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**MICHIGAN YEARBOOK OF  
INTERNATIONAL LEGAL STUDIES**

**VOLUME 5**

**1984**



# **Regulation of Transnational Communications**



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1984

Michigan Yearbook of  
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## Preface

The advent of two communications technologies in the nineteenth century, the telegraph and telephone, profoundly changed relations among states, by both providing for and necessitating increased transfer and receipt of information. The technological developments in computers and satellites that have occurred since World War II offer an equally great promise and challenge to international relations in the late twentieth century. Rapid computer transfer of information can stimulate economic growth and relay vital information to wherever it is needed; it can also spread information the individual would justifiably prefer left private. Direct broadcast satellites facilitate global exchange of television programming, but if this process is culturally one-sided, such programming could lead to massive social disruption. Clearly international legal efforts at the regulation of communications must consider all sides of issues with very complex social, political and economic implications.

It was with the hope of contributing usefully to the extensive debate surrounding the regulation of the new communications technologies that the editors of the *1984 Michigan Yearbook of International Legal Studies* chose this topic. Once selected, it has provided our contributors and student authors with a variety of issues in public and private international law. The volume begins with the theoretically interesting and practically important question of how to allocate justly what is becoming a limited resource: orbital slots for communications satellites in the geostationary orbit. It next considers European efforts to exploit the new communications satellites on a regional scale. This discussion is followed by a group of articles exploring the possibly deleterious effects on both international trade and communications of national attempts to regulate the international transfer of information. After a consideration of certain legal issues raised by new developments in specific technologies, the volume concludes with a group of articles discussing past and present efforts of the member states of international organizations to effect an international regulatory scheme that will succeed in balancing widely differing national communications needs. Although somewhat disparate, the articles are knit together by recurring themes of human and national rights and, most fundamentally, by their writers' shared recognition of the need to regulate communications in a manner that narrows rather than enlarges the gap between those

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countries with well developed communications industries and those without.

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