

Title: *International and Foreign Legal Research: A Coursebook*

Authors: Marci Hoffman & Mary Rumsey

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Length: 389 p.

Price: \$156.00

Intended Audience: Students taking a course in foreign and international legal research.

Unique features: A list of abbreviations and acronyms begins the text; an appendix, containing a comprehensive bibliography, and a thorough index bring up the end.

Major Strength: The authors do an excellent job of providing practical scenarios in which a certain resource would be helpful. In so doing, they help the reader answer the inevitable question, “When will I ever use this?”

Major Weakness: As with any print material, discussing electronic resources in any great detail can be risky, as electronic information changes and disappears so quickly. The authors caution readers as to the fleeting quality of electronic information, but not until a brief paragraph at the beginning of the appendix. This would have been better placed in an introduction to the text.

Review:

Written for use in a course on foreign and international legal research, this text could be immensely beneficial for anyone attempting to conduct research in foreign and international law. The book is progressively structured, beginning with a section on “Getting Started,” graduating to in-depth sections covering international law and foreign and comparative law, and concluding with chapters that cover specific fields of international law, such as human rights law.

The authors do an excellent job of advising the reader how to conduct research with the various resources they identify. Several times throughout the book they offer sample scenarios to provide real-world examples of international legal research tasks and the types of materials one might utilize for each. In addition, as they discuss each source, the authors highlight its strengths and weaknesses and identify reasons that a researcher would use that particular text.

The authors offer other practical research tips throughout the text, including helpful subject headings to aid library catalog research in a specific topic; considerations to be made when evaluating legal information online; and effective search tips for Westlaw, Lexis, and even Google.

Materials Covered: The authors identify hundreds of materials throughout this text, including books, periodical articles, websites, and databases. The major resources on foreign and international law, such as World LII and GLIN, come up in almost every chapter of the book, but the authors do an effective job of covering a wide variety of resources, a feature that would prove helpful at times when the major sources on foreign and international law fail to address the research question at hand. In addition, the authors strike a good balance between print and electronic resources, as well as free and subscription-based resources.

The hazard, of course, with identifying and talking at length about electronic resources in a print book is that electronic resources change – or even disappear – on a dime. The authors, to their credit, acknowledge this in the appendix at the end of the book. However, given that the authors frequently go into great detail about search strategies in resources such as Lexis and Westlaw, perhaps putting this disclaimer about the fleeting quality of electronic resources at the beginning of the text would have been better placement. Likewise, this same appendix mentions that references in the text to Lexis and Westlaw refer to the classic versions; this may also have been better placed at the beginning of the text. These two products epitomize the struggles with teaching electronic resources in print texts, as their new products are so vastly different from the classic versions; while international and foreign materials are still better accessible in the classic versions, Westlaw Next now contains international materials, which means that Lexis Advance should not be too far behind. With their increasing adoption by law firms, legal research texts will have to start teaching both platforms in order to stay current. Even if it is just a statement that international and foreign legal research is best conducted in the classic versions, that is enough to alert the reader to the best resources to use for his or her research project. Without such an acknowledgement up front, the text seems slightly out of date.

Recommendation:

Well-written, thorough, and easy to understand, this book would make an excellent addition to any law library's collection. Though intended for use in a course on foreign and international legal research, due to the conversational quality with which the authors walk the reader through use of these various materials, this book could be beneficial to any student beginning research in foreign and international law.

Review by Ashley Ahlbrand, Indiana University Maurer School of Law, Library