



**Electronic Resource Guide**

# Introduction

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of International Law

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**T**his electronic resource guide, often called the ERG, has been published online by the American Society of International Law (ASIL) since 1997. Since then it has been systematically updated and continuously expanded. The chapter format of the ERG is designed to be used by students, teachers, practitioners and researchers as a self-guided tour of relevant, quality, up-to-date online resources covering important areas of international law. The ERG also serves as a ready-made teaching tool at graduate and undergraduate levels.

The narrative format of the ERG is complemented and augmented by EISIL (Electronic Information System for International Law), a free online database that organizes and provides links to, and useful information on, web resources from the full spectrum of international law. EISIL's subject-organized format and expert-provided content also enhances its potential as teaching tool.

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## **I. Introduction**

The introductory chapter of this guide provides an overview and background of the ASIL Guide to Electronic Resources of International Law as well as general information on electronic developments in performing research on the Internet.

The availability of the Web in the mid-1990s to the wider public opened up access to international legal documents to a broader audience of researchers. Governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as international courts and tribunals increasingly posted documents and other materials on their website. In addition to current content, websites were being utilized for archival content further enhancing their value as an important research tool. These developments led the American Society of International Law to launch, in 1997, the *ASIL Guide to Electronic Resources for International Law* ("ERG" or "*Electronic Resource Guide*"). The idea was to have an electronic guide devoted to electronic resources, freely available to international legal researchers around the globe. The purpose of the ERG has been to evaluate, organize, guide and explain these varied electronic sources.

## **II. The Guide Today**

The individual chapters of the ERG are critically revised and updated on a six-month basis. Rather than just compiling lists of links, the authors discuss the unique features of electronic research in their fields of expertise. They set out basic strategies to find international legal materials and examine what resources are available on international environmental, economic and criminal law, public and private international law, human rights, intellectual property law, treaties, international organizations, international commercial arbitration, law of the sea, the European Union, and the

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United Nations.

Each chapter is arranged in a logical fashion to aid the researcher. In some cases, the author outlines general search strategies for the particular subject area, and then links to specific research aids, such as specialized journal indexes and bibliographies, before identifying the relevant primary resources.

## **A. Current Scope**

In addition to the Introductory chapter, there are thirteen chapters devoted to a specialized topic area of international law. The authors of the ASIL Electronic Research Guide monitor and evaluate new electronic resources for consideration in the individual chapters of the Guide. The current scope of the Guide includes the following chapters:

### **European Union**

Provides an overview of the instruments, documents, and other resources for researching the European Union, a legal system based on a "supranational" legal framework.

### **Human Rights**

The focus of this chapter is on the main organizations which promulgate human rights instruments: the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the International Labour Organization, the Organization of American States, and many others. The chapter points to Web sites for locating primary documents, including international instruments, case law, and other relevant information. It also provides links and tips for locating secondary sources, such as country reports, NGO documentation, and periodical literature.

### **Intellectual Property**

Provides information for locating the major international intellectual property treaties and agreements, links to the most important international bodies dealing with IP issues, and information on how to locate domestic legislation.

### **International Commercial Arbitration**

Reviews the major international commercial arbitration institutions and agreements. A major component of this chapter is a detailed listing of national arbitration statutes. There is also a section on Lexis and Westlaw.

### **International Criminal Law**

Provides links to international, regional, and national courts, as well as to law enforcement

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organizations, such as INTERPOL. It guides researchers to Web sites that address special categories of crimes -- war, environmental or drug-related, not to mention terrorism and genocide -- as well as to statistical and clearinghouse information sources.

### **International Economic Law**

The author presents "an overview of electronic resources in this dynamic and evolving area of law." The materials are organized generally into "International Trade Law" including export-import materials, ISO and ICC information, as well as treaty sources; "International Financial Law" from such organizations as the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), MIGA, IFC and the World Bank; "Regional Economic Integration;" "International Development Law;" "Private International Law" and "International Business Regulation" which includes subsections on competition, e-commerce, environment, and taxation.

### **International Environmental Law**

This chapter organizes links to subject-relevant sections of a wide variety of international organizations -- the UN and its specialized agencies, ASEAN, Council of Europe, the EU, WTO, NAFTA, OAU, OECD, OAS, and many more. Later, the author identifies and links to secondary sources and online discussion groups.

### **International Humanitarian Law**

An overview on researching the law of war and law of armed conflict is presented in this chapter. In addition to the Geneva and Hague law, information on leading institutions, military resources, and related topics is included.

### **International Organizations**

Provides a brief introduction to the concepts of "intergovernmental organizations" and "non-governmental organizations" as well as a discussion of electronic resources helpful in researching these organizations. Links to the Web sites of representative intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations have been selected to highlight access to their documents and other publications.

### **Law of the Sea**

The chapter covers the global, regional, and specialized treaty instruments associated with the governance of the law of the oceans and seas including the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), conservation, environment, maritime space, and other related areas. Also identified are the relevant ocean law international organizations and dispute tribunals and courts. A

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section on secondary sources provides the researcher with guidance on finding leading treatises, legal periodicals, current awareness and other resources.

### **Private International Law**

This chapter specifies those international organizations that are drafting conventions, model laws, legal guides, and other documents and instruments related to commercial arbitration and sales of goods. There are links to the UNCITRAL Arbitration Rules, the UNIDROIT Conventions on International Financial Leasing, and the Hague Conventions on Private International Law that cover taking of evidence, child abduction, and service of documents abroad, among others.

### **Public International Law**

#### **Public International Law**

Supplemented by the work of international organizations, the sources of international law identified in ICJ Art. 38 provide a useful framework for discussing the resources for researching international law. Information on locating treaties, customary international law, and secondary and current awareness resources is covered.

### **United Nations**

Identifies and directs researcher to access points within the UN system before focusing on areas such as international law and treaties. Web resources that have been developed by various UN organs, for example, the UN Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees) are highlighted. Other research guides and tools are provided, followed by a description of the various commercial sources of UN materials online or on CD-ROM.

### **B. Basic Documents of International Law**

Researching international law frequently requires finding multilateral and bilateral treaties, the judgments of international courts and tribunals, the resolutions, declarations and other documents of inter-governmental organizations, model rules, and other sources that may be unfamiliar to the researcher.

A good place to begin researching international law on the Web is [EISIL: Electronic Information System for International Law](http://www.eisil.org) (<http://www.eisil.org>). Developed by ASIL, EISIL allows researchers to easily locate the highest quality primary materials, authoritative Web sites, and research resources related to international law on the Internet. EISIL is easy to use and is available free of charge.

A short list of frequently cited basic instruments for some of the major areas of international law is listed below. Although well-known, these documents used to be surprisingly difficult to find. Now,

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fortunately, most of them are available on the Web. In the list below, you will see that, where possible, the most authoritative institutional source has been selected. Please refer to the evaluation section of this introductory chapter for guidance on evaluating and citing electronic documents.

- [Charter of the United Nations](#) (1945)  
(<http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>)
- [Statute of the International Court of Justice](#) (1945)  
(<http://www.icj-cij.org/documents/index.php?p1=4&p2=2&p3=0>)
- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (1948)  
(<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>)
- [Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works](#) (1886)  
([http://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/berne/trtdocs\\_wo001.html](http://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/berne/trtdocs_wo001.html))
- [Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#) (1948)  
([http://www.unchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/E.CN.4.RES.2003.66.En?Opendocument](http://www.unchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/E.CN.4.RES.2003.66.En?Opendocument))
- [Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations](#) (1961)  
([http://untreaty.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9\\_1\\_1961.pdf](http://untreaty.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9_1_1961.pdf))
- [Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties](#) (1969)  
([http://untreaty.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/1\\_1\\_1969.pdf](http://untreaty.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/1_1_1969.pdf))
- [UN Convention on the Law of the Sea](#) (1982)  
([http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/closindx.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/closindx.htm))
- [Geneva Conventions](#) (Laws of War) (1949)  
(<http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/genevaconventions>)
- [Hague Conventions on Private International Law](#) (1954 to present)  
([http://www.hcch.net/index\\_en.php?act=conventions.listing](http://www.hcch.net/index_en.php?act=conventions.listing))
- [\(New York\) Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards](#) (1958) (<http://www.uncitral.org/pdf/english/texts/arbitration/NY->

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conv/XXII\_1\_e.pdf)

- [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species](#) (1973)  
(<http://www.cites.org/eng/disc/E-Text.pdf>)
- [International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings](#) (1997)  
(<http://www.un.org/law/terrorism.htm>)
- [Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty](#) (1996)  
([http://www.ctbto.org/fileadmin/content/treaty/treaty\\_text.pdf](http://www.ctbto.org/fileadmin/content/treaty/treaty_text.pdf))
- [World Trade Organization Agreement](#) (1994)  
([http://www.wto.org/english/docs\\_e/legal\\_e/04-wto.pdf](http://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/04-wto.pdf))

A useful resource for locating citations to many important treaties and agreements is

[Frequently-Cited Treaties and Other International Agreements](#)

(<http://libguides.law.umn.edu/frequentlycitedtreaties>).

These instruments give some idea of the many areas which are covered in international law including trade, human rights, communications, use of force, environment and intellectual property. To explore a topic in greater depth and detail, consult the specialized chapters of the ERG (<http://www.asil.org/erghome.cfm>).

### **III. Impact of the Web on International Law Research**

Since the mid-1990's, the Web has evolved as an important resource to researchers of international law materials. The Web has provided easier access to international norms, especially new treaties, agreements, and instruments and, documentation from international organizations. Further, the Web has allowed researchers greater ability to locate time-sensitive information, such as treaty ratification dates. Researchers can also monitor current developments more quickly using social media and other electronic resources.

#### **A. Electronic Developments and Information Issues**

Ongoing technological innovation introduces a variety of issues for web-based research. Preservation and access issues, especially for information stored in "legacy" formats like CD-ROMs and obsolete software programs are among the challenges requiring evaluation and recommendations. While these formats are not directly web based issues, lessons learned from migrating information to new platforms and points of access have implications for the web-based researcher. "Discoverability " or



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Identifying the relevant resources, regardless of format, is an important step in the research process. The authenticity of electronic documents is also important as both current and archival documentation is increasingly available on the Internet.

Content providers, librarians, and information advocates are among those involved in working through the issues, developing and proposing options, and implementing tools to help ensure that certain resources do not become inaccessible. Some of the studies and reports on current information issues are listed below.

The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), [State-by-State Report on Authentication of Online Legal Resources](http://www.aallnet.org/aallwash/authen_rprt/AuthenFinalReport.pdf) ([http://www.aallnet.org/aallwash/authen\\_rprt/AuthenFinalReport.pdf](http://www.aallnet.org/aallwash/authen_rprt/AuthenFinalReport.pdf))

Claire M. Germain, "[Legal Information Management in a Global and Digital Age: Revolution and Tradition](#)" (April 27, 2007). Cornell Law School. Cornell Law School Legal Studies Research Paper Series, Paper 73. (<http://lsr.nellco.org/cornell/lsrcp/papers/73>).

Trudy Petersen, [Temporary Courts, Permanent Records](#), ([http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/TCPR\\_Peterson\\_HAPPO02.pdf](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/TCPR_Peterson_HAPPO02.pdf)). Discussion of some of the information issues regarding access and preservation of resources collected for temporary courts.

## **B. Digitization and Archiving Projects**

Digital collections of traditional print collections are also good sources for the Internet researcher. A closer look at some of these trends appears in an article by Roger C Schonfeld and Brian Lavoie, [Books without Boundaries: A Brief Tour of the System-wide Print Book Collection](#), *The Journal of Electronic Publishing* 9(2) (2006) (<http://www.hti.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=jep;view=text;rgn=main;idno=3336451.0009.208>). Also see "[Preserving Legal Materials in Digital Formats](#)," from the Legal Information Preservation Alliance (LIPA) ([http://www.aallnet.org/lipa/LIPA\\_White\\_Paper\\_Final.pdf](http://www.aallnet.org/lipa/LIPA_White_Paper_Final.pdf)).

Among the large scale digitization projects are [HathiTrust](http://hathitrust.org) (<http://hathitrust.org>), [Open Content Alliance](http://www.opencontentalliance.org) (OCA) (<http://www.opencontentalliance.org>), and [Google Books](http://books.google.com/googlebooks/library.html) (<http://books.google.com/googlebooks/library.html>). The focus of the latter initiative is on access to content rather than preservation. A series of articles on information issues related to these digitization initiatives recently appeared in the [New York Review of Books](http://nybooks.com) (<http://nybooks.com>).

Examples of academic, government, commercial and other projects are listed below.

[Center for Human Rights Documentation and Research](#) (Columbia University Libraries)

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([http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/humanrights/archive\\_collections/hrw.html](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/humanrights/archive_collections/hrw.html))

[Cybercemetery](http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/) (<http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/>) Provides access to documents of inactive U.S. government agencies.

Electronic Resource Collections (<http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/>) An electronic archive of information products produced by U.S. Department of State from 1990 to 1997.

[HeinOnline](http://heinonline.org/) (<http://heinonline.org/>) In addition to serving as an important archive for journals of international law, HeinOnline has expanded its coverage of international law resources including its Foreign and International Law Research Database (FILRD) , Restatement of Law, Legal Classics, and Jessup Library.

[The Making of Modern Law, Legal Treatises, 1800-1926](http://gdc.gale.com/products/the-making-of-modern-law-legal-treatises-1800-1926)(<http://gdc.gale.com/products/the-making-of-modern-law-legal-treatises-1800-1926>)

[The Nuremberg Trials Project: A Digital Document Collection](http://nuremberg.law.harvard.edu/php/docs_swi.php?DI=1&text=overview) (Harvard Law School) ([http://nuremberg.law.harvard.edu/php/docs\\_swi.php?DI=1&text=overview](http://nuremberg.law.harvard.edu/php/docs_swi.php?DI=1&text=overview)) A searchable collection of the document analyses and full texts of the trial transcripts.

[The Online Library of Liberty](http://oll.libertyfund.org/) (<http://oll.libertyfund.org/>)

Works may be searched by title, author, or keyword. The collection is also organized by historical periods and subject areas including Law, History of Political Thought, and War and Peace. Researchers will find works by Grotius, Vattel, and others. The [Goodrich Seminar Room Virtual Tour](#) offers a visually interesting way to identify leading scholarly contributions throughout history.

[Registry of U.S. Government Publication Digitization Projects](http://registry.fdplp.gov)(<http://registry.fdplp.gov>)

## IV. Researching International Law on the Web

### A. Locating Relevant Information

With so much information available on the Web, how does one locate the most relevant materials? There are basically two types of tools for locating information on the Web: megasites or portals (also referred to as directories, catalogs or indices) and internet search engines.

#### 1. Research Portals

Gateway portals are a centralized collection of websites organized using a specific classification scheme, usually by subject or document type. Portals having descriptive annotations in addition to the web address are particularly helpful. Some examples include:

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- ASIL, [Electronic Information System for International Law](http://www.eisil.org) (EISIL) (<http://www.eisil.org>)
- [Foreign and International Law Web](http://www.washlaw.edu/forint/) (Washburn University School of Law) (<http://www.washlaw.edu/forint/>)
- [WorldLII: International](http://www.worldlii.org/catalog/2500.html) (<http://www.worldlii.org/catalog/2500.html>)

## 2. Search Engines

Most Internet users rely on general search engines, such as Google and Yahoo! to locate relevant sites. There is so much information on the Web that you will need to use search engines to locate relevant information. For a good comparison of the major search engines, see [The Best Search Engines](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/SearchEngines.html) (<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/SearchEngines.html>).

- [AltaVista](http://www.altavista.com/) (<http://www.altavista.com/>) See also [BabelFish](http://babelfish.altavista.com/) (AltaVista's page for translating foreign language texts to English) (<http://babelfish.altavista.com/>).
- [Findlaw](http://www.findlaw.com/) (<http://www.findlaw.com/>)
- [Google](http://www.google.com) (<http://www.google.com>)
- [Metacrawler](http://www.metacrawler.com/) (<http://www.metacrawler.com/>)
- [Yahoo!](http://dir.yahoo.com/Government/law) (<http://dir.yahoo.com/Government/law>)

The sites listed below are useful resources for learning more about the Web and current developments in Internet research.

- [CompletePlanet](http://aip.completeplanet.com/) (<http://aip.completeplanet.com/>)
- [Infomine Multiple Database Search](http://infomine.ucr.edu) (Scholarly Internet Resource Content) (<http://infomine.ucr.edu>)
- [Invisible Web: What it is, Why it exists, How to find it, and Its inherent ambiguity](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/InvisibleWeb.html) (<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/InvisibleWeb.html>)
- [Librarian's Index to the Internet](http://lii.org/) (<http://lii.org/>)
- [Wayback Internet Archive](http://archive.org/web/web.php) (<http://archive.org/web/web.php>)

## 3. Internet Browsers

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Researchers should be aware that any limitations to fully accessing web content may be a function of the web browser one uses to access the information. Listed below are some of the more popular browsers currently in use.

- [Bing](http://www.bing.com) (http://www.bing.com)
- [Google Chrome](http://www.google.com/chrome) (http://www.google.com/chrome)
- [Internet Explorer](http://www.microsoft.com) (http://www.microsoft.com)
- [Mozilla's Firefox](http://www.mozilla.com) (http://www.mozilla.com)
- [Opera](http://www.operamini.com) (http://www.operamini.com)
- [Safari](http://www.apple.com/safari) (http://www.apple.com/safari)

## B. Evaluating What You Find on the Web

Some criteria to use when evaluating Web resources for authoritativeness and reliability relate to factors including the accuracy, quality, completeness, and timeliness of the information. In addition to factors related to the content, think about the site's organization and navigability, how the documents are structured and arranged, and whether there are good tools for locating information on the site, such as a search device.

1. How accessible is the site, does it have a lot of graphics and high-end technologies that delay access? Does the site have any kind of archival or retention policy?
2. Are there multiple levels of access? If you pay a fee, do you get more or higher quality information?
3. Not all sites provide information in multiple languages and English language sites dominate the Web.

For more information on how to evaluate a Web site, see [How to Evaluate a Web Site](http://www.llrx.com/features/webeval.htm) (http://www.llrx.com/features/webeval.htm).

- [In-SITE](http://library2.lawschool.cornell.edu/insiteasp/default.asp) (Cornell Law Library)
- A current awareness tool for law-related web sites (http://library2.lawschool.cornell.edu/insiteasp/default.asp)
- [Notable Web Resources](http://www.law.harvard.edu/library/research/guides/index.html) (Harvard Law Library) (http://www.law.harvard.edu/library/research/guides/index.html)

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- [Research Buzz](http://researchbuzz.me/) (Internet Research News) (<http://researchbuzz.me/>)
- [Resource Shelf](http://www.resourceshelf.com/) (<http://www.resourceshelf.com/>) and [Docuticker](http://www.docuticker.com/) (<http://www.docuticker.com/>)
  - Provides information on new web sites and resources in many different topic areas. A weekly newsletter is also available.
- [The Virtual Chase Alert](http://www.virtualchase.com/) (<http://www.virtualchase.com/>)
- Focuses on new web resources related to law

## V. Citing to Web Documents

How to properly cite documents located on the Web is always a question. It is important to give the essential information: author, title, the location (the URL), and the date the source was last visited. There are a couple of sites that contain information on citing to electronic information. Peter W. Martin, [Introduction to Basic Legal Citation](http://www.law.cornell.edu/citation/) (<http://www.law.cornell.edu/citation/>) (2006 ed.).

- American Bar Association (ABA) [Universal Citation](http://www.abanet.org/tech/ltrc/research/citation/home.html) (<http://www.abanet.org/tech/ltrc/research/citation/home.html>).
- [Electronic Citation Guides](http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/general/citation.htm)
- (<http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/general/citation.htm>)

## VI. Further Research

Vannevar Bush, writing in 1945 "as peace approaches," discussed scientific applications for increasing access to recorded knowledge in ["As We May Think"](http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/194507/bush) (<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/194507/bush>). Bush is credited with providing the theoretical basis of today's hypertext. In recognizing the growth and volume of published information and the challenge of staying current, he contemplated the storage or "compression" of information and an effective means for finding it through "selection by association." His description of how a person engaged in study would utilize the individual processing machine or "memex" closely depicts what occurs during the research process: ". . . thus he builds a trail of his interest through the maze of materials available to him."

The ASIL Electronic Research Guide is one tool that provides assistance in navigating the available resources on the Internet. To explore a topic of international law research in greater depth and

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detail, please consult the individual [chapters](#) of the ERG (<http://www.asil.org/erghome.cfm>).

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Kelly's previous positions were Senior Reference Librarian at Dickstein Shapiro and Reference Librarian at Georgetown University Law Center Library. She has designed and taught seminars in legal research methods, the Internet, and participated in "AALL Bridge the Gap" programs to introduce students to practice-oriented research. Through her association with the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) and the Librarians Society of Washington, DC (LLSDC) she has served in various leadership roles and, education and scholarship activities. She received her B.A. degree from the University of Nebraska – Lincoln and her M.L.I.S. from Texas Woman's University. Kelly is also a member of International Association of Law Libraries.