

CURRENT ISSUES

Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals

Abstract: Marci Hoffman, General Editor of the Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals, reports on how this major multilingual legal index handles its content, and how it is developing in the electronic era.*

Keywords: legal journals; indexing

INTRODUCTION

The *Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals* (IFLP) is the pre-eminent multilingual index to articles and book reviews published in more than 500 legal journals published worldwide. The *Index* provides in-depth coverage of public and private international law, comparative law, and the domestic law of jurisdictions from around the world. IFLP also analyzes the contents of many individually published collections of legal essays, Festschriften, Mélanges, and congress reports each year.¹ It is a crucial research tool for those interested in international, foreign and comparative law.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIES

The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) was founded in 1906 to promote and enhance the value of law libraries to the legal and public communities, to foster the profession of law librarianship, and to provide leadership in the field of legal information. The Association represents more than 4,500 law librarians and related legal information professionals who are affiliated with a wide range of institutions: law firms, law schools, corporate legal departments, government, publishers, and suppliers.²

AALL and its members have had a long affiliation with IFLP. The Association has been instrumental in the development and success of the *Index* for over 50 years. AALL has always served as the operational organization for the *Index* and is the holder of its copyright. The *Index* has benefitted from the expert editorial direction of AALL members over the years and I assumed the role of general editor in January 2011.

SOME HISTORY

After World War II, journal literature focusing on foreign (non U.S.), international, and comparative law began to

proliferate. The existing research tools for organizing and accessing legal literature did not cover these burgeoning areas of law and really could not handle this kind of expansion. Various ideas were considered but they failed to move forward.

In 1955, AALL appointed William B. Stern, the Associate & Foreign Law Librarian of the Los Angeles County Law Library, to chair a special committee charged with developing plans for indexing and abstracting international and foreign legal materials. Stern saw the need for a way to control and direct the increasing volume of journal literature on foreign, comparative and international law, and make this available in a systematic manner. Stern, with the support of William D. Murphy of Kirkland & Ellis and Jack S. Ellenberger of Covington & Burling, gained the support of the Ford Foundation with two grants for the development of IFLP. The *Index* was initially housed in London at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (IALS) where it remained from 1960 to 1984 under the leadership of K. Howard Drake (1959–1967) and then Willi Steiner (1968–1984). Upon Steiner's retirement from IALS, a search was undertaken for a successor as general editor and a new home for IFLP. Tom Reynolds, then Associate Law Librarian, was chosen as the new general editor and the University of California, Berkeley Law Library was selected to house the operation.³

IFLP TODAY

As noted previously, IFLP currently indexes more than 500 legal journals from around the world. While there are other legal periodical indexes available to researchers and even ones that cover legal journals from other jurisdictions, no other index can rival the scope and coverage of IFLP.

Since its inception, IFLP has been a print resource. In the early 1990's, the *Index* moved to an electronic environment and was hosted on several different platforms. In 2011, IFLP migrated to its current platform on HeinOnline.⁴ The decision to go with HeinOnline was simple. Hein offered a robust search engine, an ability to link to full-text journal literature, and they showed an interest in further developing the database. Hein also took over publishing the print version of the *Index*.

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USING IFLP

IFLP is a powerful research tool for accessing journal literature on foreign, comparative and international law topics. It is a necessity in an academic law library to provide access to journal literature beyond what is found in the typical tools available in most law libraries, such as LegalTrac⁵ and the *Index to Legal Periodicals* (ILP).⁶ However, IFLP is not just a resource for the academic environment; practitioners also benefit from the scope of the *Index*. Since law firms are operating in a global environment, the *Index* provides lawyers with access to information on foreign investments, trade, intellectual property, foreign legal regimes, transnational business, and much more.

The HeinOnline platform allows a researcher to search for articles published in multiple jurisdictions and languages. The researcher can search using the following options:

- Keyword
- Author
- Article or Journal title
- Country of Publication
- Subject/Country Heading
- Language of the Article
- Book Title
- Book Reviewer
- ISSN or ISBN

Researchers can search for articles and then limit by using filters: language, date, subject, country, region, author, journal title, and resource type (article or collection).

There are also several browsing capabilities online and in the print: list of subjects and countries, and a list of publications. The database indicates if a specific journal is full-text online by displaying a double asterisks next to the title on the list of publications.

One of the most exciting features is the ability to link to the full-text of the article. Researchers can easily access more than 52,000 articles and books reviews. This is an area of growth for the *Index* and we are working hard with our partners at Hein to increase access to full-text sources. If a researcher needs an article that is not available on HeinOnline, she can use her regular inter-library borrowing channels or, in some cases, purchase the article from the publisher.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The content of the *Index* is derived from the hard work of many people. In addition to my role as the general editor, the team is comprised of a managing editor, an administrative editor, and a web editor.⁷ We also hire several undergraduate and graduate students who possess excellent and varied language abilities. They are responsible for the majority of the data entry. We have a talented group of indexers from around the world.⁸ Like many indexes, we use real people to analyze each article added to IFLP. The general and managing editors select the indexers and we look for people with the necessary language skills (we index in 26 languages, such as Chinese, German, Korean, Hungarian, Polish, Portuguese, and more) and knowledge of law and legal bibliography. The managing editor is responsible for training the indexers and reviews their work very closely. The indexers are assigned a group of journal titles based on their abilities. They evaluate each article and add the appropriate subjects from our controlled list of subject headings. This data is entered into the content management system (back-end administrative database) by our student employees and is thoroughly reviewed and proofed by the managing and administrative editors.

THE INDEXING PROCESS

The Berkeley Law Library owns almost every journal indexed by IFLP. The IFLP staff is housed at Berkeley Law

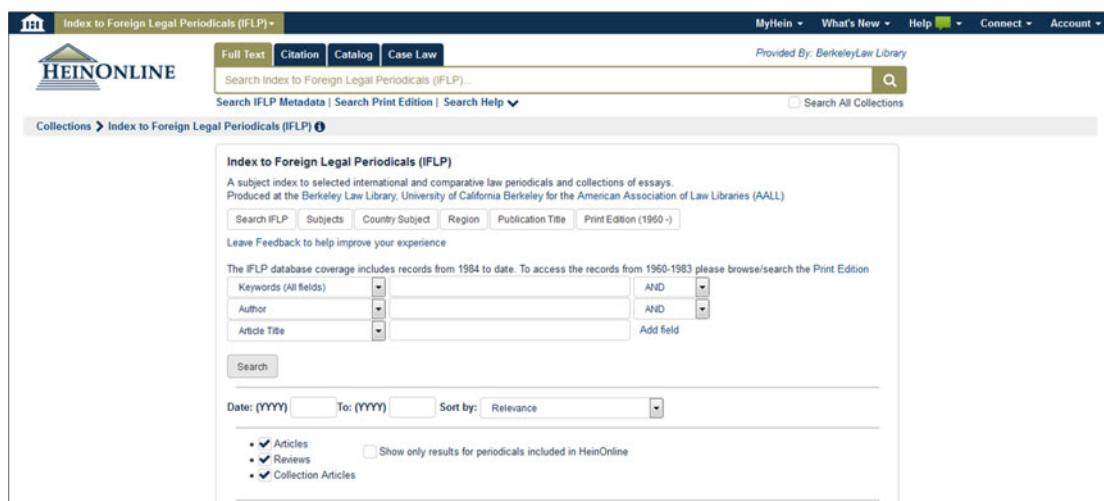


Figure 1: The IFLP Home page on HeinOnline.

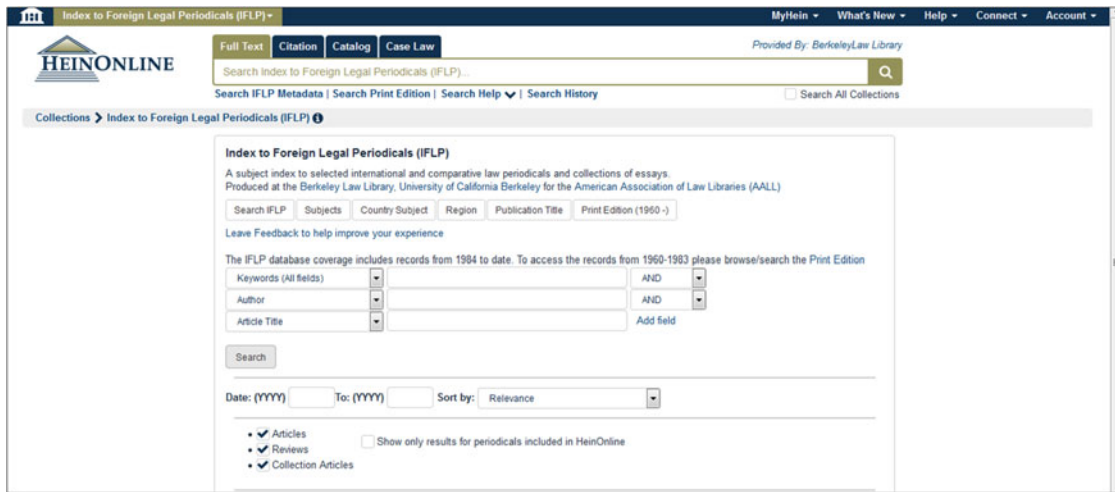


Figure 2: IFLP Search.

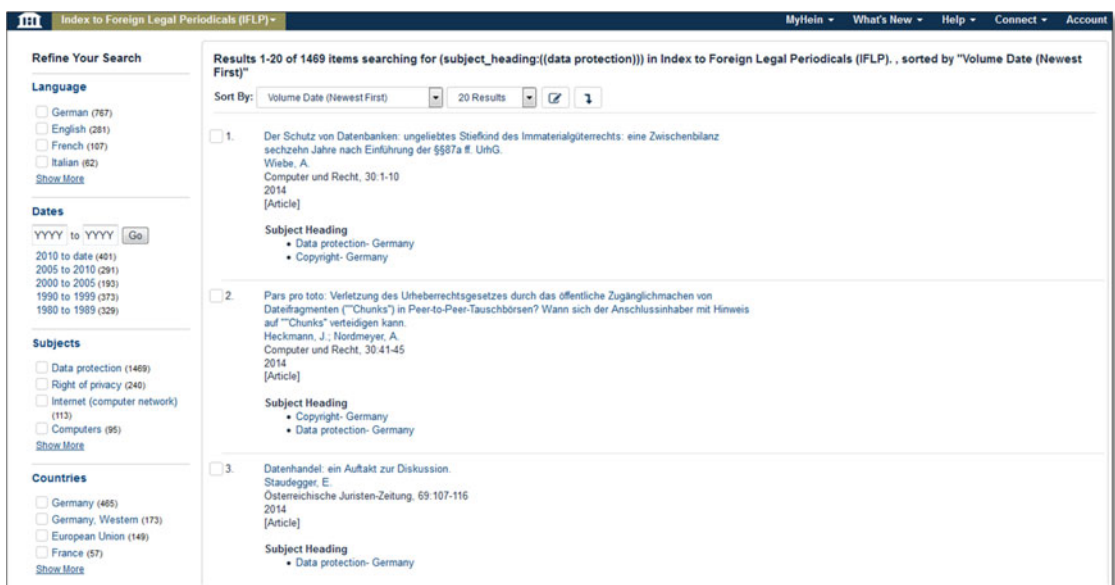


Figure 3: Filtering options.

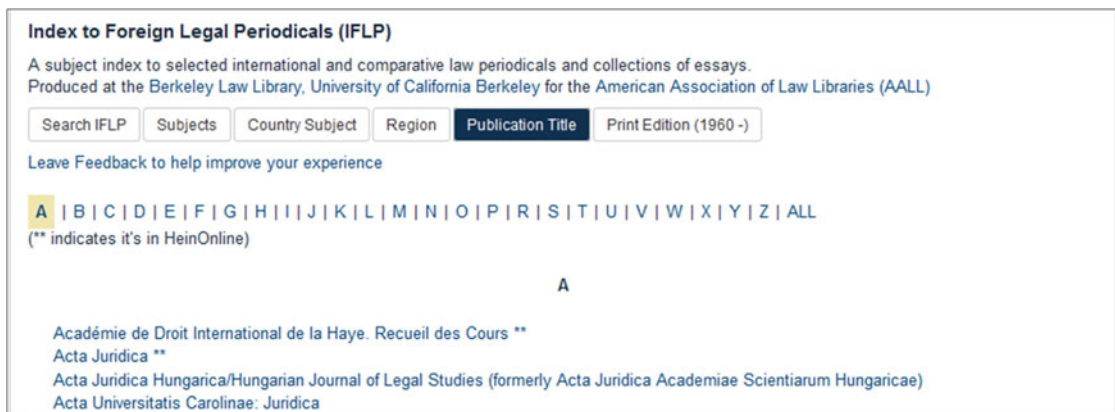


Figure 4: Publication Title Browse.



Figure 5: An IFLP record with full-text access.

and all of the titles are routed to the *Index* upon arrival. If the title is only available electronically, the managing editor receives an email or RSS feed alerting him to a new issue. Our student employees add the bibliographic data for each article to the content management system. This information is then printed out for the indexers on half sheets of paper called 'fiche'.

As you can see in Figure 6, each article is assigned an ID number and the basic metadata about the article is prepopulated: the title of the article, the author(s), and the citation information for each article.

Indexers assign up to three subject headings to each article, using an in-house controlled subject list (which is closely based on the Library of Congress system). Valid subject headings are indicated with an underline and a bold font in the Subject Headings compilation.⁹ Here is an example:

Legal research

Used for Research, Legal

See also

- RT Bibliography
- NT Automated legal research
- Comparative law
- International law: research and teaching

Additionally, if there is a specific geographic region pertaining to the subject matter, a geographic heading is assigned (but not necessarily required). For example, an article which is a comparative discussion of legal research in France and Germany, would be marked as:

- Subject 1 Legal research
- Geo Ref 1 France

- Subject 2 Legal research
- Geo Ref 2 Germany

In addition to these broader subject and geographic entries, we also use special headings. If an article discusses a specific international treaty or agreement, the subject heading should be **'Treaties: particular'** and the Indexer must include the name of the treaty on the fiche (especially if it is not included in the title of the article). If an article discusses more than one treaty, then the subject heading **'Treaties'** is used only.

Similarly, if an article is biographical about one person, the subject heading should be **'Biography: individual'** and the surname of the subject should be written on the fiche (especially if it is not included in the title of the article). If the article is biographical about

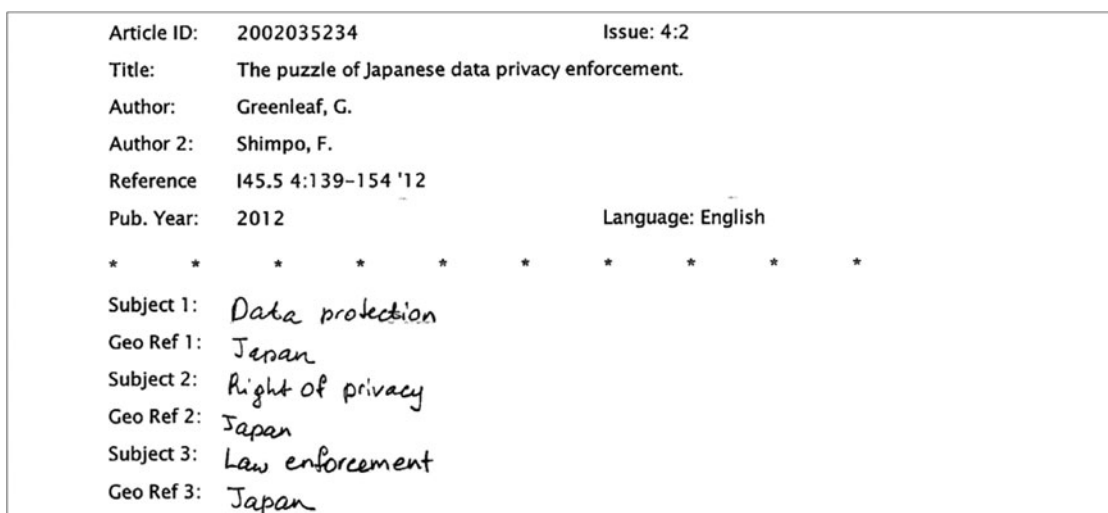


Figure 6: Example of a fiche.



Figure 7: The same article information (as for Figure 6) in the IFLP database.

more than one person, then we use subject heading **'Biography: collective.'**

The Indexers assign the most helpful subject headings to aid the researchers. Using a broader or more general term is sometimes a necessary evil, but we try to avoid them if more specific headings are available.

Our indexers also catch any errors in the bibliographic information contained on the fiche. This gives us a second set of eyes for accuracy and consistency.

The subject index is available in several languages: English, French, German, and Spanish. This is a helpful tool for the indexers who are reviewing journals in these languages. At the moment, however, the foreign language versions of the subject headings are not searchable in the database. We hope to implement this feature in the near future.

The subject index was completely revamped in 2002 and we would like to undertake this project again. However, this is a complicated and costly endeavour so we do edit the index to reflect changes in the law and legal terminology. Indexers are encouraged to suggest new terms for the index based on what they are seeing in the literature and their knowledge of legal systems.

We are considering ways we can better utilize technology to improve our processes. Ideally, we would have a back-end administrative database where the indexers could pull up their assigned articles/journals and review the bibliographic data and add the relevant subject headings. This would allow us to cut down on the amount of time it takes to send information to the indexers and the time it takes to receive and add their work to the content management system. As it now stands, this process is time consuming and there is a significant time lag for getting current journal literature into the index. Since researchers are eager to access the new literature, we add updated content to the database before we add it

to the print version of the index. The print index is published four times a year with the final cumulative issue at the end. The print version is still a labour-intensive process requiring careful proofreading by the managing and administrative editors.

We are also working with Hein to see if there is a way for their systems to retrieve the metadata automatically for the journals that are full-text on their database. This information would be used to prepopulate the fiche with the basic bibliographic data and eliminate so much human data entry. If this works out, we can cut down on data entry time and get the new information to the indexers more quickly.

Of course, we are also faced with the decision about whether we should continue to publish the print. Thus far, we have resisted because many of our subscribers still maintain the print only. As the database continues to develop and our subscribers see the benefits of the value added information, we hope they will make the decision themselves to move online.

THE ADVISORY BOARD

Each year, I invite several AALL members to join the Advisory Board. Board members must have the appropriate qualifications for being asked to join. The qualifications include:

- expertise and proven work experience in international, foreign and comparative legal research and collection development (or some sort of equivalent experience)
- work experience in these areas for at least two years
- foreign language abilities beyond English.

Members must be able to meet deadlines and dedicate the time needed to complete the assigned work. The Board meets annually at the AALL Annual Meeting as well as virtually several times during the year. The Advisory Board works with the general editor on the following:

- suggesting new journals to be indexed
- proposing improvements to the *Index* platform currently on HeinOnline
- assisting with developing new tools for marketing or teaching
- other projects as assigned by the general editor (for example, creating criteria for the evaluation of new journals or presenting the *Index* at national and international librarian meetings).

As noted in the first point above, the main focus of our work is to review and discuss a list of potential titles for inclusion in the *Index*. This list of titles is compiled by the general editor, and is based on the editor's knowledge of the new journals, suggestions from the Advisory Board, solicitations from publishers and journal editors, and suggestions from colleagues. The list is reviewed by

the Advisory Board and discussed in-depth during our meetings. When we discuss a new journal, we consider the following criteria:

- topic of the journal and jurisdiction covered.
- cost.
- frequency.
- publisher.
- quality of the articles, if samples are available.
- availability on HeinOnline.
- number of libraries that subscribe (based on WorldCat) or access electronically.
- subjective factors: peer-reviewed, composition of editorial and advisory board.
- comments from Advisory Board members based on their knowledge about the topic, the editors and publishers, and the interest of their communities in the topic.
- other bits of information, such as coverage in other indexes.

Here is an example:

Asian Journal of International Law (Cambridge, 2011–)
\$198 (print & online)

Semiannual

Excellent advisory & editorial boards

Peer reviewed

25 libraries on WC

Indexed: ILP

<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=AJL>

Asia is of high interest to researchers and practitioners and with it being in English, the journal is easily accessible.

Solid publisher and produced by the Asian Society of International Law.

Advisory and editorial board includes many prominent people in international law, such as ICJ Justices and well-known legal scholars.

Articles cover public and private international law topics in the region.

We consider journals that are available in print, subscription databases and open access. We also consider other factors, such as those that emerged from several surveys conducted a few years ago regarding the lack of depth of coverage for certain countries or regions.¹⁰

FEEDBACK FROM THE LEGAL COMMUNITY

The partnership with AALL and Hein has allowed the *Index* to be responsive to the needs and comments of

our users, especially the law librarian community. In response to their feedback, we have added filtering options for refining search results: language, dates, subjects, countries, and regions.

This association has also allowed us access to expertise beyond those on the Advisory Board. For example, we were interested in adding more articles on Chinese law and reached out to the AALL Foreign, Comparative and International Special Interest Section for their suggestions on which journals we should index, both in the vernacular and in English. We plan to do other similar cooperative projects focusing on specific regions, countries and topics.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

In order to make the *Index* more viable in the future, we have many plans for enhancement of the content and development of the database.

- Plans are underway to allow researchers to search using our multilingual subject headings.
- Linking to more full-text content.
- Making the *Index* from 1960–1983 fully searchable. 1984 was recently rekeyed and added to the searchable database.
- Adding the best law journals from more jurisdictions, such as the UK, Canada, and Australia. In the past, the *Index* did not cover common law jurisdictions.
- Ability to update the content more frequently allowing users to access new literature in a more timely manner.
- Developing and marketing regional packages of content within the database. This will allow more non-U.S. subscribers to access a slice of the IFLP content.

CONCLUSION

In an environment where legal researchers turn to Google and Google Scholar before other tools, we still firmly believe that IFLP is still a crucial resource for librarians, legal scholars, law students and legal practitioners. No other research tool covers the world of legal journal literature like IFLP. Consequently, we are committed to the continued development of the *Index* and to making it a more effective and efficient research tool. As we endeavour to improve the platform, link to more full-text articles, and expand the scope of coverage, we will continue to rely on our best assets – the indexers and the other people who make the *Index* possible.

Footnotes

¹ See IFLP's website, <http://www.law.berkeley.edu/library/iflp/>.

² See AALL's website, <http://aallnet.org/tm/about>.

³ For more information on the history of IFLP, see Thomas H. Reynolds, *Indexing of Legal Journal Literature and the History and Development of the Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals*, 15 *LAW LIBR.* 38 (1984) and Lesley Dingle, *A Survey of Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals Users and Its Implications for Future Developments of the Index*, 104 *LAW LIBR. J.* 427 (2012), available at <http://www.aallnet.org/main-menu/Publications/Ilj/vol-104/no-3/2012-30.pdf>.

⁴ For more information about IFLP on HeinOnline, see <http://heinonline.org/HeinDocs/IFLP.pdf>.

⁵ Also known as *Legal Resources Index*, see <http://www.gale.com/pdf/facts/legal.pdf>.

⁶ For more information about ILP, see <https://www.ebscohost.com/academic/index-to-legal-periodicals-and-books-full-text>.

⁷ See the editorial team at <https://www.law.berkeley.edu/library/iflp/editorial.html>.

⁸ See the list of indexers at <http://www.law.berkeley.edu/library/iflp/indexing.html>. Not only are the indexers fluent in the language of the journals they index, many of them are trained lawyers and law librarians.

⁹ Available at <https://www.law.berkeley.edu/library/iflp/headings.html>.

¹⁰ See Lesley Dingle, *A Survey of Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals Users and Its Implications for Future Developments of the Index*, 104 *LAW LIBRARY J.* 427, 436 (2012), available at <http://www.aallnet.org/main-menu/Publications/Ilj/vol-104/no-3/2012-30.pdf>.

Biography

Marci Hoffman is the Associate Director of the Berkeley Law Library at the University of California, Berkeley as well as the International and Foreign Law Librarian. Ms. Hoffman is also a Lecturer in Residence at Berkeley Law and teaches International and Foreign Legal Research.