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Welcome to the Ambassador

Stephen F. Reed*

From its founding in 1979, the Northwestern Journal of International Law and Business (JILB) has brought a particular perspective to the broad discipline known as “international law.” While other journals might address topics such as treaties, the international criminal court, and human rights through a variety of lenses and with varying amounts of theoretical discussion, JILB has sought to bring a focus to private international law. By exploring questions of how businesses are impacted by international law—and how international law is in turn impacted by business—JILB has illuminated practical issues confronted by multinational businesses. The real-world focus of the journal has by no means lessened its scholarly flavor or integrity; rather, JILB has given the academy a place to engage in scholarship that both acknowledges and studies the economic and business impact of its complex doctrinal area.

Although JILB has stayed the course of being relevant to practice while exploring issues in an in-depth and research-intensive manner, the world is markedly different than it was in 1979. In the late 1970s, Westlaw and Lexis were in their infancy, fax machines were rare, and personal computers were just beginning to enter homes. The world communicated primarily by telephone and paper correspondence, and JILB was distributed to subscribers solely by mail. JILB continues to be mailed to subscribers in 2011, but it is also available online, as is its archive. Practitioners and scholars now interact through blawgs and other online publications, which can vary in reliability, but share an immediacy that is difficult to achieve in a traditional print journal. Practitioners and their business clients alike have begun to demand fast and up-to-date information in a digestible format, particularly when they do not have the time to review large quantities of scholarship. The academy, meanwhile, has taken advantage of the ability to publish time-sensitive and often shorter pieces online, which can lead to immediate feedback and impact.

The Ambassador is launching into these exciting and fast-moving waters. It is the hope of JILB’s editors, including its new dedicated Ambassador Editor, that the Ambassador will be especially relevant to practitioners, and particularly of-the-moment. To that end, the Ambassador

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will consider pieces that are time-sensitive and shorter than JILB’s typical print articles, and will endeavor to bring an enhanced practical focus to all of its offerings. It will also, of course, adhere to the same high standards of selection and editorial quality as the print journal—it will just offer something different: more timely, more practical. As the new faculty advisor to JILB and a practitioner-academic myself, I believe there has been no more exciting moment in JILB’s history since its founding.

The first Ambassador offering, an article by James Larry exploring the potential fight between National Hockey League players and owners over participation in the 2014 Winter Olympics, is an excellent piece to launch the Ambassador. It is timely, since the battle between players and owners is already starting to brew; it is practical, since it talks about the real impact the issue will have on negotiations among players, owners and the NHL; and, perhaps most importantly, it is lively. In the following months, the Ambassador will share additional pieces of similar quality, all with an eye to sharing practical scholarship on the fast track. We hope you will join us on this new adventure.