

Research Cornerstones

Guide to Loose-leaf Services

Introduction

Loose-leaf services are defined in Black's Law Dictionary as "A type of lawbook having pages that are periodically replaced with updated pages, designed to cope with constant change and increasing bulk" (at 954, 7th ed. 1999). These sources provide timely updates to specific areas of law and often span jurisdictions.

Description

Typically created in the form of ring or post binders, loose-leafs can be taken apart to insert and/or remove pages. In general, there are two types of services:

Interfiled Newsletter or Cumulating

Pages containing updated information are inserted where superseded pages are removed. Updated information is provided as supplemental unit; the accumulated units serve as the body of the title and are indexed.

There are some services, however, that combine versions of the two types to serve the user to better advantage.

Common Loose-leaf Publishers

While there are many publishers of loose-leaf services, the following are commonly found in U.S legal research:

- Aspen Publishing
- Bureau of National Affairs (BNA)
- Commerce Clearing House (CCH)
- Research Institute of America (RIA)
- Matthew Bender
- West Publishing

Common Features

Instructions - Sometimes labeled as "How to Use This Service," these instructions serve as an introduction to not only the organization of the service but also to the scope of its content. Although users often gloss over this to get to the information needed, the instructions provide valuable insights that should not be overlooked.

Indexes and Tables - These are finding aids that may appear in tabbed sections of the service (most often at the back) or in separate volumes.

Topical Index— a detailed list of subject headings and subheadings

Finding Lists – often a quick reference for tables, charts, and summaries of major regulations/legislation with citations to more detailed information within the service

Tables –very helpful when your research starts with a specific case name or a statutory section

Cases – listing of cases cited, sometimes provide parallel citation

Rules, Regulations, Orders, Statutes – a cross-reference listing of major primary sources by section with citations within the service

Current or Supplementary Indexes – rather than republishing lengthy cumulative indexes throughout the year, some services maintain an index supplement (often printed on another color paper) or separate "current index" which may be compiled annually in the master index.

Page Numbering and Paragraph (§) Numbering

Due to the periodic changes and additions to a loose-leaf service, pages may not appear in standard numerical order; therefore, services often refer to paragraph (§) or section (§) numbers for consistency.

Primary Source Materials

Some services provide the full text of important legal and regulatory documents at state and federal levels

- Case decisions– judicial and/or administrative decisions
- Statutes and statutory changes
- Regulations

Secondary Sources

- Summaries of proposed legislation and regulations
- Editorial notes, comments, and analysis
- News coverage of recent developments(see Current Developments section below)

Current Developments

This section will have varying titles, depending on the publisher (Highlights, Bulletin, Report Letter, etc.). The purpose is to provide up-to-date information on new issues, decisions, and developments. Depending on the type of service, this update may contain summaries of materials added (interfiled service) or more complete coverage and notices (newsletter service).

Most Recent Updates

Depending on the set, loose-leaves can be updated at different intervals. To determine how current a loose-leaf set is, consult the filing instructions (in the front of the volume/set or the back, depending on the publisher) that indicate when the service was last updated. Sometimes current development news summaries appear with these instructions.

Transfer Binders or Bound Reprints

Periodically cases and other material are removed from loose-leaf sets to be maintained separately. Some services simply insert the same pages into "transfer binders" that have their own indexes; others reprint the loose-leaf pages into bound volumes resembling case reporters that contain their own index and digest.

Finding a Loose-leaf Service For Your Research

If you are not sure if your area of research has a loose-leaf service, contact a Research Librarian to assist you in using *Legal Loose-leafs in Print's* subject index. Once you find a specific title, search our online catalog to see if the title is available here.

Jones School of Law Library

Do you need more help? Come, Let us reason together.

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