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Researching International Law

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China and India wish to broaden their economic ties; the US and EU dispute over subsidies for Boeing and Airbus; Toyota brings hybrid vehicle manufacturing from Japan to the U.S. – what does all this international news mean to attorneys and law librarians? It could mean that it's time to brush up on your skills in researching international law. While you can't become an expert researcher overnight, you can cover the basics of international legal research (such as locating a treaty, or finding decisions of an international court) with a few easy clicks on the Web.

Electronic Information System for International Law One of the best places to start international legal research is through a Web portal, and nothing beats EISIL (<http://www.eisil.org>). Developed by the American Society of International Law, this free international law portal is an open database of authenticated primary and secondary materials. It represents the breadth of international law that was previously scattered in libraries, archives, and specialized sites buried in the "deep web." EISIL (pronounced "easel") links the user to useful international law websites, research guides, and primary documents, along with descriptions of such resources (including date, alternate titles and legal citations to authoritative sources). If the item is not timely, authentic, or complete, the EISIL editors will not include it. To browse EISIL, just go to the homepage and choose one of thirteen broad categories: General International Law, International Organizations, International Air, Space & Water, Communications & Transport, International Economic Law, International Human Rights, International Criminal Law, International Dispute Settlement, States & Groups of States, Private International Law, Use of Force, Individuals & Groups, or International Environmental Law. The Basic Sources sub-category reveals a list of links to primary documents (treaties, conventions, agreements, statutes, etc.), web sites, and research guides. Click on the title to access the document itself, or follow the other link to More Information about the document. To search for a specific document, type the title or subject into the search box or click on the Advanced Search option which allows the user to search phrases and limit by date or field.

Law Library Resource Xchange Founded in 1996 by Sabrina I. Pacifici, LLRX (<http://www.llrx.com>) is a free web journal with well-documented up-to-the-minute columns, feature articles, topical research guides, and library-related news resources. Click on the link to the International Law Resource Center to see the topical collection of articles on subjects ranging from international family law, to international competition law, to international transport and logistics. Written by nationally recognized law librarians and attorneys, the articles include bibliographies and research guides containing text, links, and documentation to key print and online resources in areas of (international) legal research.

Laws of Foreign Countries Sometimes your international legal research takes you into the area of foreign law (i.e., the laws of a particular nation). Perhaps you need to find foreign securities laws, or protect a copyright abroad; these can sometimes be a bit more difficult to locate, especially if you need an official English translation of the law. In these instances, the LLRX website offers a good starting point for foreign law research. Follow the link to the Comparative and Foreign Law Resource Center to find articles on how to conduct legal

research for regions such as Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, plus more than forty specific countries. Like the international legal research articles on LLRX, these foreign law guides are also written by experts in the field. Topics range from basic introductions (including information about the legal system of the country, its courts, and information about government ministries or agencies) to more in-depth coverage of specific topics such as Requirements for Execution of Foreign Money Judgments in the Netherlands Absent a Treaty. Many of the articles get updated regularly and any additions are easily identified by a yellow background color. The Law Library of Congress website offers another good place to find foreign laws, through the Nations of the World page (<http://www.loc.gov/law/guide/nations.html>). These pages are organized by country and then sub-categorized by Constitution, and branch of government (Executive, Judicial, and Legislative). They also include links to legal guides and general sources for each country. You will not be able to access all types of documents for all countries; some have not been put online, and some are simply not available (for instance, the Kingdom of Bhutan does not have a written constitution).

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