, few, if any, of Michigan’s online cases, laws, and regulations have such a guarantee.

G. Ann Baker is the director of the Corporation Division of the Bureau of Commercial Services. Ann’s article about how the state processes digital corporate documents is enlightening concerning the complexities involved in ensuring that legal documents are preserved, protected, and made available to the public.

Randy Davidson is an assistant defender at the State Appellate Defender Office and the former chair of the State Bar Committee

on Libraries, Legal Research, and Legal Publications. His article, “Michigan Court Rules in the Digital Age,” provides an excellent overview of the status of Michigan’s court rules regarding digital discovery, electronic evidence, and electronic filing.

Highly readable and extremely practical is Faith Heikkila’s article, “Data Privacy in the Law Firm: How to Protect Client Data.” Faith addresses the digital security issues practitioners face daily and reminds us about laws and issues that many readers may be unaware of.

And finally, the regular Libraries and Legal Research column, written this month by yours truly, reviews the best of Michigan’s “unauthenticated” online resources. ■



*Randy Foreman is the coordinator of this theme issue. He is chair of the State Bar Committee on Libraries, Legal Research, and Legal Publications and is the student instructional services librarian at Thomas M. Cooley Law School. Randy graduated cum laude from Thomas M. Cooley Law School in 1999. He has a master’s degree in library science from the State University of New York at Albany, two bachelor’s degrees from Michigan State University, and an associates degree in electronics technology from I.T.T.*