



# United Nations Research

BOSTON COLLEGE LAW LIBRARY

## INTRODUCTION

Since its establishment in 1945, the United Nations has played a prominent role in the development of international law. This role has two major components: first, the development and implementation of international law through the promulgation and administration of international agreements and second, through the decisions and opinions of the International Court of Justice. The peacekeeping mission of the United Nations, exercised through the Security Council, has also reinforced and promoted the established principles of international law.

The United Nations and the International Court of Justice are not the only sources of international law, however. A researcher should not limit any work in the area of international law to the efforts of the United Nations and the International Court of Justice. This guide is designed to provide a researcher with an introduction to United Nations materials and their finding aids, and it should not be seen as an overview of the entire body of international law.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

There are six principal organs of the United Nations established under the Charter of 1945. These principal organs are the General Assembly, the Security Council, the International Court of Justice, the Trusteeship Council, the Secretariat and the Economic and Social Council.

**The General Assembly** is the major deliberative body of the United Nations. Its wide-ranging agenda includes political, security, economic, financial, social, humanitarian, cultural and legal issues. The General Assembly also oversees procedural and budgetary matters. This agenda is administered by two general committees and seven substantive or main committees.

Under Article 24 of the United Nations Charter, the **Security Council** has the “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.” It may act with regard to peaceful settlement of disputes, and it also may act with respect to threats to and breaches of the peace. The Council has 15 members, including five permanent members: China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and the United States. Each of the five permanent members has veto power on substantive decisions. The affirmative vote of nine members is needed for procedural and substantive decisions.

**The International Court of Justice (ICJ)** is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. Member nations are by their status parties to the Statute of the ICJ, which governs its operation. The ICJ consists of 15 judges, elected by the General Assembly and the Security Council. Judges serve a nine-year term and may be reelected. The ICJ’s jurisdiction extends to cases brought by state parties. The General Assembly, the Security Council and other United Nations organs and agencies may request an advisory opinion from the Court.

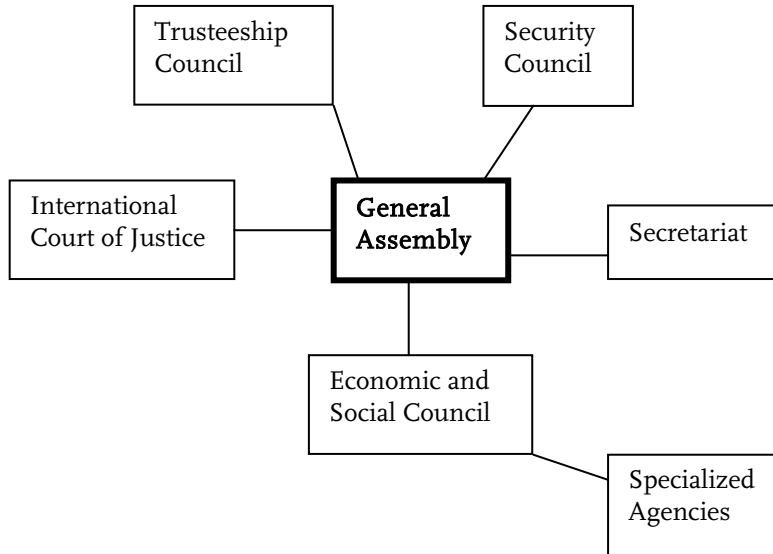
**The Trusteeship Council** is empowered by the Charter to oversee the economic, political, educational and social development in territories placed under trusteeship by the United Nations.

**The Secretariat** is the chief administrative office for the United Nations. The Secretary General performs the many duties entrusted to the office by the General Assembly and the other principal organs. The Secretary General reports annually to the General Assembly on the work of the United Nations.

**The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** operates under the authority of the General Assembly. It has 54 members, elected by the General Assembly for three-year terms. The ECOSOC is principally responsible for the economic and social activities of the United Nations. Article 62 of the Charter empowers it to “make or initiate studies and reports with respect to international economic, social, cultural, educational, health, and related matters” and to make recommendations regarding these issues to the General Assembly, member nations and specialized agencies. In addition to reports and recommendations, the ECOSOC may prepare draft conventions for submission to the General Assembly. The ECOSOC also includes a number of subsidiary bodies, such as the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on the Status of Women, and various regional commissions, as well as standing committees such as the Committee on Natural Resources and the Committee on Science and Technology for Development.

## Specialized Agencies

Although not part of the United Nations organization, the following specialized agencies report to the ECOSOC and have agreements with the United Nations on relations between the United Nations and the agency: Food and Agriculture Organization, International Civil Aviation Organization, International Development Association, International Labour Organization, International Monetary Fund, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, United Nations International Development Organization, World Health Organization and the World Intellectual Property Organization.



## TYPES OF UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATIONS

Every year the United Nations produces thousands of publications relating to its work. United Nations publications, other than opinions of the International Court of Justice, fall into one of three categories:

### Official Records

These are published by the General Assembly, the ECOSOC, the Security Council, the Trusteeship Council and many specialized agencies. These publications contain speeches, documents, reports and actions for each organ's or agency's session. Speeches and voting records are included in the meeting records; documents relating to the work of the session are included in the annexes; and the major reports, resolutions and decisions are included in the supplements. Rule 20.7.1 of *The Blue Book: A Uniform System of Citation* provides a detailed description of each part of the Official Records.

### Sales Publication

Many important reports, studies, documents and proceedings are also published outside the Official Records series and are offered for sale to the general public. These publications are included as part of the United Nations Depository Library program.

### Mimeographed Publications

The United Nations produces many of its documents in mimeograph form; these publications are not offered for sale to the general public. Mimeograph publications are frequently draft versions of reports, studies, or international agreements. Occasionally these publications are intended for limited distribution and are not included in the United Nations Depository program.

## WHERE TO FIND UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATIONS

The Boston College Law Library has on microfiche the Readex Corporation's *United Nations Documents and Publications*, from 1946 to the present. The library's microfiche collection includes as complete a range as possible of sales and mimeographed publications, as well as the Official Records of the General Assembly, the ECOSOC, the Security Council and the Trusteeship Council. The library also holds the Human Rights segment of the Readex microfiche collection, which includes publications of the Commission on Human Rights. Please consult library staff for assistance with the Readex *United Nations Documents and Publications* microfiche service.

The O'Neill Library on the main campus of Boston College also has an extensive collection of United Nations publications and reference materials.

Unless a publication is designated as limited, it should be included in the collection of a United Nations Depository Library. The Widener Library at Harvard University is a United Nations Depository Library. Please contact a member of the Boston College Law Library staff for more information about using the United Nations collection at Harvard University.

The United Nations has established a significant presence on the Internet. Visit the United Nations Home Page at <http://www.un.org> for information about the structure of the United Nations and general as well as topical research guides. There are also links to other related web sites and links to the full text of United Nations documents.

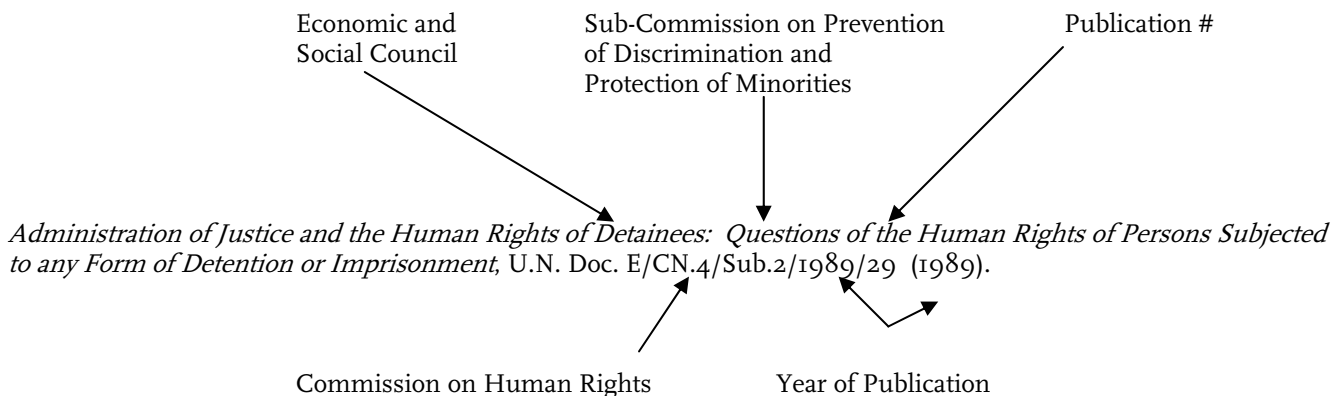
Top Five Internet Sites for UN Research	
UN Home Page	<a href="http://www.un.org">www.un.org</a>
UN Treaty Collection	<a href="http://untreaty.un.org">http://untreaty.un.org</a>
International Court of Justice	<a href="http://www.icj-cij.org">www.icj-cij.org</a>
UN Environment Program	<a href="http://www.unep.org">www.unep.org</a>
UN High Commissioner for Refugees	<a href="http://www.unhcr.ch">www.unhcr.ch</a>

### CITATION FORM FOR UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATIONS

To access United Nations publications, a researcher must understand the document series symbols developed by the United Nations. The document series is made up of distinct alphanumeric elements which identify the authority under which the document is produced. The alphanumeric elements are separated by oblique slashes (/) and are composed of capital letters and figures, usually Arabic numerals. Roman numerals are used to designate a session number or a subsidiary organ. Each element of the document series symbols provides a specific piece of information about the document which, taken together, provide the researcher with an understanding of which agency published the document and when.

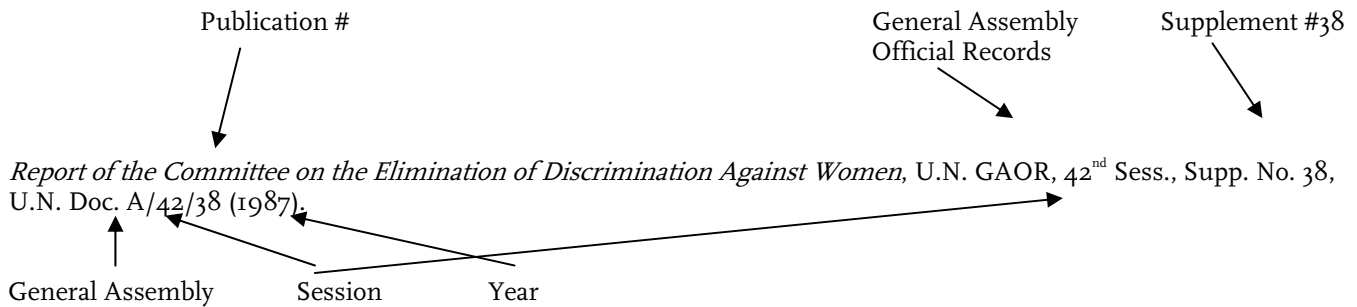
Set out below are examples of the citation form for United Nations publications, including the U.N. Document Symbol:

*Administration of Justice and the Human Rights of Detainees: Questions of the Human Rights of Persons Subjected to any Form of Detention or Imprisonment*, U.N. Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/1989/29 (1989).



Citations to Official Records should also include a reference to the session, organ or agency, and the type of Official Record, as in the following example:

*Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women*, U.N. GAOR, 42<sup>nd</sup> Sess., Supp. No. 38, U.N. Doc. A/42/38 (1987).



UN General Assembly Resolutions are published as supplements in the General Assembly Official Records series.

The symbols for the principal organs of the United Nations are:

- A/- General Assembly
- E/- Economic and Social Council
- ICJ International Court of Justice
- S/- Security Council
- ST/- Secretariat
- T/- Trusteeship Council

Symbols for some subsidiary organs of the United Nations include:

- AT/- Administrative Tribunal
- CAT/- Convention Against Torture
- CCPR/- Int'l Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- CEDAW/- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- CERD/- Int'l Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- CRC/- Convention on the Rights of the Child

The following symbols are used with numbers in identifying specific subsidiary bodies:

- /AC.# Ad Hoc Committee
- /C.# Standing, Permanent, or Main Committee
- /CN.# Commission
- /CONF.# Conference
- /Sub.# Sub-commission

A more detailed list of many of the alphanumeric elements of the United Nations Document Series is available in the front of each issue of UNDOC: *Current Index: United Nation Document Index*, discussed in the next section of the guide.

### WHERE TO FIND ICJ OPINIONS

The decisions, orders and opinions of the ICJ are available at the Boston College Law Library in three sources:

- *Reports of Judgements, Advisory Opinions and Orders of the International Court of Justice*, 1947— . LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 214 .I58.
- *International Law Reports*, 1950 — . LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 199 .I58.
- Westlaw, INT-ICJ database, 1947 — .
- ICJ website: <http://www.icj-cij.org>.

### HOW TO FIND UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATIONS

To use any collection of United Nations documents effectively, a researcher must locate the relevant United Nations citation for a document. The following research tools provide the citations to documents. They also may provide analysis of the document or the text of the document itself, particularly if it is a United Nations Resolution or International Agreement.

Considering the enormous amount of United Nations material available, a researcher would be well advised to begin work with one of the general or subject guides discussed below. If a researcher wants to review material chronologically then use of the various United Nations Document Indices or annual publications might be a helpful starting point.

### General Guides

- Encyclopedia of the United Nations and International Relations. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis, 1990. LAW REFERENCE AREA KZ 4968 .O86 1990.  
This important work provides an overview of United Nations structure and activities, as well as information on the major international agreements. The full text of many of those agreements is also set out.
- Joyner, Christopher, editor. *The United Nations and International Law*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1997. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 4993 .U55 1997.
- Schacter, Oscar and Christopher C. Joyner, editors. *United Nations Legal Order*. 2 vols. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1995. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 4992.2 .U55 1995.
- Wolfrum, Rudiger, editor. *United Nations: Law, Policies and Practice*. 2 vols. Dordrecht, Netherlands: M. Nijhoff, 1995. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION JZ 4970 .H36 1995.

### Yearbooks

- *International Court of Justice Yearbook*. The Hague: International Court of Justice, 1949 — . LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 6273 .F58.  
An annual survey of the Court's structure and activities.
- *International Law Commission Yearbook*. NY: United Nations, 1949—. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 21 .U55.  
An annual survey of the activities of an important international law making body. Delays in publication have now reached two to three years.
- *United Nations Juridical Yearbook*. New York: United Nations, 1964 — . LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 4949 .U55.  
This annual publication gives a broader overview of legal activities of the United Nations. Its major drawback is the delay in its publication, which is now up to five years.
- *Yearbook of the United Nations*. New York: United Nations, 1947 — . LAW GENERAL COLLECTION JZ 4947 .U55.  
The annual survey of United Nations activity. It is one of the most useful tools available to the United Nations researcher. The *Yearbook* provides detailed analysis of the activities of the principal organs and related agencies for a particular year. The footnotes include extensive references to publications and their relevant citations. The full text of General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions are also reprinted. The major problem with the *Yearbook* is its delay in publication, which is now up to five years behind the current session.

### "Travaux Préparatoires" (Preparatory Works)

The following compilations of documents and citations to United Nations publications are extremely useful for organizing a research project based upon one of these international agreements.

- Bossuyt, Marc J. *Guide to the "travaux préparatoires" of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1987. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION K 3238.3 .B67 1987.
- Detrick, Sharon, editor. *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: A Guide to the "Travaux Préparatoires."* Dordrecht, Netherlands: M. Nijhoff, 1992. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION K 639 .A41989 A38 1992.
- Rehof, Lars Adam. *Guide to the Travaux Préparatoires of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION K 3240 .S86 1998.
- Svensson-McCarthy, Anna Lee. *The International Law of Human Rights and States of Exception: With Special Attention to the Travaux Préparatoires and Case Law of the International Monitoring Organs*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: M. Nijhoff, 1998. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION K 3240 .S86 1998.
- Weis, Paul. *The Refugee Convention, 1951: the Travaux Préparatoires Analysed, with a Commentary*. New York: Grotius Publications, 1995. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION K 3230 .R45 A34 1995.

## Subject Guides

- *United Nations Action in the Field of Human Rights*. New York: United Nations, 1994. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION K 3240.4 .U45 1994.  
A publication of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights in Geneva, it provides a researcher with comprehensive coverage of the activities of all United Nations organs and agencies, from 1945. It arranges the topic by broad subject headings, with references to all the major international agreements and United Nations publications. This source is one of the best starting points for research in the area of human rights.

## Indexes

The indexes to UN publications are designed to provide subject access to the material and a checklist of publications issued by a particular organ or agency. They are good starting points if a researcher wants a chronological approach to a topic or needs to find recent publications. Otherwise a researcher would do well to begin with a general or subject guide, which provides a more organized and comprehensive approach.

- *United Nations Document Index*. 24 volumes. New York: United Nations, 1950-1973. LAW LIBRARY MICROFORMS INDEX AREA JZ 4935 .U54 A2.  
This index covers the formative years of the United Nations as well as documents involved in the drafting of many major international agreements, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It provides subject access and an annual cumulative list of documents issued by United Nations organs and agencies.
- *UNDEX. Series C. Cumulative Edition, 1974-1978*. 4 volumes  
New York: K.G. Saur, 1979-1980. LAW LIBRARY MICROFORMS INDEX AREA JZ 4935 .U54 A22.  
This set provides publication information on documents issued by the United Nations and the International Court of Justice. The arrangement is by United Nations Document Number, thus allowing a researcher to find all the documents issued by a particular United Nations organ or agency for this time period. This set contains neither a subject index nor a country index.
- *UNDOC: Current Index: United Nations Document Index*. v. 1-18, #3, 1979-September, 1996. New York: United Nations, 1979-1996. LAW LIBRARY MICROFORMS INDEX AREA JZ 4935 .U54 A23, v. 9-18, #3, 1987-1996. O'NEILL GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS REFERENCE JX 1977 .A2U6 v. 1-18, #3, 1979-1996.  
The official United Nations Documents Index was formed by the merger of the three parts of its predecessor, *UNDEX*. The index provides subject, personal/corporate author and title access, as well as a list of publications arranged by United Nations Document number. *UNDOC* ceased publication in September, 1996. Please note that the law library's collection of *UNDOC* begins with volume 9 in 1987. The O'Neill Government Documents collection is complete.
- *UN-I-QUE: United Nations Info Quest*. <http://lib-unique.un.org/lib/unique.nsf>  
A part of the United Nations web site, *UN-I-QUE* is a ready reference file designed to provide quick access to United Nations document symbols/sales number for United Nations materials. *UN-I-QUE* focuses on documents of a recurring nature, e.g., annual/sessional reports of committees and commissions, annual publications and reports of major conferences. It does not provide full bibliographic details, and it is not intended to replace the other available United Nations indices. Coverage for documents included in the database is 1946 onwards.
- *AccessUN*, 1966-present. This Readex United Nations Index provides access to current and retrospective United Nations documents and publications. The index can be reached through the Boston College Law Library's web site at <http://www.bc.edu/schools/law/library/research/international> and following the links to *AccessUN*. Access to this database is restricted to those with a connection to the Boston College network.

## Treaties and International Agreements

- Bowman, M.J. and Harris, D.J., *Multilateral Treaties: Index and Current Status*. London: Butterworths, 1984. 11<sup>th</sup> Supplement, 1995. LAW LIBRARY REFERENCE AREA KZ 118 .B68 1984.  
This one-volume index provides access to multilateral treaties from 1856. Arranged chronologically, it includes information on the parties to the treaty or agreement, the date concluded, current status, the location of the text in various treaty collections and a general description of the treaty or agreement. It also features subject and keyword indexing. The supplement contains the same information for treaties and agreement from 1983-1994 and updated status information for the earlier treaties and agreements.
- *Status of Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary General*. <http://untreaty.un.org>  
A very valuable resource for anyone undertaking United Nations research, this database provides a subject arrangement of the major UN multilateral treaties. It provides information on the status of the treaties, date of

entry into force and the cite to the text in the *United Nations Treaty Series*. The text of any state party's reservation or declaration on the treaty is also set out.

## Document Collections

- United Nations. General Assembly. *Resolutions Adopted by the General Assembly, 1946* — . Edited and compiled by Dusan J. Djonovich. Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana, 1973 — . LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 5006.2 .U53.
- United Nations. Security Council. *Resolutions and Decisions of the Security Council, 1946* — . Edited and compiled by Dusan J. Djonovich. Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana, 1988 — . LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 5036 .U55. These document compilations provide the full text of General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions, dating back to 1946. The sets also contain the voting records for each resolution. The actual text of each resolution is reprinted from the Official Record volumes of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The General Assembly Resolutions are complete through 1986, and the Security Council Resolutions and Decisions are complete through 1979. The full text of General Assembly Resolutions are available electronically at <http://www.un.org/documents/resga.htm>. Coverage is from 1981 to the present. The Security Council Resolutions, from Resolution 345 (1974) to the present, are available electronically at <http://www.un.org/documents/scres.htm>.
- *International Legal Materials*, v. 1 — , 1962 — . LAW LIBRARY RESERVE and LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 64 .I58. Published by the American Society of International Law on a bimonthly basis, this journal provides researchers with current documents of international law, including General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions and the text of current United Nations drafted international instruments. It has annual and cumulative subject indices and jurisdictional entries, including a general United Nations entry.
- *United Nations Treaty Series: Treaties and International Agreements Registered or Filed and Recorded with the Secretariat of the United Nations*. New York: United Nations, v. 1 — , 1946 — . LAW LIBRARY MICROFORMS cabinet 2, drawer 8; LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 172 .T74. Article 102 of the United Nations Charter requires every member state to register any treaty or agreement entered into with the Secretariat, for publication by the United Nations. This series is the result of that mandate. Despite the requirement, not every treaty or agreement is registered, and the delay in publication of the series also lessens its effectiveness. It is, nevertheless, one of the most comprehensive collections of treaties and agreements available to a researcher. The law library has volumes 1-500 on microfiche, and volumes 500 forward in paper. An electronic version of this set can be found at <http://untreaty.un.org>.

## Current Awareness

These sources provide a researcher with up-to-date information about the activities and publications of the UN.

- *LexisNexis and Westlaw*  
Both of these online services have databases that provide current information on the United Nations, through newspapers, periodicals, newsletters and wire services. They also include the full text of important sources such as *International Legal Materials*. Consult the online database directories or ask a legal information librarian for help.
- *United Nations Chronicle*. v. 1—, 1963— . LAW PERIODICALS U v. 27, 1990-.  
A quarterly publication of the United Nations Office of Public Information, this journal is designed to provide highlights of recent United Nations activity and a schedule of upcoming meetings and events. Please note that our holdings begin with volume 27 in 1990.
- Internet  
Internet resources, such as the United Nations' web site, provide current information on UN activities and publications. The United Nations web site is at <http://www.un.org>.  
The United Nations Drug Control Program, based in Vienna, has a very useful web site, with many links to other UN-related sites. These links are at <http://www.undcp.org/unlinks.html>.  
The United Nations Scholars' Workstation at Yale University, <http://www.library.yale.edu/un>, is a collection of texts, finding aids, data sets, maps and pointers to print and electronic information about the UN and its affiliated organizations.

## SOURCES OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### United Nations

- Germain, Claire M. *Germain's Transnational Law Research: A Guide for Attorneys*. "United Nations," pp. IV 346 - IV 362. Irvington on Hudson, NY: Transnational Juris Publications, 1991—(looseleaf). LAW REFERENCE AREA K 85 .G47 1991.  
A well-written, concise overview of the United Nations, its publications, and the UN document system.
- Hajnal, Peter I., editor. *International Information: Documents, Publications, and Electronic Information of International Government Organizations*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1997. LAW REFERENCE AREA JZ 4850 .I58 1997.  
A very useful overview of the UN's structure, as well as a detailed look at UN publications and electronic resources.
- Stolken-Fitschen, Ilona. "Brief Guide to United Nations Documents," in *United Nations: Law, Policies and Practices*, pp. 1505-1517 (see General Guides, *supra*, for publication information and law library call number). Perhaps the best explanation of the United Nations publication and document system, it forms the last chapter of an excellent guide to the UN.

### Research Guides for International Law

- Cohen, Morris, Robert Berring, and Kent C. Olson. *How to Find the Law*. St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Co. Chapter 15: International Law. LAW RESERVES KF 240 .H6.
- Fox, James R. *Dictionary of International and Comparative Law*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana, 1997. LAW REFERENCE AREA KZ 1161 .F9 1997.
- *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of International Law*. New York: Oceana, 1986. LAW REFERENCE AREA KZ 1161 .P27 1986.
- *Guide to International Legal Research*. 3d ed. Charlottesville, VA: Lexis Legal Publishers, 1998. LAW REFERENCE AREA KZ 1234 .G84 1998.
- *The International Law Dictionary*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio Publishers, 1986. LAW REFERENCE AREA KZ 1161 .B54 1987.

### Basic International Law Treatises

- Brownlie, Ian. *Principles of Public International Law*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 3225 .B76 A37 1998.
- Degan, Vladimir. *Sources of International Law*. Boston: Kluwer Law International, 1997. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 1242 .D44 1997.
- Janis, Mark W. *An Introduction to International Law*. 3d ed. Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Law & Business, 1999. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 3140 .J36 A35 1999.
- Sands, Phillippe, and Pierre Klein, editors. *Bowett's Law of International Institutions*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Sweet & Maxwell, 2001. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 4850 .S26 2001.
- Schachter, Oscar. *International Law in Theory and Practice*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1991. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 3160 .S33 A35 1991.
- Slomanson, William R. *Fundamental Perspectives on International Law*. St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Co., 1990. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 3180 .S59 A35 1990.
- Wallace, Rebecca M. M. *International Law: A Student Introduction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1992. LAW GENERAL COLLECTION KZ 3295 .W35 A35 1992.

An electronic version of this guide can be found at <http://www.bc.edu/schools/law/library/research/researchguides/>

Revised May 2004. Copyright 2004, The Boston College Law Library. Permission to reproduce is hereby granted except for use in items to be offered for sale. Please credit the Boston College Law Library.