

MEMORANDUM

TO: David Wrone

FROM: George Leopold

DATE: February 22, 1978

RE: Research Assistant

It has been my experience that a research assistant or intern almost immediately confronts the problem of how to organize large amounts of information into some logical and usable form. Few academic situations are as bewildering as having to dig one's way out of a mass of material that he/she is unfamiliar with.

Therefore, the most important lesson the assistant can learn is how to organize himself and, in turn, the information he is working with. This could include, for example, how to catalogue materials in terms of relevance to a particular subject matter or general importance. In short, the intern should be taught the fundamental tools of scholarship.

Related to this is the problem of how to analyze documents. What is the best way of carrying out a critical analysis? Sentence by sentence? Word for word? Do shortcuts exist that could save valuable time?

Finally, it is vital that the assistant and the person he/she is working under communicate. By being able to ask questions and get understandable answers to technical problems, the intern will know precisely what is expected of him. Such a working relationship will undoubtedly benefit both parties.

In all of these ways, then, the assistant can begin to develop the skills necessary for scholarly research and the sense of responsibility and discipline that are prerequisites for scholarship.