

Opening up the UK's Foreign and International Law Collections: the FLARE Initiative, the FLAG Foreign Law Guide and the FLARE Index to Treaties

Abstract: Hester Swift, Foreign and International Law Librarian, Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, and Peter Clinch, Senior Subject Librarian for Law, Cardiff University delivered this paper at the recent BIALL Annual Conference.

Keywords: Online databases; International law; treaties; comparative law

The FLARE initiative

The FLARE group was launched in 2003 by five libraries with substantial foreign law collections: the Bodleian and Squire law libraries, at Oxford and Cambridge respectively; the British Library and the libraries of the University of London's Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (IALS) and School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). The chair is Jules Winterton, IALS Librarian.

FLARE stands for Foreign Law Research. The group's stated purpose is "to explore and implement collaborative policies to improve the overall provision of research materials in foreign, comparative and international law to the research community in the UK." Its detailed aims include collaborative collection development, facilitating and promoting awareness and use of foreign, comparative and international law materials; and fostering the expertise of librarians in the collection, management and exploitation of these materials.

One major collection development project is the creation of a national collection of European official gazettes. Most countries publish their legislation in official gazettes, for example, German legislation is published in a gazette called the *Bundesgesetzblatt*. The long-term FLARE project involves identification and comparison of the extent of each FLARE library's holdings, pinpointing gaps and overlaps. Selective cancellations and transfers of stock between libraries are then carried out in order to eliminate duplication and fill gaps.

A batch of old Eastern European official gazettes has already been moved from IALS to the British Library. This made sense because IALS had a lot of short runs, but no current subscriptions, while the British Library had a large collection, but with some gaps. The British Library and the University of London (on behalf of IALS), have signed a trust deed covering the terms of the transfer. This consolidation of complete runs in the same library makes it easier for researchers to find what they need.

In connection with the gazettes project, FLARE has produced a Union List of European official gazettes, a resource discovery tool which is available to all on the FLARE website (<http://ials.sas.ac.uk/flare/flare.htm>). For each jurisdiction, the List provides a description of the gazette, saying what type of legal materials it includes, what is available on the internet, and so on. The List is kept updated as changes are made to print holdings and when printed gazettes become electronic-only. At present it covers only the British Library and IALS, but the intention is to extend it to the three other libraries. FLARE has also produced two other discovery tools, both much larger in scope, the FLAG Foreign Law Guide and the FLARE Index to Treaties. These are described below.

Other FLARE collection development initiatives are focusing on Central and Eastern European materials and North American law reports. The work on Central and Eastern Europe was motivated by the accession to the EU of many countries from the region in 2004 and the consequent growth of research interest in the area. FLARE

Figure 1: The FLARE website (<http://ials.sas.ac.uk/flare/flare.htm>)

Figure 2: Searching FLAG for Belarussian legislation

Figure 3: Flare Index to Treaties

partners are currently beginning to coordinate their acquisitions policies and an initial audit of holdings has been carried out. FLARE members have also assessed their collections of US and Canadian law reports and made selective cancellations, aiming to eliminate unnecessary duplication. The cancelled series are all on Lexis and Westlaw International, so they remain easily available in all the FLARE libraries, but if the hard copy is essential for any reason there are bound volumes in at least one of the partner libraries.

Cancellation of print subscriptions frees up much-needed shelf space and, of course, funds, which can then be used for development in other areas of the collections. By systematically consolidating, co-ordinating and developing the UK's major foreign law collections in this way, FLARE's work will assure the continued availability of foreign law materials to academic researchers and to the legal profession.


Another of FLARE's concerns, as mentioned previously, is the development of law librarians' expertise. Anything which enhances the profession's knowledge of foreign, comparative and international law resources will facilitate access to them by library users. To this end, the five FLARE libraries organised training on Central and Eastern European legal materials a few years ago, focusing on Poland, Russia and the Ukraine. Then in March 2009 a one-day foreign and international law workshop was held at the Institute of Advanced Legal

Studies, under the auspices of BIALL. Information and guidance is also available via the FLARE website, in the form of almost thirty research guides on foreign and international law.

FLAG (Foreign Law Guide)

Before FLARE, the same five libraries had previously been engaged in the Foreign Law Guide project. Funded by the Research Support Libraries Programme, this resulted in the creation of FLAG, a free online directory of foreign and international legal materials in UK libraries (<http://193.62.18.232/dbtw-wpd/textbase/collsearch.htm>). If a researcher wants to know where they can find Belarussian legislation or Zambian law reports, for example, FLAG will have the answers – see illustration.

FLAG may be searched by country or international organisation (such as the World Intellectual Property Organisation) or by general subject area (such as environmental law). It is also possible to select the region of the UK in which to search for a library with the collection sought. The advantages of FLAG are that, in the results, an indication of the relative strength of the collection is given. Entries have been kept up to date by two reviews since the database was created in 2002, the latest in 2007, and the entries are simple to understand, compiled to a consistent format making



Your search found **1** records
Viewing 1 of 1 records

Flare Index to Treaties: Treaty details

Title
Convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms (**CETS 5**)

Date concluded
04/11/1950

Place concluded
Rome

Published in
213 UNTS 221; CETS 5 (web version 1, below); 1 EYB 316; UKTS 71 (1952), Cmd 8969; 156 BFSP 915; JOF 4 May 1974; 1974 RTAF 28; 2 Vert A 20; 45 AJIL Supp 24; 1 HRR 65; 1 Peaslee 354

Check abbreviation
[Check abbreviation for Treaty source](#)

Web version1
<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/005.htm>

Web version2
<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/z17euroco.html>

Web version3
<http://www.echr.coe.int/NR/rdonlyres/D5CC24A7-DC13-4318-B457-5C9014916D7A/0/EnglishAnglais.pdf>

IALS accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of the information included in the web sites to which the Index links. Web sites are listed in no particular order but efforts have been made to include only those that appear to be more authoritative.

Indexed in
Bowman & Harris Treaty 256

EISIL link
http://www.eisil.org/index.php?sid=187107836&id=683&t=link_details&cat=811

Authentic texts
English
French

Depository
Council of Europe (CE)

Developments
<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=005&CM=8&DF=4/25/2006&CL=ENG>
<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=005&CM=8&DF=4/25/2006&CL=ENG>

Treaty Index record ID
{5025A176-9210-4DD8-AB97-F177B37BD32A}

Date Treaty Index record created / modified
11/04/2008

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Figure 4: Flare Index to Treaties search result

comparison of the holdings of a number of libraries easy.

The FLARE Index to Treaties

Launched in March 2009, the FLARE Index <http://ials.sas.ac.uk/treatyindex.htm> is based on, and brings up to date, the well-known print index: Bowman and Harris: *Index to Multilateral Treaties*, first published in 1984 and last updated in 1994. Bowman and Harris selected approximately 1,000 of the most significant multilateral treaties concluded since 1856 and provided details both of where the text of the treaty was available in print form and of ratifications, signatories, parties to the treaty and denunciations. It performed the twin functions of a finding and an updating tool. The latter pieces of information required frequent revision and research. The lack of time and finance for this research resulted in the main work ceasing to be updated by the staff at the University of Nottingham Treaty Centre.

The FLARE partners decided that their Index would focus on the finding tool aspect only, but that it must include not only information on where the text of a treaty is available in print form, but also links to where it is freely available on the internet. The Index includes details of over 1,500 significant multilateral treaties.

The Index is searchable by keyword drawn from the official, popular and alternative titles for a treaty,

additional keywords relevant to the subject matter, the date the treaty was concluded (either as dd/mm/yyyy or simply yyyy) or the place where the treaty was concluded (see Figure 4). For Council of Europe and International Labour Organization treaties, which are published and referred to by a unique sequence reference, it is possible to enter only that unique reference number (in the case of the Council of Europe, for example: CETS 189) to retrieve information about the particular treaty.

The results detail where the treaty is published in full text print, with a link to a look-up index to the abbreviations used for the publications mentioned. There are also links to internet versions – IALS, which hosts the database on behalf of the FLARE partners, disclaims any liability for the accuracy of the treaty text provided via the links, though every attempt has been made to ensure links are made only to the most authoritative versions. Amongst other information provided in the results are links to the American Society of International Law EISIL portal site which provides more background on some of the treaties featured in the Index. Where the organisation responsible for drawing up the treaty (such as the Council of Europe) has a web site detailing changes to the text through protocols and other instruments, a 'Developments' web link is provided – see Figure 4.

It is intended to update the Index at regular intervals. Comments and suggestions for improving the Index are welcomed through the feedback address on the web site.