

Opening up the UK's foreign and international law collections: the FLARE initiative and Index to Treaties, and the FLAG Foreign Law Guide

The FLARE group of libraries launched a new internet resource in March this year, the FLARE Index to Treaties. It has already proved popular with librarians and has attracted a substantial amount of web traffic. But what is FLARE? What does it do – and what other web resources does it provide? This article outlines the work of the group and describes the FLAG Foreign Law Guide and FLARE's Union List of Official Gazettes.

The FLARE initiative was started in 2003 by five libraries with substantial foreign law collections: the British Library, the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (IALS), the Bodleian Law Library, the Squire Law Library and the School of Oriental and African Studies Library (SOAS). The same libraries had previously been engaged in the Foreign Law Guide project, which was funded by the Research Support Libraries Programme (RSLP).

FLARE stands for Foreign Law Research. In the words of the group's statement of purpose, it seeks "to explore and implement collaborative policies to improve the overall provision of research materials in foreign, comparative and international law to the research community in the UK." Representatives from the five partner libraries meet several times a year, chaired by the IALS Associate Director and Librarian, Jules Winterton.

Collaborative collection development forms a substantial part of the FLARE group's work. One of its major projects is the creation of a national collection of European official gazettes, distributed across the FLARE libraries. This involves identification and comparison of the extent of each library's holdings, pinpointing gaps and overlaps – a lengthy process. Selective cancellations and stock transfers between libraries are then carried out, in order to eliminate duplication and fill gaps. For example, IALS had a number of short runs of old Eastern European gazettes, but no current subscriptions, while the British Library has a more extensive collection, with some missing issues, so the IALS gazettes were transferred to the British Library to fill the gaps. The British Library and the University of London, on behalf of IALS, have signed a trust deed covering the terms on which IALS has deposited the gazettes at the British Library. Under the agreement, the British Library is responsible for conservation of the transferred materials and for maintaining subscriptions, while

IALS retains the right to borrow transferred volumes for use on its own premises, or to send its staff and researchers to consult them in the British Library's reading rooms.

In order to facilitate access by researchers, FLARE has produced a union list of European official gazettes, which is available on its website (<http://ials.sas.ac.uk/flare/flare.htm>). At the moment it only covers holdings at the British Library and IALS, but the intention is to extend it to the other FLARE libraries. The Union List does not simply state which titles are held where: for each jurisdiction it provides a description of the gazette, saying what type of legal materials it includes, listing title changes and linking to those which are available on the internet. It is kept updated as print holdings change and internet availability grows.

Current title: Lovtidende for Kongeriget Danmark			
Start date: 1871-			
Notes: Published in three parts as follows: Part A. Statutes, Ordinances, Ministerial Regulations and Orders; Part B. Budget Laws and Naturalization Orders; Part C. International Agreements			
Web Site: URL: http://www.retsinfo.dk/			
Notes: Retsinformation (Legal Information) is the official online legal information system of the Danish State. It was established in 1985 and contains all Acts of the Parliament and Statutory Orders, circulars, etc issued by the administration. It includes Bills and Parliamentary orders and resolutions. All documents are in Danish. There are links off the home page to Lovtidende A from 1995, Lovtidende C from 2000 and Ministerialtidende from 1995.			
Holdings Information			
Lovtidende for Kongeriget Danmark ... A			
Location	Pressmark	Holdings	Completeness
British Library	SB.2/2(1)	1896-97; 1902; 1911-1992; 1996-1998; 2001-	No gaps of more than a year other than those noted
IALS	RES GO9.E.2	1939-1970	
	GO9.E.2	1971-	

First part of the Danish entry on Union List

Other FLARE collection development initiatives are focusing on Central and Eastern European materials and North American law reports. An initial audit of Central and Eastern European law holdings in the FLARE libraries has been carried out. Selective cancellations of US and Canadian law reports have been made, to eliminate unnecessary duplication. These cancelled law reports are all available on the Westlaw International online service, so they are still easily available in all the FLARE libraries; if the hard copy is essential for any reason, it remains available in at

least one of them. Cancellation of print subscriptions releases much-needed shelf space and – of course - funds, which can then be used for development in other areas of the collections. By systematically consolidating, coordinating and developing the UK's major foreign law collections in this way, FLARE's work will assure the continued availability of foreign law materials to both academic researchers and the legal profession .


One of FLARE's objectives is to engage in projects to promote awareness of foreign and international legal research resources, in order to encourage their use. The FLAG guide, the FLARE Index to Treaties and the Union List of Gazettes are 3 tools which have been produced in furtherance of this objective. They can all be found on the FLARE homepage

Developing law librarians' expertise in the collection, management and exploitation of foreign and international law materials is another of FLARE's concerns. Anything which enhances the profession's knowledge of these resources and their confidence in dealing with them will facilitate access by library users. A few years ago the FLARE libraries organised a training event on Central and Eastern European legal materials, focusing on Poland, Russia and the Ukraine. Then, in March 2009, a one-day foreign and international law workshop was put on at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, under the auspices of BIALL.


The FLARE website hosts the FLAG Foreign Law Guide. FLAG is a searchable directory of foreign and international law collections in UK libraries. Users can select the required jurisdiction and resource type (for example, legislation, court reports, or parliamentary proceedings), then a list of libraries with relevant holdings will be displayed. Searches can be restricted to libraries in a given region of the UK if desired.

FLAG covers primary legal materials only, that is: legislation, case law and treaties, plus related sources such as parliamentary proceedings. The facility to search by resource type, rather than by a specific series title, is particularly valuable: materials such as legislation and parliamentary proceedings are notoriously difficult to find on library catalogues, since their exact titles are not usually known and tend to change fairly frequently.

Search Collections - Microsoft Internet Explorer
File Edit View Favorites Tools Help
Address http://193.62.18.232/dbtw-wpd/textbase/collsearch.htm



Foreign Law Guide



[Library Search](#)[Advanced Search](#)[About the FLAG project](#)

FLAG contains collection descriptions of primary materials in print format for foreign jurisdictions held in UK libraries. Use this screen to search for either the law of a particular country or the law made by an international organisation. General type of legal material lists the types of law material found in the libraries appraised. If you require legislation, specify 'legislation'; if you require court reports, specify 'court reports'. The heading legislation and court reports will identify only that small number of publications which contains both types of law material; the heading will not combine searches over all collections of legislation and all collections of court reports. Fill in at least one of the fields below and Submit Query.

[Click here for a note on updating of the database](#)

Country

AND

Province or State

AND

International Organisation

AND

General type of legal material


AND


Free text search

AND

Library Region

AND



Powered by DB/Text Web Publisher, from 

Internet

The FLAG search screen