

“Why I Love Casemaker”

WRITING COMPETITION



The Kentucky Bar Association & Casemaker are pleased to announce that **Thomas Nelson Sneed** is the winner of the 2018 “Why I Love Casemaker” writing competition. His winning entry is featured below.

As a young attorney in western Kentucky, I vividly remember my law firm’s library. The Kentucky Revised Statutes, South Western Reporters, American Law Reports, and Kentucky Practice Series lined the shelves. We even had a limited subscription to a legal research database for access to Kentucky primary materials and relevant federal court opinions. However, legal research was more problematic if the resources we had didn’t fully answer the question at hand.

Fast forward to today. Legal research has changed as dramatically as my career. I am now a professor and law library director at a law school in Kansas. I teach legal research skills to law students with a multitude of resources at my disposal. Even with this breadth of options available, I spend significant class time working with Casemaker. Both Kentucky and Kansas provide access to Casemaker as a benefit of membership with the state bar association and many of our students will one day practice law in a setting where economical legal research alternatives are a must. I am already hearing anecdotal stories from my students on the benefit of being well versed with Casemaker and I continually remind them that Casemaker is a quality and sometimes overlooked resource. I see the many benefits to using Casemaker and I teach Casemaker to future attorneys. But why do I love Casemaker?

THE WIDE RANGE OF RESOURCES

A legal research database is only as good as the resources it provides and Casemaker provides a strong collection of legal materials. Within the Kentucky library, you will find case law, statutes, and administrative regulations, along with more specialized materials such as attorney general opinions,

worker’s compensation decisions, and Kentucky session laws. The federal options are robust as well, and the partnership with vLex provides access to international materials. There are even additional features such as the daily updates from Casemaker-Digest, the Casecheck+ citator for updating the law, and a convenient legal dictionary.

THE PRICE IS RIGHT

Many of the students I work with will practice with smaller, budget conscious law firms and the same can be said for many law firms in Kentucky. Casemaker’s partnership with state bar associations is a recognition of the need to provide quality access to legal materials to all attorneys no matter the size of their law firm. The legal profession is mindful of passing operational costs along to clients and the ability to perform necessary legal research using a cost-effective option is a key to successfully carrying out this mandate. Casemaker plays a vital role in not only providing quality resources but it also keeps lawyers from needing to pass along research costs.

EASE OF USE

Wearing my librarian hat, I know from speaking with students, faculty and practicing attorneys that one of the main reasons there may be hesitation when engaging legal research is the level of difficulty in actually using the interface for the database. Casemaker succeeds in making legal research as painless as possible. Students in my classes quickly become comfortable with searches in Casemaker with minimal training. The search bar takes on a look and feel familiar to users, and advance search options including Boolean language are available for more nuanced research. I enjoy the weekly practical tips from Casemaker which I can access as a member of the Kentucky Bar Association and the app for your

smart device allows for quick, trustworthy research when away from your desk. These features are vital in the fast paced world in which we practice our trade.

My role as a librarian gives me the opportunity to work with the many alternatives available for legal research and I always try to bring my experiences from my time as a practicing attorney into my analysis of legal research resources. I value what Casemaker brings to the table and appreciate their partnership with state bar associations to provide a quality research database. If you aren’t using Casemaker, I would strongly recommend adding it to your legal research toolkit. I know my students appreciate the opportunity to gain experience using Casemaker in the classroom setting and I have no doubt they will love it as practicing attorneys as well.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

THOMAS SNEED is an associate professor and law library director at Washburn University School of Law in Topeka, Kan. At Washburn, he teaches courses on Kansas legal research, business & tax research, and leadership for lawyers. Sneed practiced law with Logan, Morton & Ratliff in Madisonville, Ky., and was a law clerk for the Hon. Charles W. Boteler, Jr., of the Fourth Judicial Circuit (KY), followed by law librarian positions at the Moritz College of Law at Ohio State and the Emory University School of Law. He holds a J.D. from the University of Kentucky College of Law, an M.L.I.S. from Kent State University, and an M.B.A. from Emory University Goizueta Business School.

