



Using Looseleaf Services

BOSTON COLLEGE LAW LIBRARY

What is a looseleaf service?

A looseleaf service is a form of publication that is periodically updated with materials which are filed in a notebook or binder to ensure that the contents are as current as possible. The updates are usually provided on a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly basis. Looseleaf services bring together into a single secondary source most of the important information from a variety of primary sources on a particular topic or field of law. Although some treatises or codes are published in looseleaf format with an annual supplementation, they are not true looseleaf services. The major publishers of looseleaf services are Bureau of National Affairs (BNA), Commerce Clearing House (CCH), Lexis Legal Publishing/Matthew Bender and Research Institute of America (RIA).

What materials and information are contained in looseleaf services?

Looseleaf services contain a variety of primary source materials on a particular topic as well as explanatory text. The primary source materials can be either full text or summarized.

While there are many different types of looseleaf services on a variety of topics, there are some features common to most looseleaf services. Looseleaf services include indexes to the materials within them. They also contain a current awareness feature, such as current reports or a highlights section, summarizing recent developments in that topic. They can be a particularly efficient way to do research and keep informed of new trends in the law.

What are the advantages of using looseleaf services?

Looseleaf services are more current than traditionally bound books and often more convenient to use because changes can be incorporated into the pertinent sections themselves rather than merely appended in the back of the volume.

Looseleaf services may be more convenient to use than codes and reporters since they may include many types of primary source materials in full text on a particular topic, thus reducing the number of separate books that need to be consulted. They also offer a variety of secondary materials including news coverage and editorial notes and comments.

Finally the indexing and organization of looseleaf services frequently make it easier to find related materials on the subject being researched.

What types of topics do looseleaf services cover?

Looseleaf services are especially prevalent in rapidly changing fields or where timeliness and currency are essential because of the importance of the issuing body. They are also very frequently used in fields which are heavily a mixture of statutory, administrative and judicial rulings.

In some fields of law, looseleaf services are the primary research tool used. These fields include tax, labor law, and environmental law. In other fields, looseleaf services provide additional sources and access points which are used in conjunction with more traditional methods of legal research such as the use of digests and annotated codes. Among these fields are family law, criminal law, and professional responsibility.

Legal Looseleafs in Print, Law Library Reference Area KF 1 .S7, provides a complete listing by title of the looseleaf services currently in publication in the United States.

How are looseleaf services organized?

While each publisher organizes its services differently, a number of features are common to all looseleaf services. First, all looseleaf services require the periodic insertion of new material and removal of superseded material. Some do this by providing new pages to be interfiled within the existing text, others by providing cumulations of new materials in a newsletter format.

Materials are indexed by topic, but there are usually current awareness features in each supplementing shipment.

Additionally, when the pages become too voluminous, or less current, they may be replaced by a bound volume of reported decisions or moved to a storage device called a transfer binder.

What are the features of an interfiled type of looseleaf service?

Interfiled looseleaf services, such as those published by Commerce Clearing House (CCH) and Research Institute of America (RIA), are especially helpful for bringing related materials all together in one place. Because individual pages can be removed and replaced, changes in the law can be incorporated right into the text without requiring the user to look in pocket parts and extra supplementary pamphlets.

An example of this type of service is the *Standard Federal Tax Reporter* by CCH. The *SFTR* contains the full text of codes, regulations, and cases brought under the tax laws. The set is organized by code section. Immediately following the code section are the regulations, publisher's comments, and summaries of cases interpreting that section. Full texts of the cases referenced can be found in a separate cases section or bound volumes.

What are the features of a newsletter type looseleaf service?

Newsletter looseleaf services, such as many of those published by the Bureau of National Affairs (BNA), are designed to keep practitioners up to date on the latest developments in the law, as well as to provide reference materials on different subtopics within the field for future research. The subscription provides a number of pamphlets on different topics. The new pamphlets are filed behind the appropriate topical dividers for future reference and research.

One of the most frequently used looseleaf service, BNA's *U.S. Law Week*, provides information on the proceedings and decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court, as well as most significant current developments in both state and federal law. The service is indexed by topic. Supreme Court case docket numbers are used to track the work of the United States Supreme Court.

How has technology changed looseleaf publication?

Technology is creating new ways to access information formerly only available through looseleaf publications. Many looseleaf services are now available on the Internet both directly and through vendors such as LexisNexis and Westlaw. By taking advantage of these electronic products lawyers and law librarians can save the labor costs associated with filing looseleaf pages and the rent costs associated with book storage. Another time-saving advantage is that online looseleaf services can be searched electronically.

Online services are cheaper for the infrequent user, but for the frequent user may be expensive to use regularly. Many of the online services have companion services that provide the latest developments in a field on a daily basis.

One looseleaf service that exemplifies the changes in looseleaf publishing brought about through technology is the BNA *Environment Reporter*. This service covers developments in environmental law and provides cases, statutes, and regulations from the fifty states as well as the federal government. Portions of this service are available through both LexisNexis and Westlaw. Online this service is accompanied by a daily companion service *Environment Today*. In the summer of 1994, BNA decided that the volume of state regulatory materials made it too costly to continue to provide those materials in print form. The paper edition of this reporter would still contain all federal developments in environmental law.

Hints for using a looseleaf service successfully

- For information on what is contained in a looseleaf service and how best to access it, the user should look for the instructions sections sometimes located in the first binder or in the index binder. Frequently titled, "How to Use This Service," these brief guides describe the contents, means of access, and special features that the service contains.
- Some looseleaf service indexes provide references to page numbers while others refer to section or paragraph numbers. If references are to section or paragraph numbers, rather than page numbers, there will be a notation to that effect somewhere on the page. Be certain to look for section and paragraph numbers instead of page numbers in those instances.

- Many looseleaf services that are maintained by interfiling have time-divided indexes. For example, an index may be divided into three sections labeled *index*, *current index*, and *latest additions to index*, or *index to volumes I - 10*, *index to volumes 11 - 20*, etc. Be sure to check all relevant sections if you are looking for all references rather than just those from a particular time frame.
- Pay attention to the *source* of the information in a looseleaf service. Primary authority can be located next to interpretive notes. Even though an editor's contribution may be clearer and better written than the primary sources, only the constitution, cases, statutes, and regulations of a jurisdiction are the law in that jurisdiction. In general, use looseleaf services to obtain background knowledge and as a tool to find primary resources. As a rule, do not cite looseleaf services unless the material does not exist elsewhere. Always check the primary source to ensure that quotations are accurate and that interpretations have a firm basis.
- Do not assume that the citations provided in a looseleaf service conform to the standards of *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation*.
- For more detailed guidance in using looseleaf services, refer to Robert Berring's *Research Using Looseleaf Services*, which is on permanent reserve, AV KF 240.B468 no. 5

Which looseleaf services does the Boston College Law Library have and where are they located?

To find out which looseleaf services we have at Boston College, use Quest, the Boston College Libraries' Information System. The law library catalog in Quest contains information concerning what looseleaf services are available and where they are located within the library. The Law Library collections are shelved by topic, in call number order regardless of form. Most looseleaf services are shelved in the General Collection, although a few are kept on Reserve or in the Reference Area.

To find the location of a particular looseleaf service, browse the catalog by title. For example, to find the Matthew Bender looseleaf, *Pension and Profit-Sharing Plans*, select "Title beginning with ..." in the Browse List, enter the words "pension and profit" in the "Browse for" window and click on "search."

To see which looseleaf services we have from a particular publisher, search by keyword. For example, to find Matthew Bender looseleaf publications in our holdings, type "looseleaf AND bender" in the keyword search window and click on "search". An advanced search by publisher name "bender" and keyword "looseleaf" yields identical results. However, note that an advanced search by publisher name "matthew bender" and keyword "looseleaf" yields no results (this is due to the fact that the publisher name is M. Bender in the catalog listings).

To find out what looseleaf services we have on a particular topic, use a keyword search and include the words "looseleaf" as part of your keyword search request. For example, to find looseleaf holdings on securities regulation, type "looseleaf AND securities" in the keyword search window.

Many looseleaf services are available to Boston College law students through LexisNexis and Westlaw. Students should consult the lists of available databases online or in print at the Information Desk.

An electronic version of this guide may be found at: <http://www.bc.edu/schools/law/library/research/researchguides/>

Reprinted May 2004

Copyright 2004, The Boston College Law Library.

Permission to reproduce is hereby granted except for use in items to be offered for sale. Please credit the Boston College Law Library.