

Commentary services (looseleaf)

What are commentary services?

Commentary services, otherwise known as looseleaf services, are similar to legal encyclopaedias, but focus on a specific area of law.

They are often used by practising lawyers, as they contain very detailed and extensive commentary about legal principles.

And if the area of law is regulated primarily by legislation, these services will contain the whole Act, complete with commentary to assist in interpreting and applying each section.

Why should I use a commentary service?

- You will want to use a commentary service to:
- get an in-depth understanding of the legal principles related to a specific area of law
- learn of major Acts and cases to follow up on
- find information to help in interpreting legislation (including section, as well as specific words and phrases)
- learn of new terminology - this is really useful when you search for further information (e.g. journal articles on AGIS, cases on CaseBase, etc.)

How do I find commentary services? Which one should I use?

Specific services will often be listed in your topic guide or reading list. You can find these by searching FindIt@Flinders for the title.

Should I search or browse commentary services?

All commentary services will have the option to either search or browse. Both can be useful - both can be frustrating. If you get stuck, try one way, then the other - if you're still stuck, contact a Librarian.

Searching

- PRO - searching is useful when you don't know how the legal principle would be categorised
- CON - you might get a lot of irrelevant results if the concept is quite broad (e.g. negligence)
- CON - you might get no results if you use the wrong terminology (e.g. murder instead of homicide)

Browsing (like flipping through chapters of a book, or looking up a word in an index)

- PRO - good if you don't know the exact terminology, or get no results when searching. Even better is if you use an Index - this tells you of related terms you could look up

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- PRO - useful if you want to look at a broad area of law to see what specific legal principles are involved (e.g. if you want to look at negligence to see what elements need to be established)
 - CON - can be tricky if you don't know how the legal principle would be classified (e.g. does trespass to land come under criminal law, property law, or torts?) Again, an Index will get around this problem

What does 'looseleaf' mean?

Looseleaf refers to the printed format of these services.

Loose pages are filed in binders that are updated with new pages sent out regularly by the publishers. These new pages contain recent changes to the law. As such, they are usually quite up-to-date.

Most services are now online, but some you might still find in print. If you need to use one of these print services:

- you can flip through it like a book - there are tabbed sections for different chapters, each with a table of contents for each section so you can find information easily
- there is usually an index at the front
- if you're stuck, there is often a section called 'How to use this service' at the front. If this doesn't help, contact the Law Liaison Librarian

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