Guide to Researching Historical Treaties

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Introduction to Researching Historical Treaties

This guide is intended to be a supplement to the Law Library’s comprehensive Guide to Treaty Research. The advice contained in that guide should be concomitantly observed when researching older treaties. However, the exercise of finding historical treaties is markedly different from finding more recent treaties on at least one count: pre-1949 treaties are even less likely to be contained in electronic format. Fortunately, the Diamond Law Library's historical treaty collection in print is incredibly vast, and most of the sources you will need to consult when undertaking a research project are ready-at-hand in the open stacks. The benefit to this guide, barring publication of a new index, is that the list of sources one should use to find historical treaty information is refreshingly finite.

Finding Aids

Index to Multilateral Treaties, 2nd Floor, JX60 H26.

Published in 1965 by the Harvard Law School Library, this is one of the best starting places for finding historical treaties. This single volume is a chronological list of 3859 multilateral treaties and other agreements from 1596 through 1963. The text contains citations to the full text of the agreement within a variety of primary sources. Particularly useful subject and regional indexes are also included separately.


This large volume lists basic information – including citations to sources containing the full text – about
multilateral treaties that were signed between 1648 and 1995. It is arranged in chronological order, making it a fantastic resource if you happen to know when the treaty was signed, or if your researching treaties within a particular date range. It provides citations to many of the sets we own at the Diamond Law Library.

**World Treaty Index, 2nd Floor finding aids, JX 171 .R631 1983.**

This five volume set attempts to index all treaties signed worldwide from 1900-1980. The treaties are summarized in chronological order. Each summary contains good, basic information, including parties, dates of signing/ratification, and citations to the United Nations Treaty Series or the League of Nations Treaty Series, if therein. Volumes 4 and 5 index treaties by party and keyword, respectively. Unfortunately, the World Treaty Index has not been supplemented since the 2nd edition was published in 1980.

**Index of British Treaties (1101-1968), 2nd Floor finding aids, JX 636 1970.**

This three volume set was published to serve as a complete consolidated index to the United Kingdom Treaty Series, and it is indispensable for finding basic information about both bilateral and multilateral British treaties. Volume One contains three separate indexes: multilateral treaties by subject, bilateral treaties by country, and bilateral treaties by subject. Each entry in Volume One indicates a date of signature. Once the date is ascertained, consult Volumes Two and Three, which contain treaties from 1101 to 1968 in chronological order, for basic information about the treaty, including the source(s) containing the full text. A fourth volume covering the period 1969-1988 supplements this set. This is the best substitute for the lack of a source indicating the status of British treaties.

**Treaty Index: 1776-1990 Consolidation, 2nd Floor Finding Aids, JX231 K174.**

Published by Hein, this 13 volume, comprehensive tool covers treaties from 1776 to present, whether ratified or not. Most volumes are revised through 1995, but there is a consolidated, bound supplement. You can access the set by treaty number, subject, country, title, and date. The first five volumes contain the "master guide," organized by treaty number. For each treaty in this section, you will learn if there are parallel citations, when and where it was signed, when it entered into force, and subsequent activity. It does not tell you whether the treaty is currently in force (see Treaties in Force). The other indexes only provide enough information to lead you back to the Master Guide.

**A Tentative List of Treaty Collections, Cellar Storage, Bibl JX Un321 (ask the circulation staff for assistance retrieving this item).**

Published by the U.S. State Department in 1919 in preparation of the Paris Peace Conference, this list contains references not to individual treaties but to the location and titles of various treaty collections. This work was largely superceded by the Manual of Collections of Treaties published by Harvard University Press several years later.

**Manual of Collections of Treaties and of Collections Relating to Treaties, Cellar Storage, Bibl JX M9 (ask the circulation staff for assistance retrieving this item).**

Contains a list of general ancient and modern treaty collections, collections by states and a valuable list of collections by subject. The appendix contains an essay from the book's editor, Dennis Peter Meyers, about the publication of treaties which is an interesting historical sketch of treaty publications from the earliest times down to the beginning of the League of Nations Treaty Series.

**Treaties, Treaty Collections and Documents on Foreign Affairs: From Sun King Suppilulima I to**
Though brief and annoyingly structured, this is an excellent bibliography of the literature relating to the history of treaties - including many non-English language sources - and treaty collections.

Catalogue of Treaties, 1814-1918, Cellar Storage, Bibl JX Un3223 (ask the circulation staff for assistance retrieving this item).

This single volume is a chronological list of basic information about treaties signed between 1814 and 1918. It includes references to sources containing the full text of the agreements in English and in other languages, where available. The entry list is admittedly incomplete as to both treaties and sources, but it includes very helpful information for 3318 treaties (and 98 selected treaties signed between 1353 and 1814) it does include. Though published by the U.S. Government Printing Office, this source contains references to both and non-U.S. bi-lateral and multilateral treaties. A thorough country index is also included. If you happen to be searching for the text of a treaty that falls within this date range, this is a particularly useful resource. This source is also available via Hein Online.

Treaty Sources

Consolidated Treaty Series, 2nd Floor, JX 120 .P35.

CTS spans 231 volumes, and reprints treaties signed between 1648 and 1919, when the League of Nations Treaty Series began. This is an invaluable resource for finding the text of historical treaties, and should be the first source consulted if an index is not used. For example, the majority of treaties listed in the Multilateral Treaty Calendar during this period are contained in this set. All texts are in their original languages, with English and French translations where available. Parallel citations are included, as are annotations to show later treaty modifications or terminations. The set is indexed by date and by party, but not by subject.

Collection of International Concessions and Related Instruments, 2nd Floor, JX4180 C68.

These thirteen volumes contain international agreements between States and non-State entities from 595 to 1974. This set is largely viewed as a companion to the Consolidated Treaty Series.

Corps Universel Diplomatique du Droit des Gens, Treasure, JX132 D8 1726.

Covers the period from 800-1731 in eight volumes. The set contains the texts of treaties in their original languages.

Nouveau Recueil de Traités: D'alliance, de Paix, de Tréve..., 2nd Floor, JX142 M32.

Contains treaties signed between 1494 – 1874 in sixteen volumes. Three supplementary volumes and two finding aid volumes (one partie chronologique and one partie alphabetique) make this a particularly important set for finding historical treaties.

Nouveau Recueil Général de Traits..., 2nd Floor, JX142 M35.

This major set published in three series includes the texts of both bilateral and multilateral treaties, conventions and other inter-state agreement involving at least one European nation. Most treaties are published in their original language, along with a French translation. The earliest text in the series is
dated 1494; note that the series' chronological coverage overlaps somewhat.

- Series 1 contains 20 volumes covering 1494-1874.
- Series 2 contains 35 volumes and one General Tables volume (with both chronological and alphabetical tables) covering treaties from 1776-1907.
- Series 3 contains 41 volumes along with 3 volumes of indexes covering treaties from 1799-1935.

**Recueil des Traités de la France, 2nd Floor, JX686 1880.**

Covers the period between 1713 to 1906 in 23 volumes. The texts are in French; general indexes are included in volume 16.

**British and Foreign State Papers, 2nd Floor, JX60 G7.**

Covers the period from 1373 to 1968. Includes treaties, statements, and various diplomatic exchanges from 1812 to 1968. Each volume has an index, but there are periodic multi-year indexes as well.

**Hertslet's Commercial Treaties, 2nd Floor, JX636 1827.**

A collection of commercial treaties and related materials. The 31 volumes reprint documents that were created between 1354 to 1910. Indexes in volumes 22 and 31. Incorporated with BFSP (see above) beginning with volume 116 (1922).

**Treaties and Other International Agreements of the 1776-1949 (Bevans), 2nd Floor, JX236 1968.**

This set replaces two earlier compilations (Malloy and Miller - see main Guide to Treaty Research for further information) by reprinting all pre-UST treaties. The first four volumes contain multilateral treaties in chronological order. Volumes 5-12 include bilateral treaties arranged by country. The index appears in volume 13. Available electronically through HeinOnline.

**U.S. Statutes at Large, 4th Floor & 3rd Floor Reserve, S A.2.**

**Electronic format:** On the Web, treaties that appeared in the Statutes at Large from 1789-1873 are available for free in full text at the Library of Congress's Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation. A more complete collection of Statutes at Large from 1789-1950, when treaties stopped being published in Statutes at Large, is also available on Hein Online, on Westlaw (USTREATIES) and LEXIS (USTRTY). It is worth noting also that LEXIS and Westlaw both have selected Statutes at Large in PDF format; use the “Get a Document” or "Find" feature to access individual Stat. citations in PDF.

**Print format:** The text of all treaties from 1776 through 1950 appear in this chronologically arranged set. Volumes 7 and 8 include all treaties from 1776-1845. From 1846 on, treaties were published in chronological order in the treaties section, which follows the statutes in each sessional volume. Executive agreements are included in volumes 47-64. Volume 64 part 3 includes a list of all treaties and agreements in volumes 1 - 64. The list is arranged by country and then by topic. Indian treaties were included through volume 16. With the inception of UST in 1950, Statutes at Large ceased publication of treaties.

**Specialized Sources**

**U.S.–Indian treaties**

Bibliography of the English Colonial Treaties with the American Indians including a Synopsis of

This valuable resource contains a very brief synopsis of each treaty, along with a citation and information about the location of the full text within libraries and private collections. Each treaty entry also contains a facsimile of the treaty title page.

Kappler's Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, 4th Floor, KF8203 1975, also available online.

This is an historically significant, seven volume compilation of U.S. treaties, laws and executive orders pertaining to Native American Indian tribes. The volumes cover U.S. Government treaties with Native Americans from 1778-1883 (Volume II) and U.S. laws and executive orders concerning Native Americans from 1871-1970 (Volumes I, III-VII). The work was first published in 1903-04 by the U.S. Government Printing Office. Enhanced by the editors' use of margin notations and a comprehensive index, the information contained in this set should be used as a starting place for any research project on this subject. Each volume contains an Index of treaties by subject and tribe.

List of Documents concerning the Negotiation of Ratified Indian Treaties, Offsite, T Un3624L.

This guide consists of a selected and annotated list of important treaty collections and indexes, though is not a comprehensive listing of such sources or individual treaties.

U.S. Statutes at Large, Volume 7, 3rd Floor Reserve & 4th Floor

S A.2. Volume 7 contains treaties between the United States and the Indian Tribes from 1778-1845.

Both the list of treaties and the treaty texts in Vol. 7 are also available on the Web at the American Memory Project and on Hein Online.

Electronic (only) Sources

Avalon Project

Yale Law School's digital library of documents relating to Law, History and Diplomacy contains online electronic copies of documents dating back over the past two thousand years, including several valuable collections of both U.S. and non-U.S. treaties.

ICRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross website contains a Treaty Database with the texts of over 100 treaties on the subject of international humanitarian law. Searchable by topic, by date and by country.

Please send comments regarding this guide to Beth Williams, Reference Librarian, Arthur W. Diamond Law Library, Columbia Law School.

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