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DIANA: A Human Rights Database

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There is a growing expectation among scholars from all disciplines that the resources of the world's research libraries be brought to the desktop. The complex universe of human rights literature invites both the electronic delivery of documentation to remote areas of the world and the imposition of order upon the burgeoning literature of this dynamic field. The information technology that has been developed over the past several years has created new potential for organization, retrieval, and dissemination of information that will facilitate the review of human rights literature.

A consortium of law librarians, university-based human rights centers, and other non-governmental human rights organizations is undertaking an ambitious project combining the evolving "information highway" and the needs of human rights advocates and researchers around the world for timely, authoritative literature in their discipline. The project is titled DIANA in honor of Diana Vincent-Daviss (1943–1993),[1] the former Librarian of Yale Law School and Deputy Director of the Orville H. Schell, Jr. Center for International Human Rights at Yale Law School. DIANA will promote the creation, organization, dissemination and preservation of primary and secondary electronic materials critical to human rights research.

A prototype of DIANA currently exists on the Internet on a World Wide Web server at the University of Cincinnati College of Law.[2] The prototype

1.   Diana Vincent-Daviss was the first woman to head the libraries of both the New York University School of Law and Yale Law School. She was especially known for her work in the areas of preservation of library materials and international human rights. Her numerous publications in those areas include a three-part research guide on human rights law published in the N.Y.U. Journal of International Law and Politics (15 N.Y.U. Journal of International Law and Politics, 212–87 (1982)).
2.   The Internet is a loose collection of thousands of computer networks available to millions of people around the world. It was born some twenty years ago as a US Department of

has been created by members of the DIANA consortium, most notably the University of Cincinnati College of Law Library's Center for Electronic Text in the Law, the Urban Morgan Institute for Human Rights, and the Schell Center for Human Rights. The prototype database contains a small sampling of some basic human rights documents from the United Nations, a few related US State Department Reports, cases from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and Diana Vincent-Daviss' bibliography on women's rights. DIANA will eventually include all major international human rights treaties; international, regional and national court decisions concerning human rights; a brief bank consisting of legal briefs from some of the most significant human rights cases; and important human rights treatises and journals. Most of these materials will be in full text. DIANA will also be integrated with and provide electronic access to other on-line services in human rights and related areas. While some of the material to be placed on DIANA is available at most university libraries in the United States, much of the material is not so readily available. DIANA will provide free access to all of these materials to anyone in the world with access to the Internet. Some of the primary material that will be made available through DIANA—e.g. major documents from the United Nations and the Organization of American States—although available in hard copy are more easily accessible through the Internet in electronic format. Many of the secondary materials, e.g. amicus briefs, and bibliographics, are not generally available anywhere.

Representatives from many of the world's major human rights collections are involved with the development of DIANA, and their collections will be added to the database as resources permit, creating a central electronic depository for human rights materials. For example, a significant portion of the collection that supports the work of the Urban Morgan Institute for Human Rights, located in the Law Library at the University of Cincinnati, will be placed on DIANA.[3] The collection, which was begun when the Institute was established in 1979, contains primarily English materials on the international protection of human rights as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments. It covers primarily the years following the establishment of the League of Nations in 1920 to the present day. The basic working tools of the collection are the bibliographies, guides, journals, yearbooks, treaties, and selected United Nations documents devoted to human rights research and advocacy.

Defense network and is currently in over forty countries. The World Wide Web is a system by which documents may be organized and made available on the Internet.

3.   Copyright permission will be sought for all publications not in the public domain. Portions of the collection may not be provided in full text because of applicable copyright restrictions.

Numerous current awareness publications and news services augment the more scholarly works. The greatest concentration of materials in the collection is legal in nature, but the scope transcends the boundaries of jurisprudence. Sources in history, anthropology, political science, sociology, and philosophy also enrich the collection.

Supplementing DIANA are a number of Internet-based initiatives providing information and discussion of current human rights issues and violations. Peacenet, Econet, and the Global Democracy Network are only three of a fast growing list of these resources. The staff of DIANA hopes to extract pertinent documents from these services and archive them into a full-text searchable form on DIANA.

Although the coverage of human rights literature within DIANA will be broad, materials identified for inclusion will be carefully selected for their significance to the field of human rights. The United Nations alone produces an avalanche of documentation that must be selected, scanned, and organized in a fashion that enhances its value for the researcher. Documents from the following organizations, including reports and decisions will be selected: the Council of Europe; the Organization of American States; the Organization of African Unity; the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; the United Nations Human Rights Committee; the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women; the Committee Against Torture; and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Relevant information from the following four United Nations agencies will also be included: the International Labor Organization, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agricultural Organization, and the Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

Documents on DIANA will be available in archival electronic text, HTML files, and optical images. The archival electronic text will be saved in a universally accepted format that will allow maximum future electronic use of the data in the files by human rights researchers and practitioners.

The optical images in the DIANA archives will allow the user to view the text of a particular document as it would appear on a printed page, and thus permit a user to cite a document available on DIANA with complete confidence in its accuracy. Optical images are digital photographs of authoritative sources that are now archived at the University of Cincinnati but will eventually be archived at numerous scanning sites around the world. The information placed in the DIANA database is being obtained from a variety of locations and from numerous formats, including hard copy, microform, and other electronic databases.

The word-searchable data files will allow the user to search all documents on DIANA, or all documents within a certain part of DIANA for a particular word or string of words. (This is similar to the format familiar to

subscribers of commercial databases like Lexis and Westlaw). The creators of DIANA are attempting to promote understanding of human rights literature through the architecture of the database. The electronic text will be distributed in a format that allows for maximum flexibility and user access. This format is known as HTML, HyperText Markup Language. Using HTML to input DIANA's documents will allow the user to access documents directly with a minimum of difficulty. Because the text will be available in HTML, a user of DIANA could find a particular treaty by looking at an alphabetical list of all treaties included in DIANA; or find out more information about human rights in a particular country by looking at a geographical breakdown of all documents on DIANA; or find out more about a particular human rights subject (such as genocide, torture, etc.) by looking at a subject matter division of all documents on DIANA. The organization of the database will change as new ways of presenting and organizing human rights information are developed.

Those who are interested in monitoring the development of DIANA may do so through Telnet: Taft.law.uc.edu, enter lynx at login; or, connecting via an Internet browser (Mosaic or Cello, for example) to the following Uniform Resource Locator (URL) on the Internet: http://www.law.uc.edu/ Diana. We welcome comments, suggestions, and collaborators on both the technical and substantive aspects of this ambitious endeavor. Comments on the content of the database should be directed to Taylor Fitchett: Phone (513) 556-0159, Internet taylor.fitchett@uc.edu or Ron Slye: (203) 432-1729, Internet slye@mail.law.yale.edu. It is critical that those with interests in the digital conversion of human rights literature collaborate widely in order to establish technological standards as well as to avoid duplication of efforts. Comments on the electronic-text or other technical aspects of DIANA should be directed to Nick Finke: Phone (513) 556-0103, Internet nick.finke@taft.law.uc.edu.