



IFLP
SEARCH

VENDOR VOICE

Partnering with HeinOnline

Adding Value to the *Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals*

For 55 years, the *Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals*, published by the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), has been helping legal information professionals, attorneys, law faculty, students, and other industry members find important articles and book collections and reviews from journals published around the world. Expanding its online presence has helped the *Index* provide more dynamic resources; yet, according to its production team, the best is yet to come.

The *Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals (IFLP)* has undergone a number of changes since its start in 1960. In the mid-1980s, AALL moved the production of the *Index* from the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies at the University of London to the Law Library at the University of California Berkeley, where it draws upon the resources of the university's international and foreign law collection, the largest and most comprehensive in the western United States.

More recently, in 2011, AALL partnered with William S. Hein & Co., Inc., to publish *IFLP*—in print and on HeinOnline.

Last year, AALL formed the *Index to Foreign*

Legal Periodicals Editorial Advisory Board to serve in an advisory capacity to the *Index's* general editor, Marci Hoffman, an associate director and international and foreign law librarian at the University of California Berkeley School of Law Library. The advisory board, which replaced an AALL committee, is composed of AALL members with specific legal research and language skills who review all index listings and contribute to the continued development of the *Index*.

Work on the journal is conducted year-round. A full-time managing editor, along with indexers, review journal literature, edit the *Index*, produce four print and five online issues, and add metadata to each issue's content to make searches more effective.

Users can access more than 52,000 full-text articles in the *Index*'s online version, which encompasses more than 720 legal journals and more than 344,000 total records. Its content spans more than two dozen languages, ranging from English to Bulgarian and Chinese.

As the only multilingual legal journal index in the world, *IPLP* serves as a significant legal community resource. *AALL Spectrum* recently spoke with Hoffman and Shannon Hein, vice president of sales for William S. Hein & Co., Inc., about the journal's significance, efforts to reach a wider audience, and what lies ahead.

How does the *Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals* provide value to the legal information industry?

Marci Hoffman: A lot of people think it only covers civil law countries or certain subjects, but it truly is an international and comparative index that covers both public and private international law and the national law of many different jurisdictions. Also, since the *Index* is now hosted on HeinOnline, there's

THE BASICS

The only multilingual legal journal index, with 26 languages covered

An AALL publication

Work is done by people—indexers from around the world, including AALL colleagues

Broad scope—the *Index* covers more than you think: domestic law, international law, comparative law

The *Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals* is the only multilingual legal journal index in the world for people doing international and comparative legal research. No other tool out there really provides the depth of coverage we provide, in pure scope of the number of countries covered and the amount of journals in different languages we index.

more information than there was ever in print, adding even more value. The collection is growing all the time.

Traditionally, which industry members have used the *Index* on a regular basis?

MH: Traditionally, academic law libraries. Some law firms may subscribe, but may not have utilized it because they didn't understand the scope of the *Index*. I'd like to see it penetrate that market more. We really do provide accessible information they can't get elsewhere—especially as firms become more multinational and global in the scope of their practices. It allows them to get information about other jurisdictions without having to subscribe to lots of different resources.

A lot of lawyers could be using the *Index* to search for resources, or, if they have a librarian, the librarian could use it. It can also be used by students, a law professor, or a law librarian in an academic library. The *Index* is very straightforward to use, and the functionality is very good and easy to learn quickly—especially since so many law firms and academics are used to the HeinOnline platform. It's a familiar interface for them.

Has the audience changed over the years?

MH: We've primarily had a lot of U.S. subscribers; we're now working with Hein and really trying to get more international subscribers.

Shannon Hein: Before the *Index* came to Hein, it was purely an index. We were able to add full text from many journals, so once you have a record located in the *Index* online, you can now link to the full-text article. We've licensed and added the full text of 115 periodicals to the *Index* in the last two years. It's an ongoing project, and we're working on it more and more.

We've also restructured the product and now offer, in addition to the full subscription, the option for eight regional subscription packages for international institutions. That brings the price down a bit and makes it more affordable.

What criteria are used to determine which items to include in the *Index*?

MH: Publishers, colleagues, advisory board members, Hein, and all kinds of folks send suggestions of titles they'd like to see covered in the *Index*. The board meets four times a year, virtually, and reviews about 10 titles each time. It is looking for journals that deal with our topical areas—anything on international, comparative, or national law from any jurisdiction. The *Index* covers content in 26 different languages, so the articles don't have to be only in English.

The board looks at the quality of the articles, who the publisher is, and at the editorial board. We're less likely to add something that's weekly because the articles aren't going to be very substantive. We also consider if it's an area of the law

that would complement other types of journals we cover in the *Index*.

What do you feel the advisory board's biggest challenge will be, moving forward?

MH: One thing it's working on is to get the word out about the scope of the *Index* to colleagues in other jurisdictions. At international conferences, advisory board members discuss the *Index* with other librarians, but as colleagues who use the *Index* in the course of doing their work, not as someone trying to sell it.

Have you tried any other new methods to obtain additional subscribers in recent years?

SH: We run multiple parallel campaigns, aimed both at customers who use other products of ours and at prospective customers. We've reached out to 204 U.S. ABA-accredited law schools; that effort runs parallel with contacting more than 700 law firms of significant size, government agencies, and law schools around the globe.

MH: The advisory board is also developing user scenarios—especially for practitioners at law firms. It helps everyone better understand what the *Index's* value is to a law firm, and not just to an academic library. I think addressing academic librarians' needs may have been the goal of the *Index* when it was developed in the 1960s, but now, when the board is considering journals to add, it's also looking at whether that particular journal would be of interest to the law firm community.

Has there been any talk about moving completely online—or does the readership still strongly feel there's value in a physical copy?

MH: We discuss it all the time.

SH: We do.

AALL's Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals Editorial Advisory Board

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content and are in the process of adding 1980-1983 to the searchable database.

MH: When we decided to launch the regional campaign, we added a regional tag to the indexed journals, so we're now able to allow regional searching. There are a lot more ways to slice and dice and access information in the electronic version than in the print.

We haven't done a survey asking people if they'd substitute the online version for print, but we've talked with users at different times, during presentations or lunches. However, a lot of people who attend those events think print can go away because they tend to be online *Index* users.

SH: We have more than three times the number of subscribers for the online version than we do for the print. The print version has been declining; each year, a few more people make the transition. There is some overlap—some people still have the print version because they have a hard time deciding to cancel, but they also subscribe online because it's more practical, easier to use, and more robust. But the less you print, the more expensive the print production process is. Eventually, there may come a time when we recommend to AALL that the print version be phased out.

MH: It has a lot to do with the number of subscribers we have for print—whether they'd be able to move to electronic, because it does cost more than print. But you're getting more for your subscription dollar.

SH: There's a lot of value online, compared to print. Everything from 1984 to date is in a fully searchable database. All bound volumes are also browsable online in PDF format from 1965 forward. We continue to add more of the older

What developments do you see in the *Index's* future? What will the publication look like in 10 years?

SH: Being able to provide instant access to the full text of an article is a crucial thing; so is being able to add different kinds of metadata to provide more access points than we offer now, which include subject, keyword, and journal title. Being able to take advantage of information technology and offer an even more robust search experience is something that will definitely happen in the future.

MH: The other thing is multilingual subject headings. You can currently search by keyword in another language, but we want to provide access to the controlled list of topics in French, German, and Spanish. Now you can only search for items using the subject heading option in English. We would like to be able to let users search by subject in multiple languages.

Do you think the *Index's* main selling point will remain the same? How does it differentiate itself from other products in the market?

MH: The *Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals* is the only multilingual legal journal index in the world for people doing international and comparative legal research. No other tool out there really provides the depth of coverage we provide, in pure scope of the number of countries covered and the amount of journals in different languages we index.

And it's all, in fact, work that's done by human beings—it's not a machine-readable index. Even Google can't cover what we cover in the *Index*. One of the problems with Google is that you can't just search for legal journals with certain topics. Only the *Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals* allows you to get the breadth and depth of coverage, and search only through legal journal literature. It covers domestic law of many different jurisdictions, international law, comparative law—"Index to Foreign Legal Periodicals" actually sounds a bit limiting; but the scope is far greater than the title implies. ■