

12-1-1990

Book Review: Guide to International Legal Research (1990)

Carol A. Watson

University of Georgia School of Law Library, cwatson@uga.edu

Repository Citation

Watson, Carol A., "Book Review: Guide to International Legal Research (1990)" (1990). *Articles, Chapters and Online Publications*. 12. https://digitalcommons.law.uga.edu/law_lib_artchop/12

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Alexander Campbell King Law Library at Digital Commons @ Georgia Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articles, Chapters and Online Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Georgia Law. [Please share how you have benefited from this access](#) For more information, please contact tstriepe@uga.edu.

GUIDE TO INTERNATIONAL LEGAL RESEARCH. The George Washington Journal of International Law and Economics. Salem, New Hampshire: Butterworth Legal Publishers, 1990. Pp. 400. Paper.

*Carol A. Watson**

Persons attempting legal research in international law for the first time frequently are overwhelmed by the varied and seemingly mysterious sources available. Fortunately, *The George Washington Journal of International Law & Economics* has published *The Guide to International Legal Research* (the *Guide*) to aid researchers in wading through the quagmire of international law sources.¹ The American Association of Law Libraries gave the *Guide* the Association's Joseph L. Andrews Bibliographical Award in 1988. This award recognized the *Guide's* significant contribution to legal bibliographic literature.

The *Guide* begins with an excellent introductory essay by Professor John W. Williams² that provides tips on researching international law. Williams suggests that international legal sources can be subdivided by time frame, scope, subject matter, and format. He explains lucidly the types of sources available within each of these subdivisions. Williams also provides a chart illustrating parallels between United States legal research resources and international legal research resources. For example, he proposes that constitutions in United States legal research are the equivalent of treaties in international legal research. Similarly, *Shepard's* citator is the equivalent of the *Treaties in Force* status tables. This chart introduces a researcher to the relationships between international resources. Williams concludes his introduction with helpful "how-to" research techniques and includes sample problems with suggested approaches. The introduction as a

* Assistant Public Services Librarian, University of Georgia School of Law, Athens, Georgia. University of Georgia, B.A. 1981; M. Ed. 1983; J.D. 1987; Clark Atlanta University, M.L.S. 1990.

¹ *The Guide to International Legal Research* was first published as Volume 15, Number 1 of *The George Washington Journal of International Law & Economics*. Five years later in 1986, the *Guide* was revised and published as Volume 20, Numbers 1 and 2 of the *Journal*.

² Assistant Professor of Political Science and Law, Principia College. Member, Virginia Bar. Principia College, B.A. 1976; The National Law Center, George Washington University, J.D., 1980.

whole is insightful and will be useful to both novice and expert legal researchers.

The *Guide* is divided into three categories: primary sources, secondary sources, and research tools. The section on primary sources discusses both codified law and case law. Constitutions, treaties, statutes, legislative materials, and administrative materials all are addressed within the section on codified law. Professor Williams, in addition to the introduction, also wrote the section on constitutions. This section contains a well-written research primer on foreign constitutions and an annotated bibliography of constitution collections. Unfortunately, not all of the topics within the codified law section are as thoroughly covered as the section on constitutions. For example, a researcher interested in statutes will be disappointed to find that the section on statutes consists of only one page. Similarly, the section on case law contains sources of decisions of international tribunals, decisions of national courts, arbitral tribunals, and United States case law; yet most of these topics receive only superficial coverage.

The second category of materials—secondary sources—examines serials and analytical tools. Within the serials section is a lengthy list of English-language international law-related publications. Bibliographical information such as the frequency, coverage, and place of publication is provided for each periodical. Likewise, there is an extensive list of loose-leaf services covering general services such as those of international organizations and foreign legal systems as well as topical looseleaf services for such topics as copyright, tax, trade, etc. Additionally, regional and national loose-leaf services are discussed. A detailed description of the coverage of each of the loose-leaf services is included. Similarly, an in-depth discussion of digests of international law of the United States, Great Britain, Switzerland and France is provided within the serials section. Finally, the serials section reviews mass media sources, bulletins, newsletters, periodical indexes, and annuals (such as proceedings and yearbooks); however, these topics are not as thoroughly surveyed as the above-mentioned topics.

In addition to serials, the secondary sources category also discusses analytical tools. This section begins with a discussion of textbooks, casebooks, classics, and the *Restatement of the Foreign Relations Law of the United States*. This section continues with an annotated list of legal encyclopedias and dictionaries. General dictionaries and encyclopedias of international law are described, as are specialized dictionaries and encyclopedias such as those dealing with diplomacy, international affairs, and political science.

The third and final category evaluates research tools and covers both practice and research aids as well as reference sources of organizations, document systems, and computer data bases. Within the practice and research aids section, practice manuals, formbooks, handbooks, manuals, guides, and bibliographies of international law are described. Practice manuals and formbooks for international organizations, international business law (including patent and trademark law), and foreign court systems are listed. As is true throughout the *Guide*, some topics are not as thoroughly covered as are others. For example, the section discussing foreign court systems' practice manuals only contains reviews of manuals from India, Canada, Great Britain, Pakistan, and New South Wales.

The reference sources section of the research tools category begins with a listing of addresses and contact personnel of relevant United States government agencies and international organizations (such as the World Health Organization). This section concludes with information regarding the resources and access policies of the Library of Congress (including contacts and telephone numbers) and University Libraries of Washington, D.C.

The reference sources section also contains a thorough discussion of document systems of the United States Government, the United Nations, the European Community, and the Organization of American States. This section contains a list of the types of documents available from each of these organizations and a description of how these documents are classified. A selected list of bibliographic tools for research in United States government publications is also provided. The section discussing the European Community contains a list of depository libraries in the United States and their addresses.

Finally, the *Guide* concludes with a descriptive list of the computer databases of Lexis and Westlaw which pertain to international law. This list contains little information beyond the database lists provided by Lexis and Westlaw. Furthermore, since the publication of the *Guide*, Lexis has added an international law library including such useful files as *International Legal Materials*, the European Community's Celex database, *UN Chronicle*, CCH's *Basic Documents of International Economic Law*, and many BNA international materials. Similarly, Westlaw has added a database covering the laws of China and another containing basic international economic law documents selected by the International Economic Law Interest Group of the American Society of International Law. Within this section of the *Guide*, descriptions of other computer-assisted research tools are also

provided, although the coverage of databases beyond Lexis and Westlaw is meager.

The Guide to International Legal Research is an ambitious project and the editors and staff of *The George Washington Journal of International Law & Economics* should be commended for their undertaking. Williams, in particular, should be applauded for his contributions to the *Guide*. The *Guide*'s major weakness is that some topics of international legal research are not as thoroughly covered as others. Further, the *Guide* contains several lengthy descriptive lists of materials without much "how-to" research information. However, the editors are committed to keeping the *Guide* up-to-date and therefore are contemplating regular revisions. Hopefully, with these revisions, all topics eventually will be examined in detail. Despite these shortcomings, this text belongs on the bookshelves of all law students, lawyers, and librarians who must tackle international legal research.