Supplementing Legal Materials

The law is fluid. It changes constantly and therefore it must be updated constantly. Updating the printed page is not a task a general subject librarian confronts very often since most books in the public library setting are updated by means of new editions. Books in law library collections are unique in that if they are not updated regularly they are useless and even potentially dangerous to the public patrons who rely on them.

Legal materials are generally updated by means of periodically issued supplements. Supplements may be issued as separate cumulative or non-cumulative volumes, as pocket parts inserted into the back cover of a volume, or as separate pages that are interfiled into a loose-leaf volume. The exact form of supplementation is determined by the publisher and usually depends on how quickly the publisher feels the material must be updated or upon the sheer size of the material.

Supplementation by separate volume usually takes the form of an additional volume that is issued annually or at some regular interval. It is generally shelved next to the existing volume. Separate or split volumes may also be issued when past supplements are incorporated into a newly issued revised volume. When this happens, volumes may be issued as consecutive parts such as v. 11, 11A, 11B, etc. so that they will be shelved next to each other.

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The second type of updating, pocket part supplementation, is usually found in multi-volume sets. The back cover of these volumes is split so that a paper supplement attached to a cardboard backing may be inserted directly into the back cover. When this type of supplement is issued, some volumes - due for content replacement or requiring no updating - may not receive a pocket part. Therefore, extra care must be taken to ensure that the appropriate pocket part is placed in the correct volume. These volumes should be labeled or users instructed that a pocket part is inserted to update the volume and that they should check it to locate the most current information available on this legal topic.

Loose-leaves, a third type of supplementation, are a very popular form of supplementation for areas of the law that are in constant flux. This type of supplementation is issued as a package of leaves that will replace only some of the current leaves in a volume. Filing loose-leaves is tedious and time consuming since the instructions issued with the package must be carefully followed and because large amounts of time are spent flipping to the appropriate leaf that needs to be removed and replaced by the one in the package.

The looseleaf instructions are the most important part of this form of supplementation. The number of the supplement must be carefully consulted and compared to the last supplement filed since it is imperative that these supplements be filed in order. Otherwise, current material may be discarded and out of date material substituted for it. Most loose-leaves carry the date of the particular supplement in one of the margins making it simple to check for the date of the most recent page the filer is about to pull and replace.

It is easy to misread some of the complex page numbers issued for legal loose-leaf publications, therefore, very careful checking is required before a page is replaced. One other common error many filers make is trying to get the job done quickly by filing a set of pages as a packet in a volume when the instructions call for interfiling of pages.

The instructions will also alert the filer to the need to shift the material from one volume to another or to the need to separate filed material from the main volume to a separately issued cumulative supplement. When in doubt, check the "contents checklist" issued regularly or periodically with the instructions to be sure that the volumes are updated correctly. By checking this list, missing parts can be reordered and needless parts discarded.

Some supplementation caveats for those not used to this type of updating process are to 1) order the title with
supplementation to assure currency, 2) check in each type of supplement by report number and/or date, 3) put the library's ownership stamp on an item only after making sure it is not a duplicate, 4) read and follow all instructions, and 5) shelve, insert, or file any new supplements as soon as possible.

NEXT ISSUE:
Legal Materials in Government Document Collections

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CLEARINGHOUSE UPDATE

Each issue of LISP NEWS highlights an item from the LISP Clearinghouse of outreach materials. Materials are available on a loan basis only. Materials in the Clearinghouse are examples of individual committees', law libraries', and other organizations' efforts to make legal information more accessible to non-lawyers.

Requests for Clearinghouse publications should be made to:

Barbara Golden
Minnesota State Law Library
25 Constitution Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55155
In this issue we highlight publication MA-004-1, Commonwealth of Massachusetts Trial Court Law Libraries: Resources for the Public Patron: A Bibliography of Selective Holdings, 1990, compiled by Suzanne Hoey and Charlie Colokathis.

This bibliography was compiled for use by the Trial Court Law Libraries but may be useful to librarians in any state serving lay or pro se patrons. Although not meant to be comprehensive, the guide provides a list of information sources on over 50 topics of interest to lay patrons.

The topics covered include many of those sought by a public patron such as materials on the aged, consumer credit, adoption, landlord and tenant law, and social security.

The decision was made not to include many of the Massachusetts sources published by commercial publishers since most of those materials are written for the practicing bar. The compilers supplied price information when it was available. The list is unannotated, but the legal sources listed could be acquired by any public library and help in answering many of the general questions presented by lay patrons.

REFERRAL RESOURCES

State Administrative Officials Classified by Function is a useful acquisition for libraries making referrals to regulatory agencies in their own state and surrounding states. Published every two years, the information in this volume is listed by topical categories which include energy, criminal justice, recycling, retirement, and social services to name just a few.

States are arranged alphabetically under each topic. The address, phone number and name of the official performing that function or a very similar function within your state of interest is then provided.

This useful referral source is published by the Council of State Governments, P.O. Box 11910, Lexington, Kentucky 40578-1910. Price is listed as $30.