1962

Legal Periodicals Available on Microfilms in the United States of America

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LEGAL PERIODICALS AVAILABLE ON MICROFILMS IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

It is a common experience that the use of law books decreases with time. The greatest use is made of current materials and the older a law book is, the less it is used. This generalization is, of course, subject to exceptions; but these exceptions hold less true in the case of periodicals than in the case of other law books. Yet, old periodicals use the same amount of expensive storage space in law libraries as new books.

On the other hand, a good law library cannot restrict itself to the collection of materials which are commonly used. Rather also rarely used books must be available in some form. The occasional use which is likely to be made of old periodicals, may convince a law librarian that this need may be satisfied from time to time with Interlibrary Loans; but Interlibrary Loans of periodicals are not available from some of our largest lenders, are time consuming and serve only one patron at a time. Yet, librarians with limited budgets may find that old volumes are out of print or when available in original form or in reprints, strain the library's budget.

Space and budget requirements have led to a certain degree of popularity of micro-reproductions of periodicals; the generic term for the latter is microforms. Microforms consist primarily of microfilms among which the 35 mm films are commonly used, and micro-reproductions on cards; among the latter, the 3" x 5" microcards (75 x 125 mm) are most popular.

In the opinion of many law librarians, the usability of micro-reproductions in law libraries is limited. The use of microforms may be inconvenient and, in any event, does not permit the reader to compare simultaneously various statements in a multitude of publications although such simultaneous use of materials is essential to legal research. There are frequently other disadvantages to the use of microforms; when a volume is not indexed or poorly indexed or when explanatory notes appear at the end of a volume rather than as footnotes, the use of microforms is particularly inconvenient. Presumably all law librarians are in agreement that frequently used materials should be available in the original paper form or in reprints.

However, there are areas in which microforms have fully established themselves. When the paper of the original publications is poor and when the original volumes are particularly bulky, preservation of the originals, particularly in bound form, may be too expensive. In this manner, many libraries keep newspapers and newspaperlike publications only on microforms. Also, there are legal materials which are not available any longer or may not be available due to limited printings, and because of their bulk they may not be suited for reprinting. Microforms are the obvious remedy for such situations. Finally, the occasional use which is made of certain types of publications, may make their reproduction on microforms advisable. In the preceding cases,
microforms save space and funds, yet are suited for library use. In this manner, many American law libraries keep voluminous materials of the Congress of the United States of America, court reports of limited significance, briefs and records (the documents and arguments which parties submit in appellate cases), and official gazettes of foreign countries on microforms. Both the Congressional Record (the report of proceedings in the Congress) and the Federal Register (the newspaper-like publication in which federal administrative regulations are published) are available on microforms. Two hundred and sixty-three official gazettes of foreign countries are available on microfilm from the New York Public Library. It would be beyond the scope of this article to list other bulky or rare legal materials which are available on microforms, except legal periodicals with which this study is concerned.

Due to the growth of law libraries, legal periodicals are available in reprints and on microforms to an increasing extent. Early volumes may not be available any longer or only in limited quantities. It may be difficult or impossible to obtain individual issues in order to complete volumes. Binding may be expensive. The choice between reprinting and micro-reproduction of old volumes is usually determined by the reproducer's estimate of the available market as microforms cost only a fraction of reprinting, the ingenuity of a publisher in finding new markets, and by the value which early volumes have for research. Some librarians prefer paper editions to microforms in any case, others weigh the inconvenience of microforms against the convenience of acquisition and preservation. Sometimes, also current volumes are micro-reproduced. The reproduction of periodicals on microforms may originate with publishers, book dealers, research institutions or libraries. Some of these projects are made for profit, others are arranged on a non-profit and cooperative basis.

There have been strong advocates of the micro-reproduction of periodicals in the United States of America, without distinction whether the periodicals are legal or not. University Microfilms, Inc. (Ann Arbor, Michigan), advises libraries to subscribe to the regular paper editions of periodicals and to place simultaneously orders for a microfilm copy which is to be delivered upon the completion of each volume. The advice includes the suggestions that the paper copies are used while the immediate demand for them exists or until they are worn out; upon receipt of the microfilm, the paper copies may be bound or destroyed. When destroyed, the microfilm storage will save 95% of the space needed for bound copies, and the cost of the microfilm is suggested as the same which is paid for the paper edition. It is unknown to what extent law librarians have adopted these suggestions.

In the following, an attempt is made to list the American legal periodicals and related materials which at this time are available on microforms, without requiring an order for the production of the original microform from which copies are made.

University Microfilms, Inc. (313 West First Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan, U.S.A.) offers the following periodicals:
Food, Drug, Cosmetic Law Journal, beginning with vol. 8 (1953)
Harvard Law Review, beginning with vol. 64 (1950)
Industrial and Labor Relations Review (from the beginning; also current materials)
Insurance Law Journal, beginning with vol. 36 (1953)
Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science, beginning with vol. 46 (1955)
Labor Law Journal (from the beginning, also current materials)
Law and Contemporary Problems, beginning with vol. 16 (1951)
Law Library Journal, vols. 1-25; also current materials)
Monthly Labor Review, (from the beginning, also current materials)
Taxes, beginning with vol. 31 (1953)
United States Department of State Bulletin, beginning with vol. 32 (1955)

In passing, it should be mentioned that certain British periodicals are available from the same source, too; they are Justice of the Peace and Local Government Review (beginning with 1950; also current materials) and Solicitor’s Journal (beginning with vol. 104; 1960).

The purchase price for these microfilms varies according to the number of pages of the paper edition, and the price is between $ 2.75 and $ 6.45 per year.

The American Bar Foundation (1155 East 60th Street, Chicago 37, Illinois, U.S.A.) has reproduced various bar association journals on cards or films. These journals are the following:

- Bench and Bar of Minnesota, vols. 1-6 (1943-1949). Microfilm, $ 15.00

In conclusion, it may be said that there is a limited number of legal periodicals which are available in the United States of America on microfilm. The growth of foreign law collections which occurs all over the world, would seem to lend great importance to projects of micro-reproducing legal periodicals in every country. This is a field of endeavor in which law librarians, wherever they are situated, have a vital interest.

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