

It can be difficult to identify patterns in legal scholarship. One way of doing that is to check on the frequency of key words, using Westlaw or Lexis-Nexis to track the numbers. There are some interesting patterns in scholarship on international environmental law:

1. The field came into its own in the decade from 1987 and 1997. Indeed, the phrase “international environmental law” was barely used at the beginning of that decade but commonplace by the end.
2. Key ideas from international environmental law such as sustainable development and the precautionary principle have found footholds in U.S. scholarship. Attention to these concepts grew continuously from 1987 to 2007 but may have stabilized since then.
3. There has been steadily growing attention over the past 15 years to international agreements dealing with climate change and oceans.

These tables provide the numbers:

Table 1

Year	UNFCCC*	UNCLOS**	“International Environmental Law”	“Trans-boundary Pollution”	Montreal Conv.***
2012	132	305	273	30	58
2007	82	286	333	52	79
2002	28	248	280	40	63
1997	7	235	298	41	83
1992	0	119	91	31	79
1987	0	92	7	5	0

*The UNFCCC climate change agreement was adopted in 1992. The search was for “UNFCCC”. All searches were in the Westlaw JLR database.

**UNCLOS – the Law of the Sea Convention — was adopted in 1982. The search was for “Law of the Sea.”

***The Montreal Ozone Convention was adopted in 1987. The search was for “Montreal /s Ozone.”

Table 2

Year	“precautionary principle”	“polluter pays”	“sustainable development”
2012	257	95	661
2007	233	80	753
2002	151	55	455
1997	75	84	365
1992	17	45	92
1987	0	0	2