

Fordham Law School

FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History

Staff Publications

Law Library

2021

Resource Reviews: International Materials on Westlaw and Lexis: An Overview

Janet Kearney

Fordham University School of Law, jkearney15@law.fordham.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/staff_publications



Part of the [Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kearney, Janet, "Resource Reviews: International Materials on Westlaw and Lexis: An Overview" (2021).
Staff Publications. 54.

https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/staff_publications/54

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Library at FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History. It has been accepted for inclusion in Staff Publications by an authorized administrator of FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History. For more information, please contact tmelnick@law.fordham.edu.

Resource Reviews: International Materials on Westlaw and Lexis: An Overview

Part of series of reviews prepared by the Electronic Research Interest Group

Janet Kearney

During the 2020 annual meeting, the Electronic Resources Interest Group discussed adding reviews of the international materials on these platforms: which countries are included; what's the coverage like; is it worth looking at? So many law schools have access to these materials (and pay for them) without really being sure of what's available. Here is a brief overview, with country-specific collections to come. This is from the perspective of an academic account in the main research platforms of Westlaw Edge and Lexis+ and does not include practical law options.

HOW WELL-KNOWN IS THE SOURCE?

We've all seen it tucked away on the Lexis and Westlaw database variations over the years: International Materials. My students tend to fall into two categories: 1) they have never seen this and assume there is nothing from another country on these platforms; 2) they think it will provide access to the US academic account equivalent - so full access to Westlaw UK, Westlaw China, etc. (Honestly, I tend to fall into type 1 for my own work.) As is usual, the truth falls somewhere in the middle - yes, these platforms do have materials from non-US jurisdictions that can be useful and helpful, but no, they do not have everything you need (and of course, coverage varies widely).

HOW COMPREHENSIVE IS IT, IN TERMS OF ITS CONTENTS?

First, note that although they are termed "international," these materials are usually foreign - the domestic law of a country other than your own - with the exception of European Union materials. Coverage varies widely between countries; or I should say, coverage varies WIDELY. Some countries listed may have only news sources (for example, Mongolia on Lexis+), and others may have cases, secondary sources, statutes, and news (for example, the United Kingdom on Lexis+). It appears that English-speaking countries have more materials, but I have not fully evaluated that.

It is important that you always check for coverage using the scope icon (the little *i* with the circle around it). Although we may be used to losing coverage of U.S. secondary sources on Westlaw and Lexis as publishers change or build their own databases (looking at you, WK), rarely do we encounter a loss of primary sources. This is not the case here; because of contracts with publishers and different ways of publishing legal information, it is very possible for sources to be removed. (When I was in law school, the Incorporated Coun-

cil for Law Reporting (UK) provided PDFs of their reporters on Westlaw, but now they have their own platform and though some of the decisions can remain if you pay for them, academic users lost included access to all the PDFs - the horror!)

HOW EASY-TO-USE (USER-FRIENDLY) IS IT?

To navigate these materials, select the international materials section. You cannot search these materials without entering into these specific collections. On Lexis+, this is in the Explore section, directly under the main search box. On Westlaw Edge, it is under Specialty areas. Once you select that, a list of countries will load; select the country of interest (for Lexis+, you may need to select View All Countries). After you select a country, then there will appear a list of what is included, and you can select further into a collection to find the scope note.

The further you browse down into a collection, the more specific the scope note will be. For example, on Westlaw Edge, if I select International Materials-United Kingdom-Cases-All UK Cases, then I can see a list of all included reporters, and the scope note is a summary indicator that some cases from 1220 are available and some reporters have PDFs. If I select a specific reporter from that list, I can then use the scope note to find the years of coverage and the content.

Westlaw Edge does provide the option of searching by content type without selecting a jurisdiction (cases, treatises, journals, etc.). On Lexis+, you must go to international materials, select View All Countries, then select the "country" titled "Foreign Law" to find a search by content type.

All combined, this is not very difficult to navigate, but it does feel more difficult than US materials on the databases. (This does make sense, as that is what the platforms are designed for.) It may take time to adjust to the method, and it will also take an understanding of the underlying jurisdiction to determine what is not included.

continued on page 5

International Materials *continued from page 4*

HOW USEFUL IS IT IN TERMS OF ITS ABILITY TO ANSWER BOTH COMMON AND RARE (DIFFICULT-TO-FIND) QUESTIONS?

It's difficult to make a general statement on usefulness because of how widely coverage varies, and it can be very dependent on what the user is searching for. There is certainly a good amount of useful information on it. I also find it a very useful teaching tool as an example for students that not everything is on Westlaw and Lexis and to illustrate the importance of a scope note.

If you would like to review the materials available from Lexis and Westlaw for a particular country for a future Resource Review, please contact Janet Kearney (jkearney15@fordham.edu) or Erin Gow (erin.gow@louisville.edu).

Coming Soon: 2021 FCIL-SIS Volunteer Survey

David Isom

In an effort to standardize the call for volunteers each year, the FCIL-SIS Executive Committee will soon be conducting its second annual Volunteer Survey to recruit new committee and IG members and chairs in advance of the 2021 Annual Meeting. We hope that you will consider responding to the survey and volunteering for one or more committee or IG! Historically, our SIS has filled committee positions on an ad hoc basis. We hope that by creating this survey and circulating it each year, we can create more robust committees and interest groups, allow for more frequent circulation in committee and IG leadership, and boost attendance at committee and IG meetings during the AALL conference. The survey will go live in April—look for announcements on the FCIL-SIS mailing list and DipLawMatic Dialogues.

FCIL Newsletter

FCIL Newsletter is a publication of the Foreign, Comparative, and International Law Special Interest Section of the American Association of Law Libraries. It is published in February, May, and October of each year. Current and past issues of *FCIL Newsletter* are [available on our website](#). We welcome submissions. Contact us for more information.

EDITORS

Melissa Abernathy
mabernathy@san Diego.edu
University of San Diego

Janet Kearney
jkearney15@fordham.edu
[u](#)
Fordham University

COPY EDITOR

Carmen Valero
carmen.valero@dentons.com
Dentons US LLP

FCIL-SIS EXECUTIVE BOARD 2020-2021

CHAIR

Susan Gualtier

VICE CHAIR/CHAIR-ELECT

Hunter Whaley

SECRETARY/TREASURER

Jennifer Allison

PAST CHAIR

Loren Turner