

GLIN Overview

The need for mutual electronic access to primary sources of the law of all nations has never been greater or more immediate. The Law Library of Congress and a group of similarly interested legislative information centers from around the world joined together to share their expertise to create the Global Legal Information Network, or GLIN. In existence from the early 1990s until 2012, GLIN was a cooperative, not-for-profit federation of government agencies or their designees that contributed legal information to the GLIN database that was available via Internet. The database contained statutes, regulations and related legal materials that originated from countries in the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia. While numerous national and regional legal databases have been developed by organizations other than GLIN, these databases serve primarily local uses, whereas GLIN was designed to enable international access and comparative legal research based on a common search system. To maximize access of citizens to their own laws and those of other nations, the system was searchable in 14 languages.

After training, national GLIN stations captured, processed, and transmitted legal information in electronic format to a centralized database. This information included statutes, constitutions and codes, regulations and selected ordinances, judicial decisions, legislative debates, and scholarly writings. Texts were taken from official original-source material to ensure authenticity and reliability. Consequently, these texts were available to users in their official language versions. Summaries for all legal resources were offered in English and in the vernacular of member nations for many items.

The standards for selecting the texts, analyzing them, producing summaries, assigning index terms, and the testing and selection of applicable hardware and software were initially developed as an international initiative and contribution of the Law Library of Congress.