

Hi all,

I got a number of responses from both lists, and I'm putting them here anonymously. Several people asked for the responses. Thanks very much to all who replied - and to Laurie for sending me a sample. I'm meeting with the attorney in charge of this project and I'm much better informed to help him decide what we're going to do.

1. I don't know if this helps: I only have USCA now, but used both as a beginning researcher and found USCS to be less intimidating than USCA, perhaps because of the layout, handy links to other LCP publications. It was also less annotated. So, perhaps it is better suited to non-legal users.

2. How do they compare? I know the USCS is much cheaper. Is it as good as USCA.

3. This question came up on law-lib a couple of years ago, and I saved the summary of responses as well as the source of the email to a Word document. I am attaching it.

We have the USCS, primarily because it is cheaper and we have the USCA available West eLibraries. I like some of the finding aids in the USCS, but I haven't made a detailed study to compare them with finding aids in USCA.

The quality of the USCS volumes is pretty low (in terms of quality of materials and workmanship). When we ordered our set, I had to return several volumes. If you do order it, check each volume carefully, and make sure the slit for the pocket part will actually open.

4. Maria -- unless things have changed significantly in the past two years (when we discontinued our lone copy of USCS) the major difference (in my opinion) between the two sets was the excellent legislative history information contained in the USCS v. the obvious West connection (case cites, key number & topic, etc.) found in the USCA. The legislative history was developed before Lexis acquired the rights to the USCS and I haven't tried to determine whether Lexis is keeping up that part of the set, and if so, how well. Unless the price is significantly lower for the USCS, I don't think you're missing anything by not having it. On the other hand if you're simply attempting to provide access to the US Code and cost is a major concern, you won't give up much by selecting the USCS over the USCA.

5. USCA includes references to the West key numbering system and has been comprehensive in coverage of cases. USCS has been selective in case coverage. On the other hand, USCS has provided notes on administrative decisions, while USCA has not included them.

6. They're both equally good. There are some very slight differences in how they obtain their text, which isn't worth it to go into, and can probably be Googled up, as it's been the topic of posts in the past. The USCS has larger books, if that's an issue. I can't recall if they have equal content in terms of tables, like CFR cross references. If there's any big difference, that's where it would be, and you might make

sure they both have whatever supplemental info you'd need. But in terms of quality of annotations/analysis, I'd say they're on equal footing.

7. While I don't know all the details of the differences, I do know that last year when teaching the two sets in my Advanced Legal Research class I tried to find something in the index to USCA, and it was virtually impossible. In USCS on the other hand, it was right there. So my (admittedly anecdotal) impression is that the reputation of former Lawyer's Coop products like USCS as being more analytical is probably deserved. If indeed the index in general is better in USCS, this would be a good reason to get it for a jail law library where your users will not be experienced searchers

8. Just a strictly personal opinion - in part informed by observations from my Advanced Legal Research students who I surveyed this year. Most people seem to feel the USCS is laid out better and more readable as far as format. I generally agree with this opinion. Also there are less annotations in the USCS - but this can actually help because the annotations are generally more relevant if they are in the USCS (remember that prisoners reading these annotations may overlearn from them and then request cases that turn out to be non-relevant - arguably more often in the USCA). Further the text of the USCS follows the Statutes at Large, rather than the USC, which is important in the common event where you are dealing with a code provision which has not been enacted into positive law (<http://uscode.house.gov/about/info.shtml>) and where there is a variation between the Statutes at Large and the USC. I assume you do not have a copy of the Statutes at Large while maybe you can print off a copy of the USC from online.

A good discussion of some differences can be found at:
<http://www.law.uidaho.edu/documents/AnnotatedCodes.pdf&pid=83680&doc=1>
and I would recommend Fundamentals of Legal Research - 8th Edition by Mersky.

Personally, I would lean to the USCS in your circumstances, especially if there is a cost savings. You will want to look at updating cost also - of course.

Please take these as what they are - informed opinions - but opinions only.

9. In many ways USCS, I think, is the better publication. It includes exact text to the Statutes at Large, using brackets to indicate Legislative Counsel Office changes. It includes CFR references in tabular form. And it has a table of uncodified laws. Its index is just as good as USCA's.

USCA is the one that everyone cites, but I think that USCS is the superior publication and it is also much cheaper. If I had to go with one, it would be USCS.

10. I have a personal preference for USCA because it's part of the Key Number System. I also find it easier to use. I know there are substantive differences between the two as well, but considering your researching population, I'd go with the USCA. You'll do less explaining about how to locate information, IMHO.

11. Off the top of my head as they say and w/o going to the volumes b/c they are on another floor. We have both. USCS has larger print and the volumes appear to be replaced more often than USCA volumes. USCS has the court rules at the end and the USCA has them in with Title 28.

12. We've supplied USCA volumes to the County Jail for years. To reduce expenses, we limit the books to Titles 18, 21, 28 and 42. We supplement these with the annual pocket parts.

Inmates without attorneys can request copies of other federal statutes if they need them for their defense. Jail staff print these (unannotated) statutes from Loislaw online.

I've never used USCS. In the whole County there is only one up-to-date copy of both USCS and USCA, and they are in our law library. Most people seem to use USCA.

We had a similar issue to yours a few years ago when Lexis started publishing a Michigan Compiled Laws Service (MCLS) set to compete with West's Michigan Compiled Laws Annotated (MCLA). Along with a strong (you can read "pushy" here) sales pitch, the MCLS set was at least \$200 less than MCLA's yearly upkeep. We keep 44 sets of MCLAs up to date for our judges and other departments, but one of them were enticed. And were we glad! Shortly after publication some of the MCLS volumes were already being replaced because of errors or omissions. The binding on the set is of poor quality. We had to replace a new volume recently because the pages were falling out.

There are always rumors going around that Lexis annotations are not always done by attorneys. But then, didn't I read that West is having some of its analyses done in India?

13. We switched over to the USCS last year, to save \$\$ primarily. We've found it to be completely satisfactory as a substitute. It does not seem to have as many annotations/cases, but the treaties and rules volumes seem more comprehensive, and of course the code is as up to date as USCA. You lose the West digest cross references, but it does have cross-references to ALRs, law journals, non Matthew Bender resources, etc.

14. Years ago, before Thomson bought West and divested itself of some product lines and took on others and Lexis bought Matthew Bender and Shepard's etc., if your law library was more weighted to Lawyers Coop materials, particularly the ALR system, LED, POF, Am Jur, (Lawyers Coop integrated library research system), you would have preferred to buy USCS over USCA. I'm not sure that this is the case anymore. Our law library used to have both USCS and USCA, but can no longer afford this luxury. Because our print collection, over time, has become more heavily weighted to West/Thomson materials, and we have a public Westlaw terminal, whose cost is underwritten substantially by our print, it was an easy decision to go with USCA. Even though USCS is still cheaper than USCA, you may want to survey your users to determine their preference. Even if you end up spending a little more, maybe your patrons will be happy with your decision.

15. Many years ago, USCS was owned by Lawyers Cooperative. The company sales rep, at the time I purchased USCS, explained a significant difference between the two. The difference being that USCS followed the Statutes at Large, while USCA followed the U. S. Code. He said the difference was important because if there were disagreement about the wording of a law, you went to the Statutes at Large because that was the law passed by Congress. I don't know if that difference holds true today. And I am relying on my memory--I purchased the set more than 15 years ago. I hope this helps.

16. I'm not a prison librarian but will respond anyway.

My understanding of the basic difference between these two sets relates to the publishers' differing philosophies regarding annotation. USCA, like other West publications, is comprehensive in its listing of caselaw (and perhaps other types of) annotations; hence its greater size and corresponding higher \$\$\$. USCS, like other (former) Lawyers Co-op publications, annotates more selectively. They each might also cite slightly different related research tools, with some preference toward its own publisher's materials.

Going on the basic research strategy of finding "one good case," I think USCS would serve just as well as USCA in a prison library setting.

Hope that helps, and if you get other views and additional info, please do summarize back to the list

17. When I was in (city), we tried cutting USCA and just keeping USCS, and the attorneys were livid! I did not try it here, because USCA is used so much more than USC.

18. We used to have both -- I thought that they were comparable. Both are annotated, and the annotations do differ slightly because different editors from different companies are doing the research.

We now have only the USCA.

19. We have both - the public tends to like USCS better because it looks simpler to read because of the type face used, more white space (less intimidating and friendlier, as described by a couple of patrons) I would think inmates would agree; the only problem is that they might already have other West products like the Calif. Reporter or West digests that would be referred to in the USCA. It is always better to keep the same line of products for that reason. Generally, USCA has more annotations but that can also be a deterrent - too much to look through and not always that helpful anyway. In CA, Lexis offers online access to the code and cases that is especially geared to prisons - I witnessed a demo in our jail and the screen and keyboard was indestructible!

20. I strongly suggest that you buy and use

<http://www.rilawpress.com/>

It will help you sort out this issue rationally as well as future

Decisions

21. We have the USCA in our main library and have the USCS out at our jail law library. I think that, for a librarian at least, they are both equally easy to use. We are not permitted to offer legal research training of any kind to the inmates at the jail, so I can't really comment on how easy the USCS is for the "average inmate" to use.

I would be interested in an anonymous summary of your responses posted to the list, though. Also, you might want to post your question to the SCCLL listserv, as many SCCLL libraries manage jail/prison law libraries.

22. A few years ago, we had both sets and they were equally (not)used.

We cancelled the USCA because we had it available on Westlaw, and removed it from the shelves.

I was glad that the USCS was left. I much prefer the annotations in this set, which cover a wider assortment of references (including the CFR). I've heard from other attorney/librarians who also prefer the layout and coverage of the USCS.

It could be that the USCA's annotations have improved by now.

23. Just an opinion. But I have never been impressed with USCS.

I have used USCA since graduate school (late 1960s) and law school (early 1970s). USCS just has never seen, in my opinion, to be an adequate substitute.

In addition to that personal sense, we have 26 subscriptions to USCA in the court of appeals and district court chambers and offices in Oklahoma City. Only one USCS subscriber in the last 16 years and that set was cancelled in 1992.

I would hazard a guess that the vast majority of federal judicial chambers and offices across the country also use USCA.

Without a doubt, some of that widespread acceptance is a testament to West Publishing Company's early and devoted marketing efforts. But a substantial part of it has to also be the quality of the editorial services that were included in USCA.

That's not proof. It's only opinion. But it all confirms my feelings that USCA is the superior set.

24. Since USCS contains current statutes, is kept up to date the same as USCA is and is less expensive, USCS should be the set of choice.

25. I have an opinion if you care. I had both in the law firm that I used to work at - and the attorneys had definite preferences - one or the other and we have both sets here. The USCS has much less material - and is organized more simply - so I actually think it is easier for the public to use - including inmates. But - what happens often is that patrons find cases that cite to the USCA - not as much to

the USCS. So they start saying things like - why isn't this case in both? Why does the USCS cite to fewer cases, etc?

Ease of use - the USCS

More material - explanation plus more cases - USCA

Just my opinion. Given a choice I usually use the USCA.

26. 1. I've always thought that USCS is better for attys who deal with admin law (tax, immigration, environmental). I've found it to have more reference citations to the CFR and other admin resources.

2. In addition, the "word on the street" is that USCA has more annotations, but that USCS has more precise, on-point citations.

3. Lastly, one thing I do like about USCA in particular, is that it provides research references to other West products, like Am Jur and to West Key Numbers. I'm not sure if your prisoners have access to those other materials.

27. These differences probably do not make a difference to your clients.

Perhaps cost should be your deciding factor. USCS might be more researcher-friendly if looking for relevant cases to interpret the statute (see 1. below).

The major differences are:

1. Annotations. West's general editorial philosophy is to broadly include everything, so it includes citations to cases that might not be about that issue in the statute. Lexis' general editorial philosophy is to be more discriminating in which decisions to include, so there are less irrelevant case citations. A significant difference is that USCS includes much more annotations to federal agency decisions.

2. USCA statute language is based on USC; USCS language is based on Statutes at Large.

28. USCS is better for annotations to CFR, and has a more selective list of annotations to cases.

29. Short version: if there's a significant price difference, go with the cheaper one. IMO, there's not enough of a difference between the two to make one the must-have version over the other. They're both good.

Traditionally, IIRC, the difference between the two was that in the case notes for each code section, West's USCA tended to try to include as many cases as possible, while Lexis' USCS preferred to try to find the best cases. Personally, that difference seems to have diminished over the years. USCS also tends to include more regulatory info -- it includes a copy of the CFR print index, and sometimes, it'll include the main CFR part relating to a USC section.

30. I've worked in places where we've had both sets. The USCS was never used unless the USCA volume wasn't on the shelf. I've found that the USCA seems to be easier to use. I also like the legislative history notes/info better. Not sure this would have bearing on a library for inmates...

Good luck. Wish I could buy the cheaper set - I think my attorneys would revolt.

31. My 2 cents worth? In my first law librarian job, the FDIC had both USCS and USCA. I had no idea what I was doing in any sense of the word, but I would reach for the USCS because it seemed to explain the law better.

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