

# Introduction to Foreign Legal Research

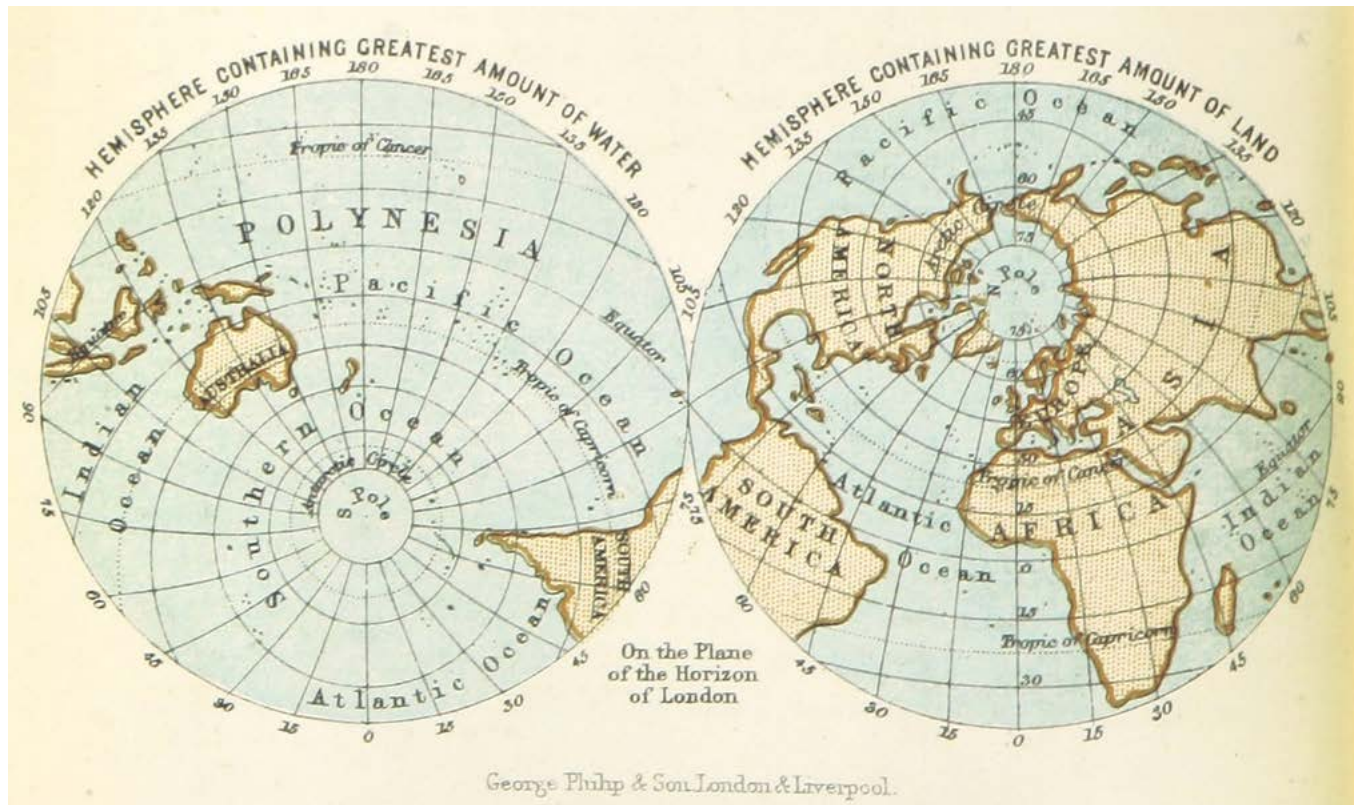
Comparative and International Law  
Survey

April 2014



# Overview

Basic introduction to foreign legal resources –  
where to begin your research



# Definitions

- Foreign Law
  - The national, or domestic, law of any country other than the one within which you are working
  - No effect outside the boundaries of that nation
- Comparative Law
  - The study of the similarities and / or differences between two or more countries or between two or more legal systems

# URGENT TASK FROM MANAGING PARTNER

*A client, Shangelina Molie, is looking to adopt a child in Ghana. I need some preliminary research to answer following questions ASAP:*

- 1. What type of legal system are we dealing with?***
- 2. Can you locate a current English copy of the Constitution of Ghana?***

# Legal Systems

## COMMON LAW SYSTEM (E.G., UNITED STATES)

- Constitutions
- Statutes/Codes
- Regulations
- Cases

## CIVIL LAW SYSTEM (E.G., FRANCE)

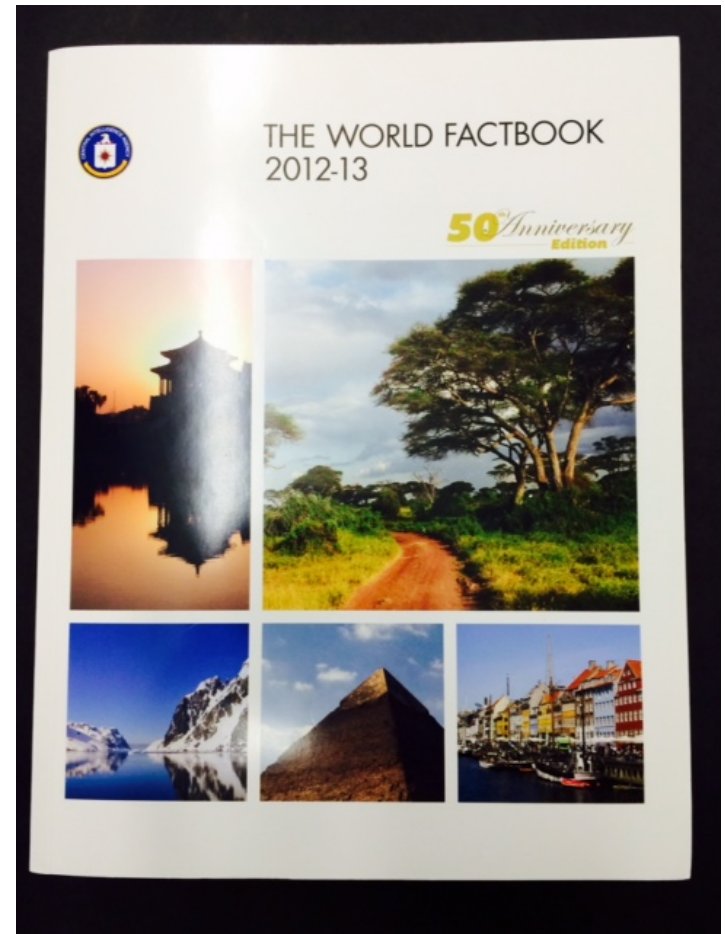
- Constitutions
- Statutes/Codes
- Regulations

# Where to Look for a Quick Overview of a Nation's Legal System

- CIA World Factbook
- Bureau of Justice World Factbook of Criminal Justice Systems
- JuriGlobe
- Foreign Law Guide
- Modern Legal Systems Cyclopedia

# CIA World Factbook

Each country profile tracks such demographics as population, ethnicity and literacy rates, as well as political, geographical and economic data.



# Bureau of Justice World Factbook of Criminal Justice Systems

Provides narrative descriptions of the criminal justice systems of 45 countries around the world



OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

**BJS** Bureau of Justice Statistics

Home Topics Publications & Products Data Collections Funding Data Analysis To

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## The World Factbook of Criminal Justice Systems

[Abstract](#) | [New country reports](#) | [Original country reports](#)

### Abstract

This factbook, developed under BJS grants, provides narrative descriptions were completed in 1993. The latest 5 entries including tv McDonald Ph.D., Professor of Sociology and Anthropology, and Deputy University

### New country reports

Template used to develop these reports.

Brazil  
[ASCII file](#) (82K) | [Spreadsheets](#) (zip format 43K)

Colombia  
[ASCII file](#) (217K) | [Spreadsheets](#) (zip format 36K)  
Spanish version: [Acrobat file](#) (731K)

Costa Rica  
[ASCII file](#) (84K) | [Spreadsheets](#) (zip format 5K)  
Spanish version: [Acrobat file](#) (72K)

Mexico  
[ASCII file](#) (163K) | [Spreadsheets](#) (zip format 56K)  
Spanish version: [Acrobat file](#) (140K)

Venezuela  
[ASCII file](#) (146K) | [Spreadsheets](#) (zip format 28K)  
Spanish version: [Acrobat file](#) (480k)

▲ [To the top](#)



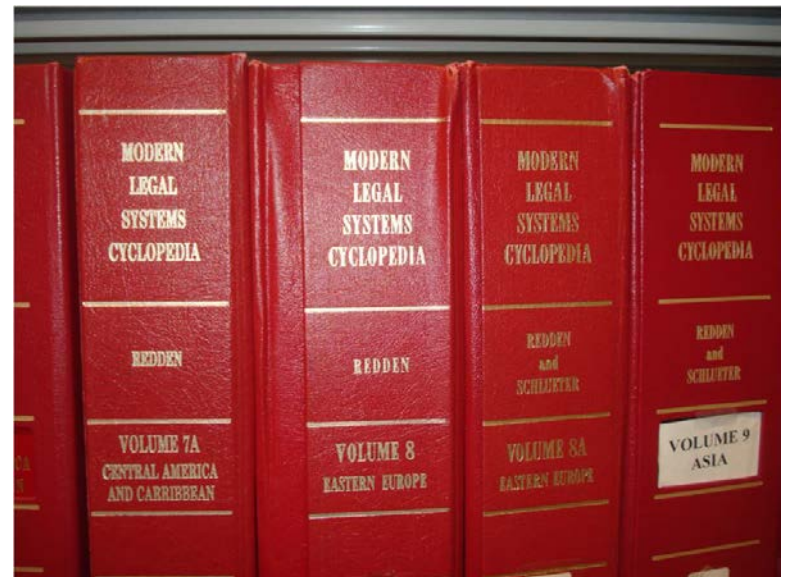
# JuriGlobe

Initial overview of  
the applicable  
legal systems

The screenshot displays the JuriGlobe website interface. At the top, the header reads "JuriGlobe - World Legal Systems Research Group" next to a small globe icon. On the right side of the header, there are "PRINT" and "FONT RESIZE" (A A A) buttons. Below the header is a vertical navigation menu with the following items: Home, About JuriGlobe, Foreword, Legal Systems Classification, Geographic Distribution (Atlas), U.N. Member States Legal Systems, Demographic Distribution, World GDP and GNI per capita Distribution, International Trade and Legal Integration, Languages and Legal Systems, International Linguistic Spaces, Ongoing Projects, and General Bibliography. To the right of the menu is a language selection bar with options: Français, Español, Русский, 中文, and عربي. Below this is a world map with five filter buttons: CIVIL LAW (red), COMMON LAW (dark blue), MUSLIM LAW (green), CUSTOMARY LAW (yellow), and MIXED SYSTEM (grey). The map shows various regions color-coded according to these legal systems, with labels for NORTH AMERICA, SOUTH AMERICA, CENTRAL AMERICA, WEST INDIES, EUROPE, ASIA, MIDDLE EAST, AFRICA, SOUTH EAST ASIA, and OCEANIA.

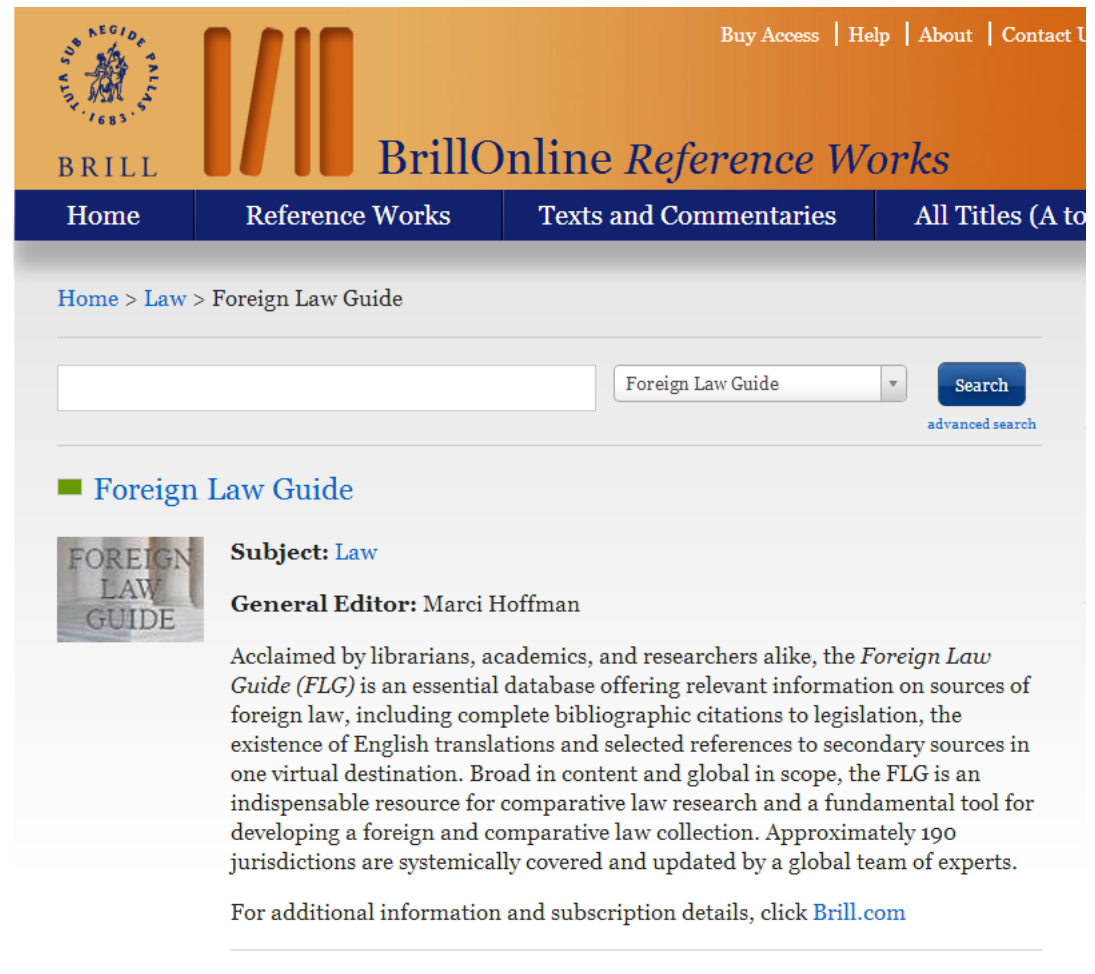
# Modern Legal Systems Cyclopedia

- An introduction to legal systems, legal education, the practice of law, and forms of government.
- K530 .M63 1984 (Reference Area)
- Also on [HeinOnline](#)



# Foreign Law Guide

Provides sources of law, legislation, English translations and selected references to secondary sources



The screenshot shows the BrillOnline Reference Works website. The header includes the Brill logo (a circular emblem with a figure and the text 'TOTA SUB REGIDE PALLAS 1683'), the text 'BRILL', and 'BrillOnline Reference Works'. Navigation links for 'Buy Access | Help | About | Contact U' are in the top right. A dark blue navigation bar contains 'Home', 'Reference Works', 'Texts and Commentaries', and 'All Titles (A to Z)'. The breadcrumb trail reads 'Home > Law > Foreign Law Guide'. A search bar contains 'Foreign Law Guide' and a 'Search' button, with a link to 'advanced search' below it. A green square icon precedes the title 'Foreign Law Guide'. A small image of the 'FOREIGN LAW GUIDE' book cover is shown. The text indicates the subject is 'Law' and the general editor is 'Marci Hoffman'. A descriptive paragraph states: 'Acclaimed by librarians, academics, and researchers alike, the *Foreign Law Guide (FLG)* is an essential database offering relevant information on sources of foreign law, including complete bibliographic citations to legislation, the existence of English translations and selected references to secondary sources in one virtual destination. Broad in content and global in scope, the FLG is an indispensable resource for comparative law research and a fundamental tool for developing a foreign and comparative law collection. Approximately 190 jurisdictions are systemically covered and updated by a global team of experts.' A link to 'Brill.com' is provided for more information and subscription details.

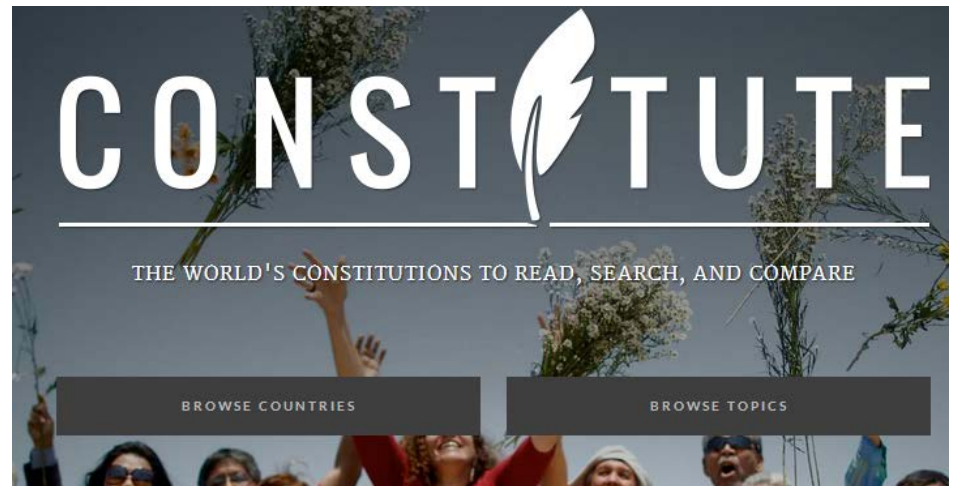
# Where to Look for a Nation's Constitution



- [Constitute Project](#)
- [World Constitutions Illustrated](#)
- [Constitutions of the Countries of the World](#)

# Constitute Project

*...includes the constitution that was in force in September of 2013 for nearly every independent state in the world.*



# World Constitutions Illustrated


Brings together current and historical constitutions, the Modern Legal Systems Encyclopedia, and other books and commentary on constitutions.


The screenshot shows the website's navigation and content sections. At the top, the title "World Constitutions Illustrated" is followed by the subtitle "Contemporary & Historical Documents & Resources". Below this, there are two main navigation options: "Browse by Country" with a dropdown menu labeled "Select a Country", and "Browse by Resource". The "Browse by Resource" section lists three categories: "World Constitutions", "Books, Periodicals, and Other Related Works", and "Additional Sources", each with a globe icon and a link to "About this resource". At the bottom, there is a "Be a Contributor" section with a "Contribute to the Project" button. On the right side, there is a gold seal award from Choice Magazine, dated 2010, for "Outstanding Academic Title".


**World Constitutions Illustrated**  
Contemporary & Historical Documents & Resources

Browse by Country  
Select a Country

Browse by Resource


 **World Constitutions**  
[About this resource](#)

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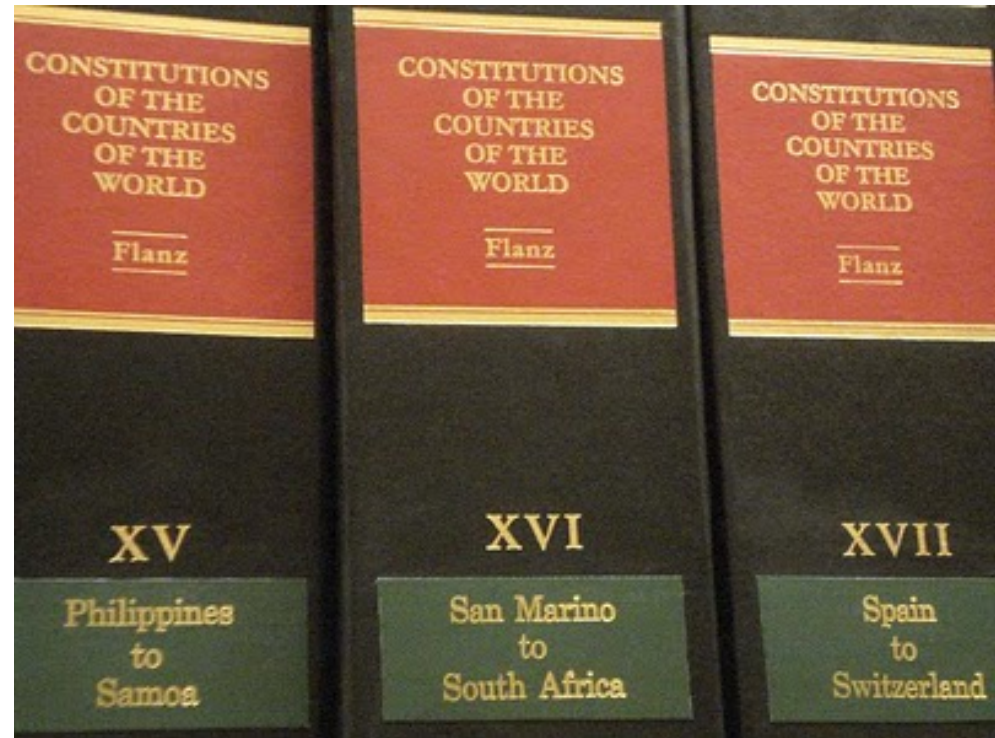
Be a Contributor  
[Contribute to the Project](#)

2010 Recipient  
**Outstanding Academic Title**  
by Choice Magazine



# Constitutions of the Countries of the World

- English-language text for more than 190 countries.
- K3157.A2 B58 1971 (Reference Area)



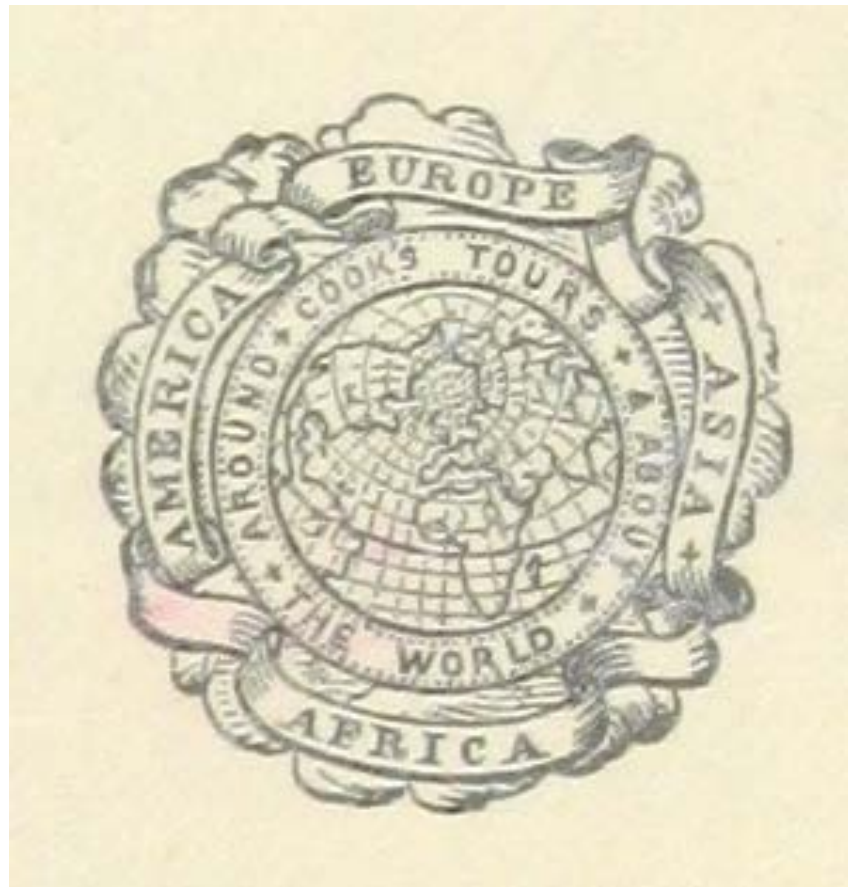
# Evaluating Online Information

- Is it reliable?
  - Who is the author?
  - Currency?
  - Scope?
- Translation issues
  - Official translation?
  - May not include latest revisions/amendments
  - Look for official government websites



# Research Guide

- [Legal & Judicial Systems in Countries Around the World](#)



# Need help?

Visit the Reference Office or

Call 543-6794 or

<http://lib.law.washington.edu/questions.html>

