The purpose of this guide is to identify some of the resources available to research international human rights, and provide tips on how to use these resources and prepare a research strategy. The sheer quantity of material is daunting and this guide cannot be comprehensive, but is a tool to aid the user picking a path through the maze of international human rights law.

Where and How to Begin

Human Rights is a multi-disciplinary subject, so, much useful material will be outside the legal framework. A clear statement of the issues or questions written down assists the researcher to focus and direct research along appropriate pathways. Do you know your specific subject area or focus? Are you interested in the human rights of children, immigrants, prisoners of war; or the human rights situation in a specific nation? Other questions to keep in mind are: what primary documents exist?; what IGOs or NGOs are active in human rights and publish reports; what are the secondary legal sources?; what other discipline(s) are evident in the issue?; and, is the use of current awareness materials indicated? A researcher must know the scope of the issue and develop a search process before starting, and then keep track of where one has been and what has been done. Remember you may consult with a librarian to assist you with defining your topic and guidance with research.

Research Guides:

Don’t reinvent the wheel. There are many legal research guides on the Internet. Locate a research guide by specific subject - trafficking; by country; by group - children; or by organization - ILO.

Below is an excellent research guide on international human rights law. It not only provide a comprehensive overview of sources, but give links to research guides on specific sub-topics within human rights law, such as a research guide on the human rights of minorities.


Additional guides on this site includes Treaties, United Nations, International Criminal Law, and International Organizations. The ASIL web site also hosts an excellent and still growing database on international treaties/conventions, websites, and other research tools called EISIL. [http://www.eisil.org/](http://www.eisil.org/)

**Bibliographies:**

Has someone else already done research and compiled a list of resources? Bibliographies are used to find related materials and provide citation information to assist with locating the documents. Deane Law Library may not hold all of the books mentioned, but most can be requested through interlibrary loan. [http://www.rightsinternational.org/link.html](http://www.rightsinternational.org/link.html)

*University of California, Berkeley. Human Rights Center. Bibliographies on Issues in Human Rights*
  [http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/humanrights/bibliographies/](http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/humanrights/bibliographies/)

**Bibliographies of Research Guides:** There are sites that compile research guides on
international law. These are good places to look for guides on a specific subject, country, etc.

American Society of International Law
http://www.asil.org/

GlobalLex
http://www.nylawglobal.org/globalex/

LLRX.com: Resource Centers: Comparative/Foreign Law & International Law
http://www.llrx.com/category/1050

University of Chicago: D’Angelo Law Library: Foreign & International Law
Legal Research on International Law Issues Using the Internet
http://www2.lib.uchicago.edu/~llou/forintlaw.html

Deane Law Library Online catalog: Finding a book may still be one of the best starting points. Books often include primary documents, reference important cases, and references to other well regarded secondary sources. “Lexicat” is the name of the database used by this law library to access the holdings of both our library and Axinn Library. Hofstra University Libraries use the Library of Congress subject headings, sample searches below.

Search Query By Subject : Examples
human rights = general or comparative books
human rights - France = add a geographic subdivision if interested in a specific country or region
asylum, right of = specific topics
human rights - children = specific groups

Keyword searching is also available. This permits the researcher to search Lexicat for books on “human rights” and “prisoner”; or, “civil rights” and “refugees” wherever these words occur in the bibliographic record. Keyword searching properly used allows for flexibility and effectiveness when searching the online catalog.

Books: Example: A simple Guided Search for “international law” and “human rights” retrieves 436 records. Listed below are a few of the most current titles. The search can be narrowed by restricting the search to “title” or to “subject; or, as described above add another keyword.

International Human Rights: Law, Policy, and Process by David Weissbrodt
K3240 .I5794 2009

Human Rights for the 21st Century: Sovereignty, Civil Society, Culture by Helen Stacy
K3240. S7185 2009

International Human Rights Law: Returning to Universal Principles by Mark Gibney
K3240 .G53 2008

Government Documents: The U.S. government collects, compiles and disseminates information in many areas of value to human rights research. The government documents that we hold are
cataloged, and may be located by searching Lexicat.

The U.S. Dept. of State:  http://travel.state.gov/law/legal/treaty/treaty_785.html provides information on treaties, nations, and reports on U.S. interests in foreign relations.


Is there a U.S. agency that works with your issue?  Check out http://www.usa.gov/ as a gateway to federal information on the web.

**LexisNexis Congressional Universe/CIS Index:** Indexes Congressional reports, hearings and prints from 1789 to the present.  Hearings are very useful for background information, experts and references to important sources.  This is the source for legislative histories.  Documents from 1789 to 1970 are available in PDF and more recent materials give a hypertext link to the full text of the document.  Unfortunately there is a gap from approximately 1971 to 1995 where documents are not available in electronic format.  If we do not have the item in another format, it may be obtained through interlibrary loan.  This database if found on our website - Online Resources - Federal Information - Legislative.

**OCLC First Search (Worldcat):** is an online catalog of materials held by many U.S. libraries.  It is found on the Library’s homepage on the right.  This database has advanced searching capabilities which allow keyword searches similar to that of Lexicat.  Books located through this database and not held by any Hofstra University Library may be obtained through interlibrary loan.  Students may request an interlibrary loan through the link on the Deane Law Library web site.  Worldcat is also on the open web at http://www.worldcat.org/ with a simpler interface.

**Periodical Indexes:** Law Reviews, bar journals and commercial publications are always for cutting edge issues and in depth analysis of narrow issues.  Articles will provide reference to primary source documents, statutes, case law, well regarded secondary resources, and an analysis of the issues.  You may not agree with the analysis given, but it is important to have the different arguments surrounding an issue.

Many indexes use Library of Congress subject headings in “subject” searching so the subject headings from books can be used for the “subject” query in an index.  Most indexes also support “keyword” and other queries.  Lexis and Westlaw permit full text searching of their law review databases, but one must remember that not all periodicals are on Lexis/Westlaw.  A journal may be indexed, but not available as electronic full text.

Interlibrary loan is available for articles that are not in electronic format or held in other format by the Hofstra University Libraries.

**Academic Search Premier:** Full text multi-disciplinary database containing scholarly, peer-reviewed publications.  Also contains indexing and abstracting for all journals in the collection.  Start here for your other discipline research.  Access database through Axinn
or Deane Libraries web sites.

**Google Scholar**: Use google scholar to restrict your web research to scholarly literature.

**Hein Online**: is a searchable full text database for retrospective and current law reviews. Holdings are not comprehensive, but major law reviews are present.

**Index to Legal Periodicals**: indexes from 1980 to the present and retro indexes 1908-1981. You should select both databases for complete coverage.

**Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals**: is an index that covers selected legal periodicals on public and private international, comparative, and domestic law of countries other than the U.S.

**Public Affairs Information Service (PAIS)**: Index to periodical, books, hearings, reports, grey literature, and government publications on public policy and social issues. International in coverage, this database is available through the Axinn Library web site.

**Research Databases**: Hofstra University Libraries subscribe to a number of databases that contain information that is not found on Lexis and Westlaw. Links to the following sites are found through the Deane Law Library home page under “Online Resources” or through the Axinn Library home page under “Research Databases”. These resources are useful for researching non-law materials. As mentioned above, international human rights issues extend beyond strictly legal resources and these resources give access to many other disciplines.

**Columbia International Affairs Online (CIAO)**: is a comprehensive source for theory and research in international affairs. It publishes a wide range of scholarship from 1991 onward that includes working papers from university research institutes, occasional papers series from NGOs, foundation-funded research projects, proceedings from conferences, books, journals and policy briefs. This is available through the Deane Law Library website.

**CountryWatch**: Current news and political, economic, cultural and business information for 192 countries. This is an excellent resource for background information on a specific country. Each countries entry also gives links to Internet links for additional information. It is available through Axinn Library’s website.

**Hein Online**: There are several libraries that are important in international research: European Center for Minority Issues; Foreign & International Law Resources Database; Treaties & Agreements Library; United Nations Law Collection. All Hein collections provide a search function and all documents are available in PDF.

**Lexis & Westlaw**: Both of these online research services offer databases that may be of use when researching international human rights law. Both services should be used since each contains materials not found in the other service. Scope of coverage for databases should be checked in both services. The directories of both have International Law/World
Law topical practice areas. Both of these services are always adding new resources. Both have international/worldwide tabs/pages that will gather all of their resources onto a single easy to use page. It can be useful to select a “tab” so that all related databases are gathered into one directory.

**Lexis:** The International Law Library or INTLAW contains files on U.S. treaties, International Legal Materials and the European Human Rights Report from 1960. Foreign Laws & Legal Sources contains commentary and analysis. In some cases the laws of a country are available. The laws are in the language of the country. The Nexis database is also a comprehensive source for news and commercial publications.

**Westlaw:** The international law databases include U.S. Treaties, International Legal Materials and international law newsletters. Westlaw has treaty databases for some non-U.S. treaties. There is a news database and it has newspapers and magazines not available on Lexis.

**Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law:** An updated comprehensive scholarly work covering the central and essential topics in international law.

**Oxford Reports on International Law in Domestic Courts:** A case reporting service that provides the most important public international law issues being decided in domestic courts around the world. This service also translates the foreign decisions into English.

**UNdata:** provides selected series from numerous specialized international data sources for all available countries and areas. It is available through the Axinn Library website.

**United Nations Treaties:** All multilateral treaties deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and those formerly deposited with the League of Nations - their latest status and a link to the full texts.

Bilateral and multilateral treaties registered with and published by the United Nations Secretariat in accordance with Article 102 up to a certain date - Detailed treaty references and full texts in all authentic language(s).

Recently Deposited Multilateral Treaties that have been deposited but not yet published - available for viewing and downloading in some or all of their authentic languages. It is available through the Deane Law Library website.

**Primary Sources:** International human rights law derives from treaties, declarations and case law. A number of treaties and courts are specific to human rights. These documents may be retrieved by searching for the organization involved or by looking for a category of human rights, i.e. the human rights of children. The online catalog, the Internet, Hein Online, Lexis and Westlaw are all places to look for primary and secondary source documents.

**Treaties**

For an excellent treaties research guide check out:
Online catalog: The Hofstra University libraries hold these documents either in the treaty series or in a collection of human rights documents. The online catalog is searched by subject (Universal Declaration of Human Rights); or by keyword (human rights and documents and children). Some of the basic sources are listed below.

- United States Treaties and Other International Agreements: KZ235.5.3 .U55.
- United States Treaties in Force: KZ235 .G85

Lexis, Westlaw, Hein Online and the Internet: All of these sources contain information on United States treaties. Information on treaties to which the U.S. is not a party might be found in International Legal Materials a legal periodical available on Lexis and Westlaw from 1980. The Internet is also a good source for documents and materials to which the U.S. is not a party.

- Hein Online: Treaties and International Agreements library for documents to which the United States is a party, and the United Nations Law Collection for League of Nations and UN Treaties.
- Lexis: See above discussion of Lexis.
- United Nations Treaties: Research database, see above.
- Westlaw: See above discussion of Westlaw.

The following web sites hold compilations of treaties and other primary materials:

- University of Minnesota Human Rights Library http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/index.html
- Fletcher Multilaterals Treaty Project http://fletcher.tufts.edu/multilaterals/
**Organizations:** International human rights law may also be researched through the international governmental or non-governmental organizations. Keep in mind that organizations not specifically linked to human rights may still have valuable information, i.e. sustainable development, environment and labor. These organizations publish commentaries, reports, press releases, and assorted other materials. A list of international governmental organizations is available at:

**International Governmental Organizations (Northwestern University Library)**
http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/resource/internat/igo.html

Search Lexicat and Worldcat for books about an organization or published by an organization. Example: Online catalog: (subject) united nations

**United Nations:** Human rights conventions, resolutions, recommendations and reports stem from the United Nations and its subsidiary organs. A number of the most important IGO’s working on human rights issues are U.N. organs. All of these are valuable primary and secondary source materials. The law library holds the indexed publications on microfiche.

**Access UN:** Includes official records, draft resolutions, meeting records and more. From 1998 to date, many of the documents are available in PDF full text.


**United Nations homepage:** http://www.un.org/


**United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.** http://www. unhchr.ch/

**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.** http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home?page=RESEARCH&id=3ebf8ef14

**United Nations, Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).**
http://www.unesco.org/
http://www.unesco.org/gengeral/eng/lega/hrights/index.html

**Council of Europe:** Established in 1949 by a group of western European nations, the Council of Europe’s aim was “to achieve greater unity between its members,” safeguarding common principles and heritage, facilitate their economic and social progress. Article 3 of its Statute provides for the acceptance of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

**Council of Europe:** http://www.coe.int/

**Council of Europe Human Rights Web:** http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_rights/

**Council of Europe. European Court of Human Rights:**
European Court of Human Rights.
Series A, Judgments and Decisions.
KJC5132.A52 E88
http://www.echr.coe.int/
Council of Europe. European Commission of Human Rights:
European Commission of Human Rights.
Decisions and Reports.
KJC5135.A5 D43
http://www.echr.coe.int/ECHR/

Lexis: European Court of Human Rights Cases (INTLAW;ECCASE from 1980)
Westlaw: European Human Rights Reports (EHR-RPTS from 1979)

Organization of American States: The OAS is a regional inter-governmental organization and includes all sovereign nations of the Americas. The branch of the OAS which deals with human rights is commonly referred to as the Inter-American Human Rights System.

Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law: http://www.wcl.american.edu/humright-center/
Organization of American States: http://www.oas.org/
Inter-American Court of Human Rights: http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/iachr/iachr.html
Basic Documents Pertaining to Human Rights in the Inter-American System: http://www.cidh.oas.org/basic.htm

Africa has a number of organizations dedicated to human rights, although our collection is not strong in African materials. However, search the online catalog for holdings on the various tribunals and truth commissions active in Africa, ex. South Africa and truth commission (keyword).

Organization of African Unity: http://www.africa-union.org/
Africa Action: http://www.africaaction.org/index.php

Subject Areas: Human rights may also be researched through subject areas such as human rights and children or minorities or women; or human rights and a specific nation, ex., China. Is there an IGO or NGO focused on the issue? Unless the subject heading is known it is easier to search human rights and subjects through the online catalog keyword. (human rights and environment) (human rights and Africa). Remember to perform the same searches in the periodical indexes.

NGOs: There are a number of non-governmental organizations (NGO) that monitor human rights. They are a valuable source for information on current conditions and analytic reports. The NGOs may monitor human rights generally or may be specific to an issue, i.e. children, women, refugees,
slave trade, etc. Examples below, this is by no means a comprehensive list.

**International Agencies and Information on the Web (University of Michigan Library)**  
http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/intl.html  
**American Civil Liberties Union**: http://www.aclu.org  
**Amnesty International**: http://www.amnesty.org/  
**Human Rights Internet**: http://www.hri.ca/index.aspx  
**Human Rights Watch**: http://www.hrw.org/  
**Human Rights First**: http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/  
**International Committee of the Red Cross**: http://www.icrc.org/

**By Region or Country**: Africa

**Online catalog**: (subject) human rights and (keyword) Africa = 158 results  
**Academic Search Premier**: (subject) human rights and (subject) africa = 571 search results  
**Index to Legal Periodicals**: (subject) human rights and (subject) africa = 334 search results

**Websites**:
- African Union:  
  http://www.africa-union.org/  
- Amnesty International Country Reports:  
  http://www.amnesty.org/alib  
- U.S. Dept. Of State Country Reports:  
  http://www.state.gov/g/drl/hr/

**By Group**: Women

**Online catalog**: (subject) human rights and (keyword) women = 68 results  
Example: Simmons, Beth / Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics/  
K3240 . S56 2009  
**Academic Search Premier**: (subject) human rights and (subject) women = 1189 search results  
**Index to Legal Periodicals**: (subject) human rights and (subject) women = 294 search results

**Website(s)**:
- AWID: Association for Women’s Rights in Development  
  http://www.awid.org/  
- Women’s Human Rights Resources Program:  
  http://www.law-lib.utoronto.ca/Diana/

**By Subject**: Labor or Labour

**Online catalog**: (title) human rights and (keyword) labor or labour = 113 results  
**Academic Search Premier**: (subject) human rights and (subject) labor or labour = 390 search results  
**Index to Legal Periodicals**: (subject) human rights and (subject) labor or labour = 138 search results
results

**Website(s):**

- Employment and Forced Labour: http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/auon.htm
- International Labour Organization: http://www.ilo.org/

**By Organization:** United Nations

**Online catalog:** (subject) human rights and (keyword) United Nations = 174 results


**Academic Search Premier:** (subject) human rights and (subject) United Nations = 1378 search results

**Index to Legal Periodicals:** (subject) human rights and (subject) United Nations = 327 search results

Please remember that this guide is illustrative of the resources available for international human rights legal research. It is intended to a starting point and basic research tips. There are other useful guides in the Deane Law Library handout racks.

Prepared by: Tricia Kasting : Updated: December 2009