

ARTICLES

FOREIGN DISSERTATIONS ON DIGITAL LAW: STATISTICAL AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Maxim I. Inozemtsev, Artyom V. Nektov*

Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO-University)
76, ave. Vernadsky, Moscow, Russia, 119454

Abstract

Modern domestic dissertations in law are often criticized for insufficient reliance on previous research. Society's demand for the study of digital aspects of law, the frequent use of the comparative legal method, and, to a certain extent, the current limited access to foreign sources, necessitate a review of foreign dissertations on digital law. We chose to use qualitative and quantitative methods to select the dissertations examined in this study. Firstly, we selected dissertations defended at universities from the QS World University Ranking. Then, we refined our search by using accessible national and university research repositories. Based on comparative legal and statistical methods, we consolidated the dissertations into a single list and divided them according to different criteria. While doing this, we also defined the main trends in preparing Ph.D. dissertations on digital law. The main results of our study include a subject-thematic index of Ph.D. dissertations in the field of digital law, which is designed to facilitate searches for relevant sources, help researchers determine topics for study, and outline the main aspects of the study of digital issues from the standpoint of various branches of law.

Keywords

digital law, digital technologies, Internet, dissertation, thesis, public law, private law

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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* Corresponding author

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СТАТЬИ

ЗАРУБЕЖНЫЕ ДИССЕРТАЦИИ ПО ЦИФРОВОМУ ПРАВУ: СТАТИСТИЧЕСКИЙ И БИБЛИОГРАФИЧЕСКИЙ ОБЗОР

М.И. Иноземцев, А.В. Нектов*

Московский государственный институт международных отношений
(университет) МИД России
119454, Россия, Москва, пр. Вернадского, 76

Аннотация

Современные отечественные диссертации по праву нередко критикуются в связи с недостаточной опорой на предшествующие исследования. Существующий запрос общества в изучении цифровых аспектов права, нередкое стремление соискателей в применении компаративистского метода исследования, а также в известной мере ограниченность доступа к зарубежным источникам обуславливают необходимость проведения обзорного исследования зарубежных диссертаций по цифровому праву. Для проведения исследования были избраны качественный и количественный методы отбора диссертаций. Первый выразился в отборе диссертаций, защищенных в университетах, входящих в рейтинг Университетов мира QS, а второй — в поиске по доступным и известным нам национальным и университетским репозиториям диссертационных исследований. На основе сравнительно-правового и статистического метода диссертации были сведены в единый перечень и выявлены основные тенденции подготовки диссертаций по вопросам цифрового права. Результатом проведенного исследования стал предметно-тематический указатель диссертационных исследований в области цифрового права, который призван облегчить возможность поиска соответствующих источников, позволить определиться с темой собственного исследования и наметить основные аспекты изучения общественных отношений в связи с применением новых технологий с позиций различных отраслей права.

Ключевые слова

цифровое право, цифровые технологии, Интернет, диссертация, публичное право, частное право

Конфликт интересов

Авторы сообщают об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

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Introduction

The concepts of ‘digital law’, ‘Internet law’, and ‘law related to new technologies’ are still highly vague and amorphous. Sometimes this provokes rather harsh statements from domestic researchers who are accustomed to seeing a claim behind the sacred combination of the ‘n-th predicate’ and the noun ‘law’ to the establishment of an independent branch of law, a branch of science, a branch of legislation, or at least an independent academic discipline²⁰.

Leaving this largely scholastic discussion outside the scope of the topic we are addressing in this work, we would like to quote a well-known line from the tragedy of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Faust*: “Grau, teurer Freund, ist alle Theorie / Unci gain des Lebens goldner Baum”.²¹ Since 2022, academic specialties in the legal regulation of new technology use have been included in the list of degrees for which PhDs can be awarded,²² which indicates that there is a demand from society to study the impact of digital technologies on law. Thus, hereinafter, we will use the flexible, and to some extent, conditional term ‘digital law’, solely for the sake of brevity and conciseness.

Despite the existing prerequisites for studying the ‘digital’ aspects of each branch of law, many researchers are still skeptical about the development of relevant problems at the level of dissertation research: “Why should we bother with problems related to digital law if there are still a lot of unresolved questions in traditional branches of law?” Nevertheless, the interest of scholars in issues concerning Legal Tech is growing, perhaps due to the recognition that many of the classic issues regarding traditional law appear new in light of the development of new technologies.²³ At the same time, due to extremely the unstable and rapidly changing sphere of digital innovation, the fundamental nature of one or another seemingly fleeting problem often escapes researchers, which makes

²⁰ See more about this in the article of one of the authors of this work: Inozemtsev (2021).

²¹ This line belongs to one of the main characters in the tragedy. In English it sounds as “All theory, dear friend, is grey, but the golden tree of actual life springs ever green”.

²² See the description of the academic specialty **5.1.1. Theoretical and historical legal sciences**: s. 33. State, law and scientific and technological progress; see the passport of the scientific specialty **5.1.2. Public law (state law) sciences**: s. 25 Public law regulation in the field of information and information (digital) technologies, archiving and information protection, s. 26 Legal regulation of the use of information (digital) technologies in the exercise of public power and in public administration; see the passport of the scientific specialty **5.1.3. Private law (civil law) sciences**: s. 30 Private legal aspects of the application of biotechnologies, information (digital) technologies, including artificial intelligence; see passport of the scientific specialty **5.1.5. International legal sciences**: s. 29 International legal cooperation in the scientific and technical sphere. International law and new technologies (digital economy, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, etc.). International information law. Although the description of the scientific specialty **5.1.4. Criminal legal sciences** does not contain a special section on the digital aspects of these sciences, research in the field of criminal law, criminal procedure, and forensic science invariably raises issues of applying new technologies. See Order No. 445 of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation dated May 11, 2022 “On Amendments to the Nomenclature of Scientific Specialties for which Academic Degrees are Awarded, approved by Order No. 118 of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation dated February 24, 2021, and in accordance with the areas of scientific-teaching staff in graduate school (adjuncture) in academic specialties provided for by the nomenclature of scientific specialties for which academic degrees are awarded, approved by order of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation dated February 24, 2021 No. 118, established by order of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation dated August 24, 2021 No. 786”

²³ For example, dissertation research by A.Yu. Marchenko (Marchenko, 2022), I.S. Mochalkina (Mochalkina, 2022), E.E. Kirsanova (Kirsanova, 2021), A.A. Kartskhia (Kartskhia, 2019), A.V. Khrustaleva (Khrustalyova, 2019) etc.

it more difficult to formulate the main issue in dissertation research and conduct a deep, rather than superficial, analysis of the subject of research.

This is directly related to the fact that people writing dissertations do not always adequately rely on the results of the work of their predecessors: often, one of the shortcomings of Ph.D. dissertations is a lack of use of relevant sources and the absence of references to them in the introductory section devoted to a review of literature relevant to the topic, as well as in the footnotes and bibliography.²⁴

It is currently considered good practice to conduct dissertation research using the comparative legal method (of course, in cases where it is appropriate and relevant for the systematic examination of the problem under study) (Michaels, 2012; Legrand & Munday, 2003). Therefore, candidates who use the comparative research method as the basis of their dissertation methodology are obliged to take into account, to the fullest extent, the achievements of not only domestic, but also foreign legal science.

According to some academics and sociologists, academic discourse develops primarily in the pages of academic periodicals (in other words, via articles in academic journals), while dissertations place a certain 'full stop' or, perhaps, a 'comma' in academic research within a certain subject area. Given this, it is all the more important to take into account not only publications from periodicals, but also full-fledged, systematic, completed dissertation research, as well as sources that are referenced in the dissertation research to be studied.

Based on this, we have defined tasks that are much more modest and practical, namely:

- 1) to analyze foreign dissertations that explore issues concerning the legal regulation of technology use and, by doing this, to reduce the distance between domestic and foreign legal disciplines;
- 2) to determine what questions within the framework of the classical branches of law are raised in foreign dissertation research related to issues concerning digitalization — in other words, to outline the palette of issues concerning digital law based on foreign research;
- 3) based on this, to create a subject-thematic index of dissertations on digital law that can be used when writing independent dissertations, academic articles, monographs, and textbooks;
- 4) to present a number of observations on statistical and development trends in studying issues regarding the legal regulation of high technology in foreign countries.

We assume that our work will be especially useful for Russian researchers, since the main international database containing dissertation research, Proquest, is not available to domestic researchers at present. Nevertheless, we are convinced that our study will also be useful to foreign readers, since a review of dissertations on digital law of this magnitude has never been carried out before, at least that we are aware of.²⁵

Our article consists of an introduction, a description of the methodology used in the undertaken research, a discussion providing a statistical analysis of Ph.D. candidates' interest in issues related to digital law, our findings, where subject-thematic names of areas of study pertaining to digital law

²⁴ See critical articles by E.A. Sukhanov (Sukhanov, 2006); V.A. Belov (Belov, 2006; Belov, 2007a; Belov, 2007b); S.V. Tretyakov (Tretyakov, 2008); A.V. Kashanin (Kashanin, 2008); A.I. Muranov (Muranov, 2019a; Muranov, 2019b).

²⁵ In our work, we relied on previously prepared studies and were inspired by the established domestic tradition of preparing bibliographic reference books for dissertations: in particular, reference books by A.V. Myskin (Myskin, 2006); V.A. Belov (Belov, 2005), a review of his handbook prepared by O.Yu. Shilokhvost (Shilokhvost, 2007); index of Russian literature on civil law A.F. Povorinsky, among which are master's and doctoral dissertations (Povorinsky, 2001), works by T.M. Shamba (Shamba T.M., 2000), G.G. Krichevsky (Krichevsky, 1998), V.A. Rakhlevsky (Rakhlevsky, 1965), a bibliographic collection of literature on civil and family law, edited by I.V. Pavlov and G.M. Sverdlov (Dragomiretskaya et al., 1962).

are formed, and a conclusion. An integral part of the article is a database containing the analyzed dissertations, which is available on the Mendeley platform (Inozemtsev & Nektov, 2023).

Methodology

This study was primarily conducted based on general scientific methods: general logical analysis, synthesis, deduction, and induction, as well as systemic and functional methods. In order to apply these, information on the relevant dissertations in various international databases, as well as national and university repositories, was painstakingly collected and brought into a system, where the final set of data was divided into categories for comparison.

Despite the bibliographic specifics of our study, we used the comparative legal method, which manifested itself in the analysis of the functional purpose of foreign heterogeneous legal institutions, whose use was required in order to identify subject areas of research in the field of digital law.

The statistical research method has become an important element in historical methodology, as can be seen in the infographics depicting the main trends for Ph.D. candidates' interest in issues pertaining to digital law.

One of the study's main methodological tasks was to determine the scope of sources in view of the overwhelming task of tracking *all* dissertation research directly or indirectly related to digital legal topics.

To do this, we first carried out a qualitative selection of sources. We limited our research to dissertations that were prepared and defended at Top 50 universities in the QS World University Rankings' Law cluster. At the same time, we limited our study to dissertations from universities in Europe, North America, and Australia, while excluding dissertations defended at universities in Asia, Africa, and South America (an exception being the University of Hong Kong, which, due to its history, has roots in English common law and, no less importantly, dissertations at this university are defended at English). We also investigated the websites of university repositories and libraries.

We are aware that the criterion that we've chosen for 'quality' — being in the QS World University Rankings — is rather contingent. By choosing it, we *de facto* cut out a large number of dissertations that have been defended at universities that do not meet the criteria for inclusion in the ranking, or do not occupy very high positions in it. At the same time, many of these universities have a long tradition of training scholars and preparing high-quality dissertation research in their own countries, and are well known abroad as well. Therefore, in the second place, we applied a quantitative selection criterion. We used the international and national databases containing dissertation research that are available and known to us, such as Dart Europe (<https://www.dart-europe.org/basic-search.php>) and Ethos (<https://ethos.bl.uk/Home.do?sessionId=F86060B657CE67B26690703303F4074B>), as well as the electronic archives of the Deutsche National Bibliothek (https://www.dnb.de/DE/Home/home_node.html) and the Swiss National Library (<https://www.nb.admin.ch/snl/en/home.html>), Theses.fr (<https://www.theses.fr>) etc.

Qualitative and quantitative selection of dissertations was carried out by searching the relevant databases and libraries according to the search criterion: 'law' (*recht*, *droit* and based on other language equivalents). The chronological period selected was from 2015 to 2023. Through an analysis of titles, abstracts, and, where possible, the text of the works, all dissertations were classified according to criteria that we will discuss in detail in the next section of this article.

The lack of access to the world's largest repository of dissertations — ProQuest Dissertations (<https://about.proquest.com/en/dissertations/>)²⁶ — significantly limited our work. Of course, in view of this, our search cannot claim to be complete and systematic. At the same time, as we have already mentioned above, it is not possible to access the Proquest Dissertations service in the Russian Federation, which, in a sense, makes our study a unique source of information on new discoveries in foreign legal science for the Russian readership. We hope that our data set will also be useful to foreign readers, since it will ease the burden of finding relevant academic papers, although to a lesser extent.

Significantly, we have excluded foreign bachelor's and master's theses from the spectrum of our attention, confining ourselves to successfully defended dissertations that could lead to the award of academic degrees similar to Russia's Candidate and Doctor of Law.²⁷ Although, for example, especially distinguished bachelor's theses and all master's theses in Germany and France are transferred to libraries and available for online review in electronic form. These can also be useful in the process of research, but we will limit ourselves here to mentioning such a possibility and indicating some relevant links.²⁸

In addition, based on the sample obtained, we tried to make a number of statistical and methodological observations, which are presented in the form of infographics with accompanying descriptions in the next section of this article.

Discussion

Geography of Research on Digital Law

As a result of the study, we can establish the following country statistics. Among the 263 dissertations found, the leaders are the following countries: 1) France, with 71 dissertations, took first place in our ranking, 2) the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Italy shared second place with 34 dissertations each, and 3) the United States of America came third with 23 theses. These five countries occupy the honorary pedestal for the winning jurisdictions in preparing dissertation research on digital law.

We invite the reader to familiarize themselves with the map of dissertations on digital law in Europe (Fig. 1), which presents the results, as well as the world map of dissertations on digital law (Fig. 2) and the accompanying legend table (Table 1).

²⁶ The lack of access to this resource has particularly affected the search for dissertations carried out at universities in the United States of America, since the functions of the central repository at the federal level are performed by the Library of Congress, which has for some time reduced open electronic archiving to the publication of information in Proquest Dissertations.

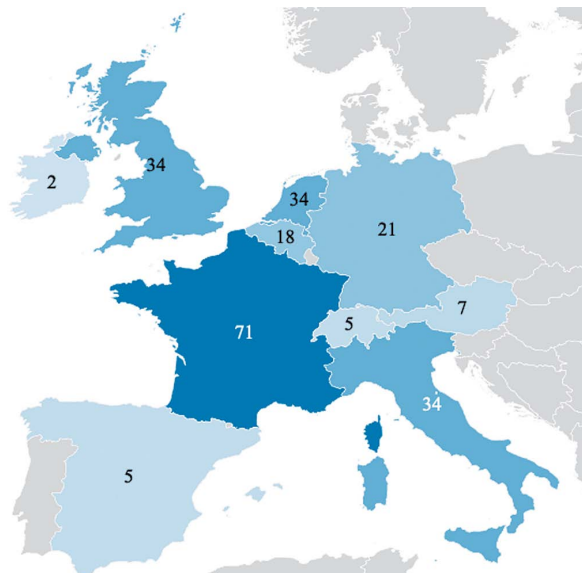
²⁷ Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation "List of foreign educational and scientific organizations, received education and (or) qualifications, academic degrees and academic titles which are recognized in the Russian Federation", approved on January 30, 2023, No. 186-p.

²⁸ See, for example, dissertations at the following links: **Theoretical legal research on the problems of blockchain Application in public administration** (Vienna University of Applied Sciences) (<https://permalink.obvsg.at/AC15559183>); **Civil law aspects of tokenization** (University of Innsbruck) (<https://permalink.obvsg.at/AC16084573>).

See also some master's dissertations: **On the problems of digital assets** (<https://d-nb.info/1257080539>), **the legal regime of objects in computer agmes** (Harvard) (<https://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99156395579603941/catalog>), **digital currency in the EU** (Harvard) (<https://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99155188203003941/catalog>), **digital assets** (Harvard) (<https://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/99156533082503941/catalog>); **cryptoassets** (Melbourne) (<http://hdl.handle.net/11343/274809>).

Figure 1

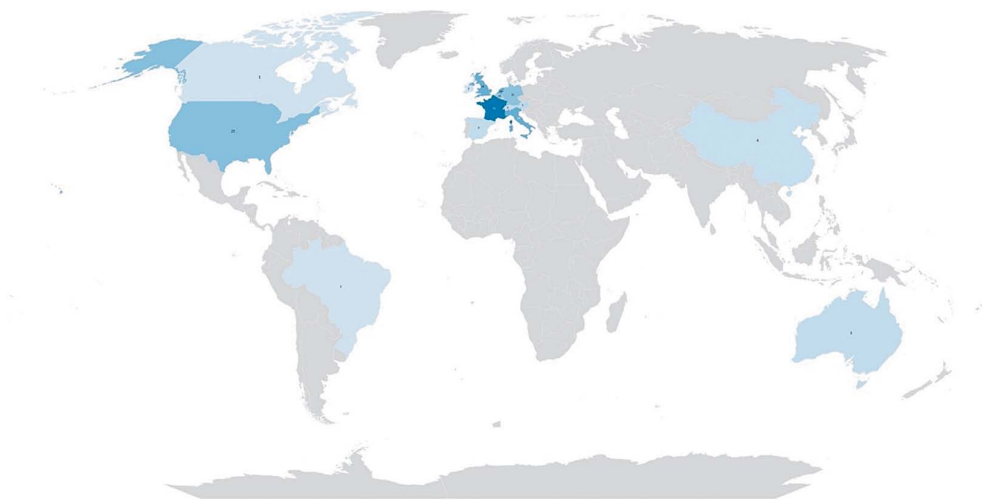
Map of Dissertations on Digital Law in Europe



Note. Prepared by the authors.

Figure 2

World Map of Dissertations on Digital Law



Note. Prepared by the authors.

Table 1

Number of Dissertations by Country

Country	Number of dissertations
France	71
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	34
Netherlands	34
Italy	34
United States of America	23
Germany	21
Belgium	18
Austria	7
Spain	5
Switzerland	5
Australia	5
China	4
Ireland	2
Canada	1

Note. Prepared by the authors.

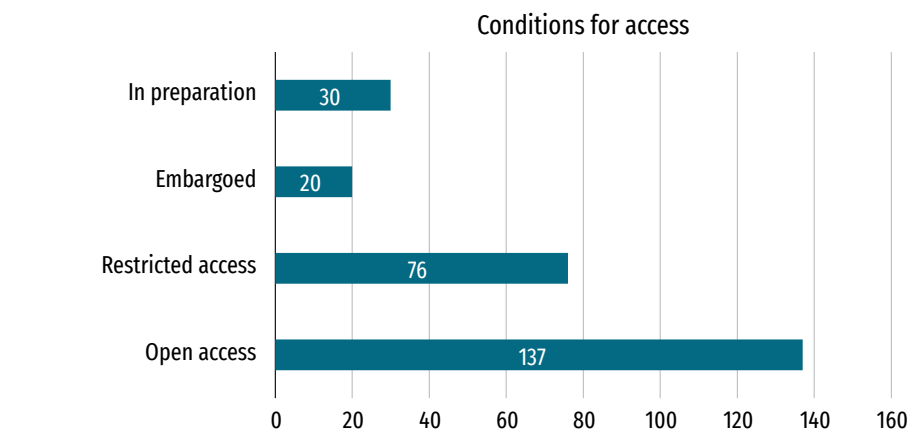
Curiously, one of the dissertations found in the French database was defended at the University of Paris 1 under the joint supervision of the University of Brazil and Sorbonne University (da Silva Campos, 2021). On the other hand, China is represented exclusively by the University of Hong Kong School of Law, since the text of dissertations and their descriptions are given in English, and the Hong Kong legal system has close ties to the common law system.

Conditions for Access to Dissertations

For a more accurate understanding of the above figures, it should be taken into account that a number of dissertations (30) were in the process of preparation and had not been defended at the time this article was published. In France, information about upcoming dissertations is published in a single French repository. It is curious that the information in this register seems to be progressive — information about research is supplemented in the process of its preparation. Some pages

Figure 3

Restrictions on Access to Dissertations



Note. Prepared by the authors.

of the registry contain only information about title of the work, the place of its preparation, and the author. Due to the uncertainty that the work will be completed, we did not take such information into account.

At the same time, we came across information on dissertations containing key words, detailed annotations, and starting dates: as a rule, a rather long period of 1 to 2 years had passed since preparation began.²⁹ Such works were included in the list of dissertations.

A significant number of dissertations are available under open license (137), which means anyone can directly download and familiarize themselves with the research.³⁰

A number of dissertations were temporarily unavailable for reading ('embargoed'). The mode of access to such dissertations is designated by the term 'embargo'. In most cases, the repositories indicate a certain date after which it will be possible to familiarize yourself with the dissertation. However, in exceptional cases, access to the research will still be limited after the expiration date.

The restricted access mode assumes that it is possible to get acquainted with the dissertation: a) either exclusively offline by visiting the university library or the national library (in rare cases, the dissertation will be freely available in open bookcases. Otherwise, the study will have to be ordered from the library) or b) online, by a special request that can be sent to the repository by e-mail.

²⁹ The typical path of a PhD student at the University of Science Po in Paris lasts three years. The first year – the preparation of the dissertation plan is carried out and close work is carried out with the supervisor. The second year is devoted to the mandatory foreign internship of a postgraduate student at the universities of Italy, England, the USA, Germany, and some other countries (optional). The third year marks the preparation of the text of the work, taking into account the previously developed drafts and the experience gained for conducting a comparative analysis. <https://www.sciencespo.fr/ecole-doctorale/en/content/doctorate-law.html>

³⁰ It is possible that, in order to access some dissertations hosted under an open license, residents of a number of countries will need to use various additional means to connect to the network, for example, VPN services. We found special research on the issue – dissertation on the legality of using VPNs, proxy servers and the Tor browser and how to regulate them. See dissertation by Eggersdorfer (2020).

The latter option provides readers with more opportunities to get acquainted with the study given proper justification of their request.

Dissertation language

The dissertations included in the set were mostly written in English: 126 dissertations. French came in second with 72 dissertations, Italian took third with 30 dissertations, and German was fourth with 27 dissertations.

Importantly, some manuscripts prepared in English were defended in the Netherlands (33 dissertations), Belgium (15 dissertations), Italy (4 dissertations), China (4 dissertations), Austria (2 dissertations), Switzerland (2 dissertations), and Germany (1 dissertation). This greatly facilitates the task of researchers who speak exclusively English (as is known, most scholars are fluent in English) in familiarizing themselves with how foreign legal systems approach digital law.

Dissertation Preparation Period

A chronological analysis of dissertations prepared from 2015 to 2023 demonstrates a growing interest in the study of digital law and the problem that enforcing it presents for society. Stable interest is especially visible in the period from 2018 to 2022, when 30 to 40 dissertations per year were defended on topics that can be attributed to issues involving digital law.

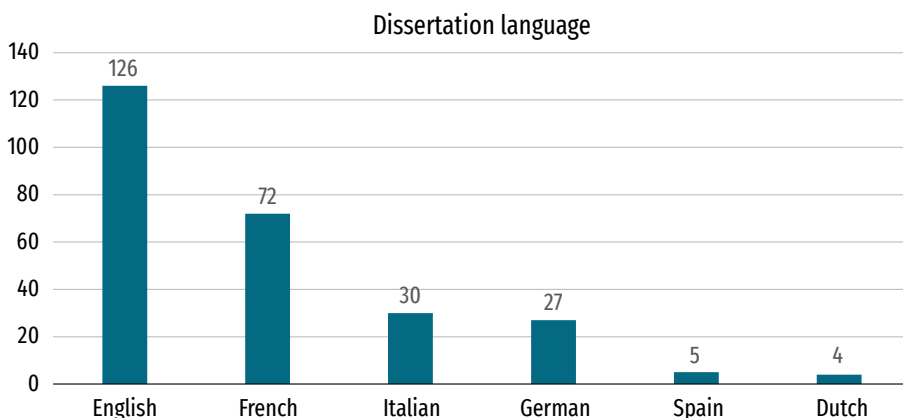
Over just several months in 2023, 13 scholars defended research on digital law and received academic degrees.

Dissertations in Private and Public Law

To classify dissertations and create a complete subject-thematic index, we have relied on the well-known convention of dividing law into private and public branches, which is widespread and shared by European legal systems and generally familiar to researchers in the Anglo-Saxon legal family. We defined 130 dissertations as private law studies and 98 dissertations as public law studies.

Figure 4

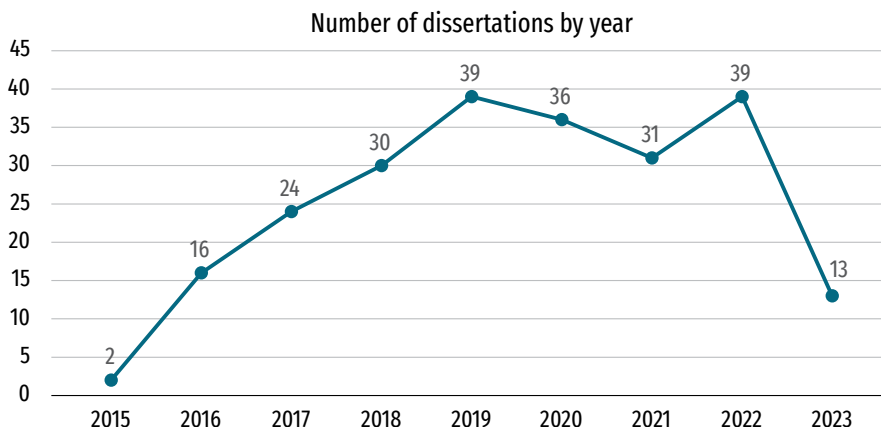
Dissertation Language



Note. Prepared by the authors.

Figure 5

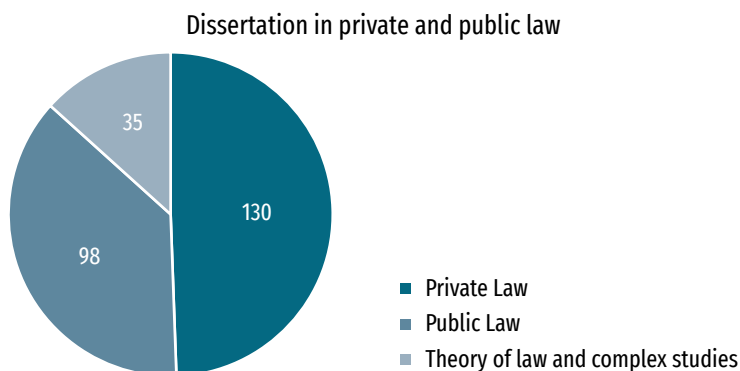
Graph of Dissertations by Year



Note. Prepared by the authors.

Figure 6

Dissertations on Private and Public Law



Note. Prepared by the authors.

Particularly noteworthy are the 35 works prepared on the theory of law, whose results can be confidently classified as useful for developing both the private and public branches of law. This number also includes dissertations with mixed (complex) subjects of study and those in which the author took into account aspects of both private law and public law.³¹

³¹ As Ernest Weinrib emphasizes in his work, any legal classification implies some degree of flexibility: “An adequate legal classification must articulate the conceptual interrelation between, for example, property and obligation, rather than assiduously assign each legal issue to one concept alone” (Weinrib, (1988)).

Dissertations Classified in Accordance with the List of Academic Specialties and Degrees Established by the Higher Attestation Commission

This classification of research is well known to the Russian reader, since researchers who wish to defend a dissertation and obtain a Candidate or Doctor of Sciences degree in law must act within the framework of academic specialties approved by the Higher Attestation Commission under the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation.

We took the classification proposed by the Higher Attestation Commission as a basis because of the following considerations: first, it seems logically correct to move from the general to the particular — from the division of law into private and public branches to narrower subdivisions. Secondly, distributing the entire array of dissertations based on criterion reflecting their relevance to academic specialties is quite utilitarian: this will allow Ph.D. candidates in a particular specialty to select relevant dissertations. Thirdly, the division proposed by the Higher Attestation Commission takes into account a dissertation's interdisciplinary nature, which, as we have shown, is quite common in dissertations on digital law.

In addition, this classification has some objective weight since, if we rely on the division of law faculties into departments, for example, we could hardly come to a common denominator. The establishment of certain departments as independent units within law faculties frequently either reflects the pure ambitions of a certain group of scholars, or (mainly at regional Russian universities) is often a combination of a number of heterogeneous disciplines taught by one team of professors (you can find examples when civil law, land law, and administrative law are taught within the same department). Thus, this division is random, to a certain extent, and selecting it for our classification would not be entirely appropriate.

The division of academic disciplines into branches is also not always fully justified. Establishing branches according to functional (economic) criterion makes it possible to create an industry that makes it convenient for individual researchers to address the challenges of the day (collective farm (kolkhoz) law, business law, commercial law, digital law, etc.) (Sukhanov, 2015).

Table 2

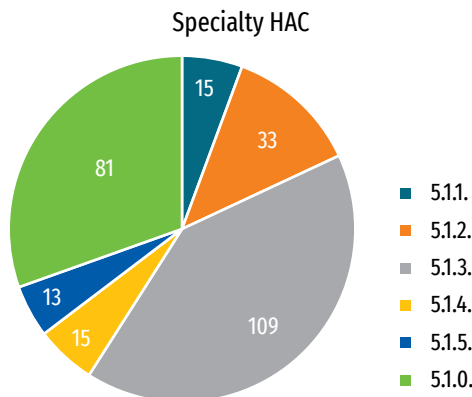
List of Academic Specialties Established by the Higher Attestation Commission

Code	Name
5.1.1.	Theoretical and historical legal sciences
5.1.2.	Public law (state law) sciences
5.1.3.	Private law (civil law) sciences
5.1.4.	Criminal legal sciences
5.1.5.	International legal sciences

Note. Prepared by the authors.

Figure 7

Diagram of Dissertations According to Specialties Established by the Higher Attestation Committee



Note. Prepared by the authors.

The vast majority of research (109 dissertations)³² is devoted to issues pertaining to private law, while 33 dissertations are devoted to public law (state law), which include the study of tax and financial law,³³ constitutional law,³⁴ and administrative law.³⁵ The third largest blocks of dissertations belong to the fields of theoretical and historical legal sciences³⁶ and criminal legal sciences,³⁷ with 15 dissertations each, while international legal sciences³⁸ comes in fourth.

Some dissertations are devoted to issues that intersect several academic specialties. In the list, such works are assigned to several relevant academic specialties and designated under the code 5.1.0. There is a total of 81 of these.

Results

As a result of reviewing and classifying 263 dissertations, as well as analyzing their titles, annotations, and text (if available), it was possible to identify a number of the most popular topics on which research is being conducted on digital law, namely:

1. Artificial Intelligence;
2. Algorithms & Blockchain
3. Digital Platforms
4. Digital Markets & Antitrust
5. Digital Currency & Fintech
6. Digital IP

³² E.g., Herbosch's dissertation (Herbosch (2023)).

³³ E.g., Core's dissertation (Core (2020)).

³⁴ E.g., Haward's dissertation (Haward (2018)).

³⁵ E.g., Cerys' dissertation (Cerys (2019)).

³⁶ E.g., Diver's dissertation (Diver (2019)).

³⁷ E.g., Ulbrich's dissertation (Ulbrich (2021)).

³⁸ E.g., Bosch's dissertation (Bosch (2019)).

7. Big Data & Personal Data
8. Digital Proceedings
9. Digital Corporate Law
10. Digital Health Law
11. Digital Public Administration and Law Enforcement
12. Human Rights in The Digital Age
13. Cybercrime & Cybersecurity
14. Internet Governance
15. Media & Social Networks
16. E-Commerce
17. Digitalization & Tax Law

Thus, it can be argued that it is these largely heterogeneous thematic areas that currently form the '*corpus of digital law*' or, more precisely, the scope of the study of what is usually called digital law in Russia and abroad. At the same time, we emphasize that such a systematization has the primary purpose to deliver thematic bibliographic data about dissertations on digital law. Therefore, this systematization is to a certain extent conventional. We do not intend to establish, update, or revise the taxonomy of digital legal material from the standpoint of proclaiming digital law as an independent branch of law.

The resulting subject-thematic index is designed to help researchers in completing purely utilitarian tasks: to navigate a prepared list of dissertations on digital law and then easily update the register. In the future, further development of the list will make it possible to explicitly identify new previously unrecognized issues related to digital law, if it is found that it is logically impossible to place them in one of the 17 categories.

Ultimately, all dissertations were compiled in a single database (Inozemtsev & Nektov, 2023) in which it is possible to analyze and select studies through the use of filters based on the criteria for comparing dissertations that have been presented in this article.

Conclusion

Thus, by selecting and systematizing 263 dissertations on issues concerning digital law, we have structurally identified and formulated a list of 17 subjects on which foreign dissertation research related to digital law is carried out. A unified database of dissertation research on digital law has been created, which is available to the reader.

We hope that our research will not only become a useful tool for lawyers studying topical issues concerning the theory and practice of digital law, but will also serve as a springboard for developing and systematizing this database in individual countries, universities, and scientific schools. We are convinced that the information contained in this study will provide an opportunity for scholars to deepen their own research through the use of the resources that were used in the preparation of this article.

The present study was limited to an analysis of foreign dissertations. In the future, we plan to carry out similar analytical work in relation to Russian research on the subject-thematic headings identified in this work. In this regard, we will be grateful for feedback and suggestions on improvements that can be made to the methodology and research tools for conducting similar studies in the future.

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Information about the authors:

Maxim I. Inozemtsev — Ph.D. in Law, Associate Professor, Department of Private International and Civil Law, MGIMO-University, Editor-in-Chief, Digital Law Journal, Moscow, Russia.

inozemtsev@inno.mgimo.ru

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1845-1363>

Artyom V. Nektov* — Ph.D. student, Department of Private International and Civil Law, MGIMO-University, Publishing Editor of Digital Law Journal, Moscow, Russia.

artem_nektov@outlook.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1518-6501>

Сведения об авторах:

Иноземцев М.И. — кандидат юридических наук, доцент, доцент кафедры международного частного и гражданского права им. С.Н. Лебедева, МГИМО МИД России, главный редактор журнала «Цифровое право» (Digital Law Journal), Москва, Россия.

inozemtsev@inno.mgimo.ru

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1845-1363>

Нектов А.В.* — аспирант кафедры международного частного и гражданского права им. С.Н. Лебедева, МГИМО МИД России, выпускающий редактор журнала «Цифровое право» (Digital Law Journal), Москва, Россия.

artem_nektov@outlook.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1518-6501>