



Sample Document and Form Resources

by Andrea Hamilton

Many law librarians can attest that a strong demand exists for good sample document and form resources. New lawyers often rely on sample documents and forms for help with the process of drafting documents. Such resources also can be helpful to “seasoned” attorneys working in unfamiliar subject areas or jurisdictions. A recent search in FirstSearch’s WorldCat® yielded more than 900 print titles related to legal forms.¹

This article does not attempt to cover all available resources. It does, however, provide an introduction to many of the resources attorneys can use for help with drafting documents and conducting research. The article is organized by practice area, starting first with “general” resources. It then discusses resources specific to tax law, corporate law, and litigation. Colorado-specific resources are noted throughout the article.

General Resources

Two collections that provide samples of general legal forms are *American Jurisprudence Legal Forms*² and *Current Legal Forms, with Tax Analysis*.³ *American Jurisprudence Legal Forms* is a sixty-two-volume set that contains over 22,000 documents for legal and business transactions. It is also available electronically via Westlaw® in the AMJUR-LF database.⁴ *Current Legal Forms* is a thirty-four-volume set covering practical-

ly every area of law, except criminal law and litigation. This title is available electronically through LexisNexis™.⁵ Both sets provide forms, annotations, checklists, and drafting guidelines.

In addition to providing electronic access to each of the treatises listed above, both LexisNexis and Westlaw provide access to additional sample documents and forms. Users can access forms through LexisNexis by navigating to the individual practice-area pages⁶ or specialty law areas.⁷ In contrast, Westlaw has created a one-stop-shop for sample forms and documents under its FORMS-ALL database, which contains samples from more than fifty forms treatises.⁸ With both LexisNexis and Westlaw, users can take advantage of precise search strategies and indexing, as well as vendor representative assistance and phone customer service.

Some law firms offer employees additional electronic access to sample forms and documents through an internal document management system, such as LexisNexis Total Search®⁹ or Thomson Elite’s West km™.¹⁰ Two primary benefits of using either Total Search or West km are: (1) users can take advantage of LexisNexis or Westlaw search and retrieval tools; and (2) users can choose to search their firm’s work product and LexisNexis or Westlaw content at the same time. For example, with Total Search, in a single search a user has the option of receiving both LexisNexis search results, as well as those results specific to the firm. Performing simultaneous searches in two separate systems may save the user time and money.

Another good resource is Bradford Publishing, which provides numerous fill-in-the-blank forms tailored to Colorado law and general, Colorado-specific sample documents.¹¹ The forms are available in print, or via the company’s online subscription service, which provides these forms for completion in either Word or WordPerfect. Forms are available on a wide range of topics, including the Uniform Commercial Code, mechanics’

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liens, real estate, leases and rentals, probate, civil procedure, and bankruptcy.

Tax Law Resources

The Internal Revenue Service ("IRS") provides free access to federal tax forms at the "Forms and Publications" page of its website.¹² From this page, users may search and download forms, instructions, and additional IRS publications. For federal and state tax forms, the Bureau of National Affairs ("BNA") offers a subscription service to its CD-ROM product, *BNATAX Management Interactive Forms*.¹³ State-specific tax forms may be available through each state's Department of Revenue website. For example, users can go to the Colorado Department of Revenue website and download Colorado income and estate tax forms,¹⁴ as well as forms relating to other tax matters, such as business registration, wage withholding, and product sales.¹⁵

Corporate Law Resources

The Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC") provides access to free sample forms on its website. Users can access the website to view detailed descriptions of SEC forms¹⁶ and to download read-only PDF versions of these forms.¹⁷ The SEC website also enables users to search company filings and find links to documents that public U.S. companies have been required to file on a regular basis.¹⁸ Another resource for corporate documents and forms is LIVEDGAR,TM a subscription service that has SEC filings and other corporate content.¹⁹ The advantage of LIVEDGAR over the SEC website is the availability of advanced search strategies. For example, a user can

perform a search to find non-competition agreements filed by Colorado-based companies, or to locate a merger agreement between a domestic and international company. LIVEDGAR also offers online and on-site support from company representatives.

Although most searchers prefer an electronic fill-in-the-blank format, many practice-area-specific print resources also are available. For example, *Federal Securities Laws: Selected Statutes, Rules, and Forms* provides forms related to federal securities law transactions.²⁰ As is the case for any of the practice areas covered in this article, state resources include state-specific forms. The Colorado Secretary of State website provides forms for business filings in Colorado on its "Secretary of State Business Division Forms" page.²¹

Litigation Resources

Several electronic subscription services can be used to view samples of complaints, extensions, and answers. If the document being viewed belongs to a newer case and was filed electronically, it is available for immediate online viewing. Public Access to Court Electronic Records ("PACER") is the federal judiciary's centralized center for electronic access to U.S. district, bankruptcy, and appellate court records.²² Search options are limited to case name, case number, and nature of suit, but results cost just eight cents per page. For greater search functionality, both LexisNexis's CourtLink^{®23} and Westlaw's WestDockets^{™24} provide access to federal (and some state) dockets, searchable by judge or attorney name, or by keyword.

As mentioned above, state or jurisdictional materials should be used for questions that are state specific. In Colorado, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit offers online access to forms via the "Rules & Forms Menu" on its website.²⁵ The self-help center for the Colorado Judicial Branch also offers online access to forms.²⁶

A good print resource for litigation-related matters is *American Jurisprudence Pleading and Practice Forms Annotated: State and Federal*, a seventy-seven-volume set containing more than 36,500 practice- and court-ready state and federal forms.²⁷ This title is available electronically from Westlaw's AMJUR-PP database, as well.²⁸ A good resource for Colorado-specific forms relevant to litigation is *Civil Procedure Forms and Commentary*, a three-volume guide from the Colorado Practice Series.²⁹ This title is available online via Westlaw's COPRAC-CPF database.³⁰

For bankruptcy litigation, West publishes *Bankruptcy Code, Rules, and Official Forms*.³¹ In addition, there are jurisdiction-specific materials relating to bankruptcy. For example, the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Colorado provides online access to relevant national and local forms.³²

Conclusion

It is impossible to include in one short article every legal practice area where sample documents and forms may be available. Attorneys should keep in mind, however, that nearly every area of law has at least one print or electronic resource that provides sample documents and forms. Conducting a keyword search on "forms" in any library catalog will yield numerous relevant results. Adding search terms such as "intellectual property" will further refine results and point to titles such as *Doing Business on the Internet: Forms and Analysis*.³³ Finally, government agency websites, as well as professional websites, often feature sample documents and forms, particularly those specific to a practice area or a jurisdiction.

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NOTES

1. FirstSearch's WorldCat® is a worldwide union catalog created and maintained collectively by more than 9,000 member institutions. A subject search was run on the following terms in August 2005: "law and legislation united states forms." The results were limited to books and yielded 924 titles; however, not every title was unique.

2. St. Paul, MN: West Group, 1971.

3. Rabkin and Johnson, New York, NY: Matthew Bender and Co., 1948.

4. See <http://www.westlaw.com>.

5. See <http://www.lexis.com>.

6. *Id.* Click on the "Research Tasks" tab and select the link for the area of law desired; available forms will be listed under the "Related Legal Forms" heading on the right side of the page. For example, selecting the "Patent" link on the "Research Tasks" tab provides a link for *Horwitz Patent Forms*, published by Matthew Bender. *Horwitz* contains more than 350 blank forms that can be filled out and filed with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. The forms include checklists of what must be done to submit an application.

7. *Supra*, note 5. Click on the "Legal" tab, select the "Area of Law—By Topic" link, and then select the link for the desired area of law. The forms are available under "Treatises & Analytical Materials." Select the link for all available forms.

8. *Supra*, note 4.

9. See <http://www.lexisnexis.com/totalsearch>.

10. See <http://www.elite.com/solutions/product-fam/westkm>.

11. See <http://www.bradfordpublishing.com>.

12. Available at <http://www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html>.

13. See <http://www.bnatax.com/tm/tmip.htm>.

14. Available at http://www.revenue.state.co.us/TPS_Dir/wrap.asp?incl=forms_download.

15. *Id.* Select the "Forms" link under the "Main Categories" heading in the left-hand column.

16. Available at <http://sec.gov/info/edgar/forms/edgform.htm>.

17. Available at <http://www.sec.gov/about/forms/secforms.htm>.

18. Available at <http://www.sec.gov/edgar/searchedgar/companysearch.html>.

19. See <http://www.gsonline.com>; a tour of LIVEDGAR™ is available by selecting the "LIVEDGAR Tour" link.

20. Coffe and Seligman, New York, NY: Foundation Press; St. Paul, MN: West Group, annual.

21. Available at http://www.sos.state.co.us/pubs/business/forms_main.htm.

22. See <http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov>.

23. See <http://www.lexisnexis.com/courtlink/online>.

24. See <http://www.west.thomson.com/westlaw/dockets>.

25. Available at <http://www.ca10.uscourts.gov/rules.cfm>.

26. Available at <http://www.courts.state.co.us/chs/court/forms/selfhelpcenter.htm>.

27. St. Paul, MN: West Group, 1956.

28. *Supra*, note 4.

29. Knapp, *Civil Procedure Forms and Commentary*, Vols. 11-13 (St. Paul, MN: West Group, 1996).

30. *Supra*, note 4.

31. *Bankruptcy Code, Rules, and Official Forms: Related Statutes, Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Federal Rules of Evidence, Indexes, Proposed Bankruptcy Rules Amendments* (St. Paul, MN: West Group, annual).

32. Available at <http://www.cob.uscourts.gov/forms.asp>.

33. Millstein, Neuburger, and Weingart, New York, NY: Law Journal Seminars-Press, 1997. ■

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