# Understanding Sales, Leases, and Licenses in a Global Perspective

# Understanding Sales, Leases, and Licenses in a Global Perspective

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> CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS Durham, North Carolina

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Rustad, Michael.

Understanding sales, leases, and licenses in a global perspective / By Michael L. Rustad.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 13: 978-1-59460-097-5 ISBN 10: 1-59460-097-X (alk. paper)

1. Export sales contracts. 2. Sales. 3. Leases. 4. Licenses. 5. Export sales contracts--United States. 6. Sales--United States. 7. Leases--United States. 8. Licenses--United States. I. Title.

K1031.R87 2007 346.07'2--dc22

2007023454

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS 700 Kent Street Durham, North Carolina 27701 Telephone (919) 489-7486 Fax (919) 493-5668 www.cap-press.com

Printed in the United States of America

## **Table of Contents**

| Table of Cases                                              | xxi            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Preface                                                     | XXV<br>·       |
| Acknowledgments<br>About the Author                         | xxxi<br>xxxiii |
| About the Author                                            | XXXIII         |
| Part One                                                    |                |
| Domestic vs. International Sales of Goods                   |                |
| Chapter 1 Introduction to Sales Law: UCC Article 2 vs. CISG | 3              |
| Part I: Overview of UCC Article 2                           | 5              |
| Sec. A: Sources of U.S. Contract Law                        | 5              |
| A.1: Federal Statutory Sources of Contract Law              | 6              |
| A.2: Structure of UCC Article 2                             | 7              |
| Sec. B: UCC Article 2's Legal Realism                       | 9              |
| Sec. C: The Comprehensiveness of the UCC                    | 11             |
| Sec. D: Supplemental Gap Fillers                            | 13             |
| Sec. E: Parties' Choice of Law Clauses                      | 16             |
| Sec. F: Preemptive Federal & State Law                      | 17             |
| Sec. G: Definitions & Preliminary Concepts                  | 18             |
| Sec. H: Sales Masquerading in the Clothing of Leases        | 19             |
| H.1: Leases vs. Disguised Sales                             | 19             |
| H.2: Tests for Security Interests Governed by UCC Article 9 | 20             |
| Sec. I: Introduction to Secured Transactions                | 20             |
| I.1: Scope of UCC Article 9                                 | 20             |
| I.2: UCC Article 9 Attachment                               | 21             |
| I.3: UCC Article 9's Concept of Perfection                  | 22             |
| I.4: UCC Article 9 Priority Rules                           | 25             |
| I.5: UCC Article 9 Remedies                                 | 25             |
| Sec. J: Liberal Sales Contract Rules                        | 31             |
| Sec. K: The Implied Obligation of Good Faith                | 32             |
| Part II. Overview of the CISG                               | 33             |
| Sec. A: Harmonizing Diverse Legal Systems                   | 33             |
| Sec. B: CISG Jurisdiction                                   | 34             |
| Sec. C: International Norms                                 | 35             |
| Sec. D: CISG & Lex Mercatoria                               | 35             |
| Sec. E: Map of CISG                                         | 36             |
| Sec. F: CISG Gap Fillers                                    | 37             |
| Sec. G: The Concept of Reasonableness                       | 39             |
| Sec. H: CISG's Jurisprudence Based on Internationality      | 41             |
| Sec. I: The Methodology of Standards                        | 44             |

| Problem Set: Chapter One                                                           | 45       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1.1: Choice of Law                                                                 | 45       |
| 1.2: CISG Article 4                                                                | 45       |
| 1.3: What Law Applies When Only One Country Is a Signatory?                        | 46       |
| 1.4: CISG Article 6 Opt Out                                                        | 46       |
| 1.5: Sphere of Application of CISG                                                 | 46       |
| 1.6: CISG as Default International Sales Law                                       | 46       |
| Summary                                                                            | 47       |
| Chapter 2 The Sphere of Application: UCC Article 2 vs. CISG                        | 51       |
| Sec. A: What's In & What's Out                                                     | 51       |
| A.1: Transactions in Goods Defined                                                 | 52       |
| Sec. B: What's Outside of UCC Article 2?                                           | 53       |
| B.1: Choses in Action                                                              | 53       |
| B.2: Professional Services                                                         | 53       |
| B.3: Assignments & Delegations                                                     | 54       |
| Assignment & Delegation Clause                                                     | 55       |
| B.4: Bailments Are Sales                                                           | 55       |
| B.5: Security Interests Are Not Sales                                              | 56       |
| B.6: Leases Are Not Sales                                                          | 56       |
| B.7: Construction Contracts                                                        | 57       |
| Sec. C: Extending UCC Article 2 Concepts to Non-Sales                              | 58       |
| Sec. D: Services & Non-Code Law                                                    | 59       |
| Sec. E: UCC Article 2's Tests for Legal Hybrids                                    | 60       |
| E.1: Preponderant Test for Hybrids                                                 | 61       |
| E.2: Gravamen Test for Hybrids                                                     | 61       |
| Sec. F: The Concept of Merchants                                                   | 63       |
| F.1 Merchant Rules in Contract Formation                                           | 63       |
| F.2: Special Treatment Merchant Rules                                              | 64       |
| F.3: General Merchant Rules                                                        | 64       |
| Part II: CISG's Sphere of Application                                              | 65       |
| Sec. A: CISG's Business-to-Business Rules                                          | 65       |
| A.1: Parties Opt Out Rights                                                        | 65       |
| A.2: CISG Article 1                                                                | 65       |
| Sec. B: CISG Goods Defined                                                         | 67       |
| Sec. C: CISG's Sphere of Application                                               | 67       |
| C.1: CISG & Multiple Places of Business                                            | 67       |
| C.2: CISG Article 1(b) & Private International Law<br>Sec. D: Exclusions from CISG | 68<br>69 |
| D.1: Consumer Goods                                                                | 69<br>69 |
| D.2: Personal Injury Cases                                                         | 09<br>70 |
| D.3: Ships, Boats & Vessels                                                        | 70       |
| D.4: Substantial Materials Supplied by Buyer                                       | 71       |
| D.5: CISG Rule Where No Knowledge of Consumer Transaction                          |          |
| D.6: Undisclosed Principals                                                        | 71       |
| D.7: Commercial Paper & Investment Securities                                      | 71       |
| Sec E: Mixed Sales & Services                                                      | 72       |
| Sec. F: CISG's Preponderant Part Test                                              | 72       |
| F.1: Sales on Execution or by Law                                                  | 73       |
| F.2: The Sale of Electricity                                                       | 74       |
| 1.2. The sure of Electricity                                                       | 71       |

| F.3: Real Estate                                                  | 75  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Sec. G: CISG's Sphere of Application                              | 75  |
| Sec. H: CISG's Concept of Good Faith                              | 75  |
| Problem Set: Chapter Two                                          | 77  |
| 2.1: Electricity & Scope of UCC Article 2                         | 77  |
| 2.2: Software Licensing & UCC Article 2                           | 77  |
| 2.3: Personal Services & UCC Article 2                            | 78  |
| 2.4: Agricultrual Services & UCC Article 2                        | 78  |
| 2.5: Computer Chips & UCC Article 2                               | 78  |
| 2.6A: Special Manufacturing of Drapery                            | 78  |
| 2.6B: Scope of CISG                                               | 78  |
| 2.7: Scope of UCC Article 2                                       | 78  |
| 2.8: Merchant Rule                                                | 78  |
| 2.9: CISG's Sphere of Application                                 | 79  |
| 2.10: Scope of CISG                                               | 79  |
| 2.11: Multiple Places of Business                                 | 79  |
| 2.12: Determining Place of Business                               | 79  |
| 2.13: Contract Formation Rules, Opt Out                           | 79  |
| 2.14: CISG's Sphere of Application                                | 79  |
| 2.15: CISG's Sphere of Application Where Buyer Supplies Materials | 79  |
| 2.16: CISG's Test for Legal Hybrids vs. UCC Article 2             | 79  |
| 2.17: Application of CISG                                         | 79  |
| Summary                                                           | 84  |
| Chapter 3 Contract Formation: UCC Article 2 vs. CISG              | 87  |
| Part I: UCC Article 2's Formation Rules                           | 88  |
| Sec. A: Offers, Acceptance & Consideration                        | 89  |
| A.1: Common Law Offers & Acceptance                               | 89  |
| A.2: UCC Article 2 Contract Formation                             | 91  |
| A.3: Effectiveness of an Offer: UCC vs. CISG                      | 92  |
| A.4: Mailbox Rule for Accepting Offers                            | 92  |
| A.5: Option Contracts                                             | 93  |
| A.6: UCC Article 2 Contract Formation                             | 94  |
| A.7: Liberal Contract Formation                                   | 95  |
| A.8: Common Law Acceptances                                       | 96  |
| Sec. B: UCC Article 2's Statute of Frauds                         | 96  |
| B.1: Merchants Must Read Their Mail Exception                     | 97  |
| B.2: Specially Manufactured Goods Exception                       | 97  |
| B.3: Exception for Performance or Payment                         | 97  |
| B.4: Exception for Performance or Payment Made                    | 98  |
| B.5: Admission As Exception to the Statute of Frauds              | 98  |
| Sec. C: UCC Article 2's Parol Evidence Rule                       | 99  |
| C.1: Parol Evidence Rule Exceptions                               | 101 |
| C.2: Parol Evidence Rule Does Not Exclude Supplemental Terms      | 102 |
| C.3: Parol Evidence Rule & Additional Terms                       | 103 |
| Sec. D: UCC Article 2's Battle of the Forms                       | 103 |
| D.1: Abolition of the Mirror Image Rule                           | 104 |
| D.2: Conditioning Acceptance, UCC §2-207(1)                       | 105 |
| D.3: Choosing Between Additional or Different Terms               | 107 |
| D.4: The Non-Merchants' Mere Proposal Rule                        | 108 |

vii

| D.5: The Merchants' "Automatic Inclusion" Rule              | 108 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| D.6: UCC §2-207(3) Knockout Rule                            | 108 |
| Part II: CISG's Formation Rules                             | 109 |
| Sec. A: CISG Offers                                         | 109 |
| A.1: Proposal to One or More Specific Persons               | 110 |
| A.2: Effectiveness of a CISG Offer & Withdrawal of an Offer | 111 |
| A.3: Receipt Theory Not the Mailbox Rule                    | 111 |
| A.4: Revocability of Offers: CISG Article 16 vs. UCC §2-205 | 111 |
| A.5: Offeror is the Master of the Offer                     | 112 |
| A.6: CISG Article 16 vs. Firm Offers                        | 112 |
| Sec. B: A Closer Look at CISG Contract Formation            | 113 |
| Sec. C: Modification of CISG Sales Contracts                | 113 |
| Sec. D: CISG Gap Fillers                                    | 115 |
| Sec. E: CISG Recognizes No Writing Requirement              | 115 |
| Sec. F: No Parol Evidence Rule under CISG                   | 116 |
| Sec. G: CISG's Battle of the Forms Rule                     | 116 |
| G.1: Immaterial Modifications Are Admissible                | 117 |
| G.2: Material Modifications Are Automatically Excluded      | 117 |
| G.3: No Equivalent to UCC §2-207(3) in CISG Article 19      | 117 |
| Problem Set: Chapter Three                                  | 119 |
| 3.1: Common Law Offers                                      | 119 |
| 3.2: Parol Evidence Rule                                    | 119 |
| 3.3: The Parol Evidence Redux                               | 119 |
| 3.4: Battle of the Forms                                    | 120 |
| 3.5: UCC §2-207 Battle of the Forms                         | 120 |
| 3.6: Battle of the Forms, UCC §2-207                        | 120 |
| 3.7: CISG & the Price Term                                  | 121 |
| 3.8: CISG Article 19                                        | 121 |
| 3.9: Rules of Construction: UCC Article 2                   | 121 |
| Summary                                                     | 126 |
| Chapter 4 Warranties: Domestic vs. International Sales Law  | 137 |
| Part I: UCC Article 2 Warranties                            | 138 |
| Sec. A: Overview                                            | 138 |
| A.1: UCC Article 2 Title Warranties                         | 138 |
| A.2: Title, Creditors & Good Faith Purchaser                | 140 |
| A.3: Entrusting Goods to Merchants                          | 141 |
| A.4: Remedies for Breach of Title or Infringement           | 143 |
| Sec. B: Performance Warranties: UCC Article 2               | 144 |
| B.1: The Methodology for Creating Express Warranties        | 145 |
| B.2: Disclaiming Express Warranties                         | 146 |
| Sec. C: Express Warranties                                  | 147 |
| C.1: Creating Express Warranties                            | 148 |
| C.2: The Methodology for Creating Express Warranties        | 149 |
| C.3: Disclaiming Express Warranties                         | 149 |
| Sec. D: Implied Warranty of Merchantability                 | 149 |
| D.1: Pass Without Objection in the Trade                    | 150 |
| D.2: Fair, Average Quality                                  | 150 |
| D.3: Fitness for the Ordinary Purpose                       | 150 |
| D.4: Runs Within Variation Permitted in the Agreement       | 152 |
|                                                             |     |

#### CONTENTS

| D.5: Adequately Contained                                         | 152 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| D.6: Conforms to Promises on Container or Label                   | 152 |
| Sec. E: Fitness for a Particular Purpose                          | 153 |
| Sec. F: Damages for Breach of Warranty                            | 154 |
| Sec. G: Taking Warranties Away: Limitations & Disclaimers         | 154 |
| G.1: Disclaiming or Limiting Warranties of Title                  | 154 |
| G.2: Disclaiming or Limiting Warranties of Performance            | 155 |
| G.3: Disclaiming the Warranty of Merchantability                  | 156 |
| G.4: Disclaiming the Warranty of Fitness for a Particular Purpose | 156 |
| G.5: "As Is" Disclaimers                                          | 156 |
| G.6: Other Methods of Disclaiming or Reducing Warranty Liability  | 157 |
| G.7: Disclaimers by Inspection                                    | 158 |
| Sec. H: State Consumer Law Restricting Disclaimers                | 159 |
| Sec. I: Limitations on Remedies That Impact Warranties            | 159 |
| Sec. J: The Federal Consumer Warranty Act                         | 160 |
| J.1: Magnuson-Moss's Disclosure Requirements                      | 161 |
| J.2: Pre-Sale Availability of Written Warranty Terms              | 161 |
| J.3: Prohibition of Complete Disclaimers of Implied Warranties    | 162 |
| J.4: FTC Warranty Regulations                                     | 162 |
| J.5: Magnuson-Moss Requirements for Written Warranties            | 162 |
| J.6: Who's Protected?                                             | 163 |
| J.7: Who Must Comply with the Magnuson-Moss Act?                  | 163 |
| J.8: Warranty Labeling Requirements                               | 163 |
| J.9: The Disclaiming of Implied Warranties                        | 164 |
| J.10: Limitations on Disclaiming Warranties                       | 164 |
| J.11: Remedies for Violations of Magnuson-Moss Act                | 165 |
| J.12: FTC's Rule against Tie-ins                                  | 165 |
| Federal Statutes Impacting Contracts                              | 171 |
| Part II: CISG Functional Equivalents to Warranties                | 172 |
| Key CISG Warranty Equivalents                                     | 173 |
| Sec. A: CISG & Freedom from Third-Party Claims                    | 173 |
| A.1: Copyright Infringement by Sellers                            | 174 |
| A.2: Trademark Infringement by Sellers                            | 175 |
| A.3: Patent or Industrial Property Infringement by Sellers        | 175 |
| A.4: CISG Defenses to Third-Party Infringement Claims             | 175 |
| Sec. B: CISG's Functional Equivalents to Warranties               | 177 |
| B.1: CISG's Equivalent of Express Warranties                      | 178 |
| B.2: CISG's Equivalent of Merchantability                         | 180 |
| Sec. C: CISG's Equivalent of a Fitness for a Particular Purpose   | 181 |
| Part III. Product Liability for Defective Goods                   | 182 |
| Sec. A: Breach of Warranty As a Theory of Product Liability       | 182 |
| Sec. B. The Dalkon Shield Mass Product Disaster                   | 182 |
| B.1: Strict Product Liability & the Dalkon Shield                 | 185 |
| B.2: Negligent Failure to Design the Dalkon Shield                | 186 |
| B.3: Negligent Failure to Warn                                    | 186 |
| B.4: Misrepresentations, § 402B                                   | 187 |
| B.5: Tort of Fraudulent Misrepresentation                         | 187 |
| B.6: Fraudulent Concealment                                       | 188 |
| B.7: Breach of Express Warranties                                 | 188 |

| CONTENTS |
|----------|
|----------|

| B.8: Breach of Implied Warranties: Merchantability & Fitness                                                                        | 188        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| B.9: Civil Conspiracy in a Products Case                                                                                            | 189        |
| Sec. C: Product Liability As Multiple Causes                                                                                        | 189        |
| Sec. D: Product Defect As a Predicate for Product Liability                                                                         | 189        |
| D.1: Manufacturing Defects                                                                                                          | 190        |
| D.2: The Consumer Expectation Test                                                                                                  | 191        |
| D.3: The Risk Utility Test for Design Defects, Restatement (Third)                                                                  | 192        |
| D.4: Failure to Warn                                                                                                                | 192        |
| Sec. E: Theories of Product Liability                                                                                               | 194        |
| E.1: Strict Product Liability                                                                                                       | 194        |
| E.2: Negligence-Based Product Liability                                                                                             | 195        |
| E.3: Express Warranty, §2-313                                                                                                       | 196        |
| E.4: Implied Warranty of Merchantability, §2-314                                                                                    | 197        |
| E.5: Implied Warranty of Fitness for a Particular Purpose,                                                                          |            |
| UCC \$2-315                                                                                                                         | 197        |
| E.6: Liability for Rest. 2d Torts, §402B                                                                                            | 198        |
| Sec. F: Defenses in Breach of Warranty Product Liability Cases                                                                      | 199        |
| F.1: Notice of Breach                                                                                                               | 199        |
| F.2: Privity of Contract                                                                                                            | 199        |
| F.3: Vertical Privity Is a Common Law Doctrine                                                                                      | 200        |
| F.5: Horizontal Privity                                                                                                             | 200        |
| [1] Alternative A to \$2-318                                                                                                        | 201        |
| [2] Alternative B to \$2-318                                                                                                        | 201        |
| [3] Alternative C to §2-318                                                                                                         | 201        |
| Sec. G: The Death of Privity                                                                                                        | 201        |
| Sec. H: Statutes of Limitation & Repose                                                                                             | 202        |
| Sec. I: The Economic Loss Rule                                                                                                      | 203        |
| Sec. J: Methods of Disclaimers or Limitations                                                                                       | 203        |
| Sec. K: Unconscionability                                                                                                           | 203        |
| Sec. L: CISG Does Not Apply to Product Liability                                                                                    | 205        |
| Sec. M: The European Union Directive Adopts Strict Product Liability                                                                | 206        |
| M.1: European Product Liability Directive                                                                                           | 207        |
| M.2: The General Product Safety Directive                                                                                           | 208        |
| Selected Articles from the European Community's                                                                                     | • • • •    |
| Product Liability Directive                                                                                                         | 209        |
| Problem Set: Chapter Four                                                                                                           | 210        |
| 4.1: Separating True Express Warranties from Seller's Talk                                                                          | 210        |
| 4.2: Express & Implied Warranties As Theories of Product Liability                                                                  | 210        |
| 4.3: Merchantability & UCC Article 2<br>4.4: Warranties & Disclaimers of Warranties                                                 | 211        |
|                                                                                                                                     | 211        |
| 4.5: Drafting Warranty Limitations                                                                                                  | 211        |
| 4.6: UCC § 2-302 Unconscionability & Warranty Limitations                                                                           | 211        |
| 4.7: UCC §2-315 Warranty of Fitness & Beyond<br>4.8: Presale Injuries & UCC Article 2 Warranties                                    | 211<br>212 |
|                                                                                                                                     | 212        |
| 4.9: CISG Article 35 Functional Equivalent of<br>UCC Article 2 Warranties                                                           | 212        |
| 4.10: CISG's Equivalent of Implied Warranty of Merchantability                                                                      | 212        |
| 4.10: CISC'S Equivalent of Implied Warranty of Merchandomity<br>4.11: Buyer's Notice Requirement in International Sales Transaction | 212        |
| Summary                                                                                                                             | 212        |
|                                                                                                                                     |            |

| CISG's Equivalent to Express Warranties                     | 218 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| CISG's Equivalent to Implied Warranty of Merchantability    | 219 |
| CISG's Equivalent to Fitness for a Particular Purpose       | 219 |
| UCC Warranties As Product Liability                         | 219 |
| Chapter 5 Gap Fillers: UCC Article 2 vs. CISG               | 221 |
| Part I: UCC Article 2 Gap Fillers                           | 221 |
| Sec. A: Overview                                            | 221 |
| Sec. B: UCC Gap Fillers                                     | 222 |
| Sec. C: The Code's Methodology for Default Terms            | 223 |
| C.1: Gap Filler for the Price                               | 224 |
| C.2: Time for Payment                                       | 224 |
| C.3: Requirements, Output & Exclusive Dealings Contracts    | 224 |
| Sec. D: Delivery in Single Lots                             | 225 |
| D.1: Seller's Place of Delivery                             | 226 |
| D.2: Time for Delivery, Reasonable Time                     | 226 |
| D.3: Open Time for Payment of Running of Credit             | 226 |
| D.4: Options & Cooperation                                  | 227 |
| Sec. E: The Concepts & Methods of Unconscionability         | 227 |
| Part II: CISG's Gap Filler                                  | 231 |
| Sec. A: General CISG Gap Fillers                            | 232 |
| Sec. B: Seller's Obligations As Gap Fillers                 | 232 |
| B.1: CISG Gap Fillers for Delivery                          | 233 |
| B.2: CISG's Default for Shipping Arrangements               | 234 |
| Sec. C: CISG Does Not Address Validity or Unconscionability | 235 |
| Problem Set: Chapter Five                                   | 235 |
| 5.1: Requirements Contracts                                 | 235 |
| 5.2: Indefinite Sales Contracts                             | 235 |
| 5.3: Performance of a Sales Contract                        | 236 |
| 5.4: UCC Article 2 Gap Fillers                              | 236 |
| 5.5: Unconscionability                                      | 236 |
| 5.6: Output Contracts                                       | 237 |
| 5.7: CISG Gap Fillers                                       | 237 |
| 5.8: CISG & Place of Delivery                               | 237 |
| 5.9: Open Price Term in Offer                               | 237 |
| 5.10: Gap Filler for Place of Delivery                      | 238 |
| 5.11: Requirements Contracts                                | 238 |
| Summary                                                     | 242 |
| Chapter 6 Risk of Loss: UCC Article 2 vs. CISG              | 243 |
| Part I: UCC Article 2's Risk of Loss Regime                 | 243 |
| Sec. A: Risk of Loss in Domestic Sales                      | 244 |
| A.1: Risk of Loss in Carrier-Type Contracts                 | 244 |
| A.2: Shipment Contract Is the Default                       | 245 |
| A.3: Risk of Loss for Destination Contracts                 | 245 |
| A.4: Risk of Loss Where Goods Are Not Moved                 | 245 |
| A.5: UCC §2-509(3), Non-Carrier & Non-Bailment Situations   | 246 |
| A.6: Merchant Residuary Rule                                | 246 |
| A.7: Non-Merchant Residuary Rule                            | 247 |
| A.8: Parties May Forge Their Own Risk of Loss Rules         | 247 |

| Sec. B: Risk of Loss in the Event of Breach, UCC §2-510                                   | 247        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Sec. C: Seller's Tender of Delivery                                                       | 248        |
| C.1: UCC Article 2's Concept of Identification                                            | 248        |
| Sec. D: Carrier-Type Contracts & Risk of Loss                                             | 249        |
| D.1: FOB Type Contracts                                                                   | 250        |
| D.2: FOB & FAS Shipment Terms                                                             | 250        |
| D.3: Destination Contract, UCC §2-509(1)(a)                                               | 250        |
| D.4: CIF & C & F Terms                                                                    | 251        |
| D.5: Delivery "Ex-Ship"                                                                   | 251        |
| Part II: CISG's Risk of Loss                                                              | 251        |
| Sec. A: CISG's Risk of Loss Regime                                                        | 251        |
| A.1: Risk of Loss & Payment Obligation of Buyer                                           | 252        |
| A.2: Risk of Loss for Carriage-Type Contracts                                             | 252        |
| A.3: Risk of Loss for Non-Carrier Cases                                                   | 252        |
| Sec. B: International Chamber of Commerce: INCOTERMS                                      | 252        |
| Problem Set: Chapter Six                                                                  | 255        |
| 6.1: Identification & Risk of Loss                                                        | 255        |
| 6.2: UCC Article 2 Risk of Loss Rules                                                     | 255        |
| 6.3: Notice Requirement for Shipments                                                     | 255        |
| 6.4: Risk of Loss                                                                         | 255        |
|                                                                                           | 255        |
| 6.5: Revocation of Acceptance & Risk of Loss<br>6.6: Risk of Loss & Destination Contracts | 255<br>256 |
| 6.7: CISG & Risk of Loss                                                                  |            |
|                                                                                           | 256<br>256 |
| 6.8: CISG, Risk of Loss & INCOTERMS                                                       |            |
| 6.9: UCC Shipment Terms                                                                   | 257        |
| 6.10: INCOTERMS & Risk of Loss                                                            | 257        |
| 6.11: Risk of Loss & INCOTERMS                                                            | 257        |
| 6.12: Risk of Loss & FAS Contracts                                                        | 257        |
| Summary                                                                                   | 260        |
| Chapter 7 Excuses in Domestic & International Sales Contracts                             | 261        |
| Part I: UCC Article 2 Excuses                                                             | 261        |
| Sec. A: Excuses under the Common Law of Contract                                          | 261        |
| Sec. B: UCC Article 2 Excuses                                                             | 263        |
| B.1: Four Code Excuse Sections                                                            | 263        |
| Part II: Excuses in International Sales Contracts                                         | 270        |
| Sec. A: Exemption from Liability                                                          | 270        |
| A.1: Impediment Caused by Third Party's Failure                                           | 270        |
| A.2: Temporary Impediment                                                                 | 270        |
| A.3: Notice of Impediment                                                                 | 270        |
| A.4: Article 79's Impediment beyond Party's Control Test                                  | 271        |
| Problem Set: Chapter Seven                                                                | 273        |
| 7.1: Excuses in UCC Article 2 & CISG                                                      | 273        |
| 7.2: Failure of Berthing                                                                  | 273        |
| 7.3: Commercial Impracticability                                                          | 273        |
| 7.4: Excuse & Adequate Assurance of Performance                                           | 273        |
| 7.5: CISG Article 79 & the Bad Vine Wax                                                   | 274        |
| Summary                                                                                   | 276        |
| Chapter 8 Performance Issues in Domestic & International Sales                            | 279        |

| CONTENTS |  |
|----------|--|
|          |  |

| Part I: UCC Article 2 Performance Standards                | 279 |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Sec. A: UCC's Concept of Good Faith                        | 279 |
| Sec. B: Delivery & Tender of Goods                         | 280 |
| Sec. C: Acceptance or Rejection of Goods                   | 281 |
| C.1: UCC Article 2 Inspection Rights                       | 282 |
| C.2: Perfect Tender Rule                                   | 283 |
| C.3: Limits to Perfect Tender Rule                         | 284 |
| C.4: Adequate Assurance of Performance                     | 284 |
| Sec. D: UCC Article 2's Concept of the Cure                | 285 |
| D.1: Seller's Right to Cure in Single Delivery Contracts   | 286 |
| D.2: Seller's Right to Cure in Installment-Type Contracts  | 286 |
| D.3: Right to Cure after Revocation of Acceptance          | 286 |
| D.4: Limitations on Right to Cure                          | 286 |
| Sec. E: The Concept of Acceptance in Sales Law             | 287 |
| Sec. F: UCC Article 2's Concepts of Rejection & Revocation | 288 |
| F.1: When Right of Rejection Arises                        | 288 |
| F.2: Buyer's Options When Exercising Right of Rejection    | 288 |
| F.3: Buyer's Duty to Give Notice of Breach                 | 289 |
| F.4: Duties of the Rejecting or Avoiding Buyer             | 290 |
| F.5: Special Rule for Merchant Buyers                      | 290 |
| F.6: Methodology for Buyer's Rejection                     | 291 |
| F.7: Acceptance                                            | 292 |
| Sec. G: Vouching in Notice                                 | 293 |
| Sec. H: UCC Article 2's Concept of the Cure                | 293 |
| Sec. I: Assurance & Suspension of Performance              | 295 |
| Sec. J: Revocation of Acceptance                           | 299 |
| Sec. K: Installment Contracts                              | 299 |
| Part II: CISG Performance Standards                        | 300 |
| Sec. A: Delivery of Goods & Nachfrist                      | 301 |
| A.1: Shipment Contract is the CISG Default                 | 302 |
| A.2: Rule for Non-Carriage Contracts                       | 302 |
| A.3: Residual Rule                                         | 303 |
| A.4: CISG's Concept of Tender                              | 303 |
| A.5: Seller's Delivery Obligation                          | 303 |
| CISG Article 31                                            | 303 |
| Sec. B: CISG's Acceptance                                  | 304 |
| Sec. C: Fundamental Breach                                 | 304 |
| Sec. D: Avoidance                                          | 305 |
| CISG Article 49                                            | 305 |
| CISG Article 64                                            | 306 |
| D.1: Avoidance Defined                                     | 306 |
| D.2: Non-Avoidance                                         | 306 |
| Sec. E: CISG & Installment Contracts                       | 307 |
| Sec. F: <i>Nachfrist</i> Period                            | 307 |
| Sec. G: Avoidance Rights                                   | 308 |
| Sec. H: The Avoidance Rights of Buyers                     | 310 |
| H.1: Avoidance in Installment Contracts                    | 311 |
| H.2: Grounds for Avoidance                                 | 311 |
| H.3: Impact of Avoidance for Risk of Loss                  | 311 |

xiii

| H.4: The Impact of Breach on Avoidance                | 311 |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Sec. I: Rights of Non-Avoiding Buyers                 | 312 |
| I.1: The Right to Substitute Goods                    | 312 |
| I.2: Reduction in Price                               | 312 |
| I.3: Specific Performance                             | 312 |
| Sec. J: The Concept of Rejection vs. CISG Avoidance   | 313 |
| Sec. K: CISG's Right to Cure                          | 313 |
| Sec. L: The Concept of Avoidance under CISG           | 314 |
| Sec. M: CISG's Inspection Rights                      | 315 |
| Sec. N: The Concept of Avoidance under CISG           | 315 |
| Sec. O: CISG's Concept of the Installment Contract    | 315 |
| Sec. P: Suspension & Assurance of Performance         | 316 |
| Problem Set: Chapter Eight                            | 317 |
| 8.1: Seller's Right to Cure                           | 317 |
| 8.2: Right to Cure                                    | 317 |
| 8.3: Right of Revocation                              | 317 |
| 8.4: Limits to the Cure                               | 317 |
| 8.5: Limits to the Revocation of Acceptance           | 318 |
| 8.6: Tender of Goods under UCC Article 2              | 318 |
| 8.7: UCC Article 2's Performance Sections             | 318 |
| 8.8: Revocation & Shaken Faith                        | 318 |
| 8.9: Limits to Cure                                   | 318 |
| 8.10: Right of Revocation of Acceptance               | 319 |
| 8.11: Right of Rejection                              | 319 |
| 8.12: Performance Problems                            | 319 |
| 8.13: Installment Sales Contracts                     | 320 |
| 8.14: UCC Article 2 Nonconforming Performance         | 320 |
| 8.15: Limits to Limitations on Remedies               | 320 |
| 8.16: CISG's Fundamental Breach, Avoidance & Remedies | 321 |
| 8.17: CISG Performance, Cure                          | 321 |
| 8.18: Refused Cure under CISG                         | 321 |
| 8.19: CISG Performance Problems                       | 321 |
| 8.20: CISG Fundamental Breach                         | 322 |
| 8.21: CISG Fundamental Breach & the Cure              | 322 |
| 8.22: CISG & Offer of Cure                            | 322 |
| 8.23: CISG Performance                                | 322 |
| Summary                                               | 333 |
| Chapter 9 Seller's Remedies: UCC Article 2 vs. CISG   | 337 |
| Part I: UCC Article 2 Seller's Remedies               | 337 |
| Sec. A: Contractually Based Seller's Remedies         | 338 |
| A.1: UCC Article 2 Liquidated Damages                 | 338 |
| A.2: Deposits                                         | 338 |
| A.3: Contractual Limitations of Remedies              | 339 |
| Sec. B: Triggers to Seller's Remedies                 | 343 |
| B.1: Anticipatory Repudiation                         | 343 |
| B.2: Retraction of Anticipatory Repudiation           | 344 |
| Sec. C: The UCC Article 2 Seller's Part 7 Remedies    | 345 |
| C.1: Keeping or Retaining Goods                       | 345 |
| C.2: Resale Remedy, UCC § 2-706                       | 347 |

| C.3: Market I             | Price Formula, UCC §2-708                  | 348 |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----|
| C.4: Lost Pro             | fits                                       | 348 |
| C.5: Action fo            | or the Price, UCC §2-709                   | 349 |
| C.6: Seller's C           | Other Options                              | 349 |
| Part II: CISG Remedies    | -                                          | 350 |
| Sec. A: Overview          | of CISG's Seller's Remedies                | 350 |
| A.1: CISG Re              | clamation Rights for Non-Breaching Sellers | 353 |
|                           | Resale Rights for Sellers                  | 354 |
| UCC vs. CIS               | •                                          | 355 |
| A.3: Contract             | t Minus Market Damages                     | 356 |
| Problem Set: Chat         | *                                          | 356 |
|                           | icle 2 Action for the Price & CISG         | 356 |
|                           | emedy of Seller                            | 357 |
|                           | emedy of Resale: Article 2 vs. CISG        | 357 |
| 9.4: Seller's R           |                                            | 357 |
| 9.5: Action fo            |                                            | 357 |
|                           | esale Remedy: UCC Article 2 vs. CISG       | 357 |
|                           | 718 Down Payment Rule                      | 358 |
| -                         | offset Rule, UCC §2-718(3)                 | 358 |
|                           | ime Seller, UCC § 2-708(2)                 | 358 |
|                           | eller's Remedies                           | 358 |
|                           | eller's Remedies                           | 358 |
| Summary                   |                                            | 362 |
|                           |                                            |     |
|                           | edies: UCC Article 2 vs. CISG              | 365 |
| Part I: Article 2 Buyer's |                                            | 365 |
|                           | of Buyer's Remedies                        | 366 |
|                           | ticle 2 Remedies                           | 366 |
|                           | for Buyer's Remedies                       | 366 |
| Sec. B: Specific Bu       |                                            | 367 |
|                           | imited Reclamation Rights                  | 367 |
|                           | ed Damage Clauses                          | 367 |
|                           | vn Payment Rule of UCC §2-718(2)           | 368 |
|                           | f Essential Purpose: UCC §2-719(2)         | 368 |
|                           | ost Favored Buyer Remedy                   | 369 |
|                           | arket Damages for Non-Delivery             | 372 |
|                           | s for Accepted Goods, UCC §2-714           | 373 |
|                           | on of Damages from the Price               | 375 |
| Sec. E: Incidental        | 6                                          | 375 |
| Sec. F: Consequer         |                                            | 375 |
| F.1: Reason to            |                                            | 376 |
| F.2: Proof of             | Lost Profits                               | 377 |
| F.3: Personal             | Injuries, UCC §2-715(2)                    | 378 |
| Sec. G: Specific Po       | erformance                                 | 378 |
| G.1: UCC §2               |                                            | 378 |
| Sec. H: Replevin:         | That Other Equitable Remedy                | 379 |
|                           | Defenses to Breach of Warranty             | 380 |
| Sec. J: Notice of E       | Breach                                     | 380 |
| J.1: Privity              |                                            | 380 |
| J.2: Statute of           | Limitations to File Claim                  | 381 |
|                           |                                            |     |

| J.3: Proximate Cause Requirement                            | 381 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| J.4: Economic Loss Doctrine                                 | 381 |
| Sec. K: Right to Adequate Assurance of Performance          | 382 |
| Part II: CISG's Buyer's Remedies                            | 382 |
| Sec. A: Overview of CISG's Buyer's Remedies                 | 384 |
| A.1: Keeping the International Sales Contract on the Tracks | 384 |
| A.2: Buyer's Right of Avoidance                             | 385 |
| Sec. B: Buyer's Right to Damages                            | 386 |
| B.1: CISG Damages                                           | 387 |
| Sec. C: Buyer's Right to Specific Performance               | 389 |
| Sec. D: Buyer's Right to Suspend Performance                | 390 |
| Sec. E: Anticipatory Avoidance                              | 390 |
| Sec. F: Buyer's Remedies for Partial Performance            | 390 |
| Sec. G: Mitigation & Consequential Damages                  | 390 |
| Sec. H: Duties of Rejecting Buyers                          | 391 |
| Problem Set: Chapter Ten                                    | 391 |
| 10.1: Seller's Anticipatory Repudiation & Cover             | 391 |
| 10.2: Buyer's Damages for Breach of Warranty Damages        | 391 |
| 10.3: Specific Performance                                  | 392 |
| 10.4: Buyer's Cover Remedy                                  | 392 |
| 10.5: Buyer's Right to Return of Down Payment               | 392 |
| 10.6: Return of Deposit                                     | 392 |
| 10.7: Enforceability of Remedy Limitations under            |     |
| UCC Article 2 & CISG                                        | 392 |
| Summary                                                     | 397 |
| Part Two                                                    |     |
| The Concepts & Methods of Leases & Licenses                 |     |
| napter 11 The Leases of Goods                               | 403 |

| Chapter 11 The Leases of Goods                               | 403 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Part I: United States Law of Leases of Goods: UCC Article 2A | 404 |
| Sec. A: Updating UCC Article 2A for the Internet             | 405 |
| Sec. B: Overview of UCC Article 2A                           | 407 |
| Sec. C: Types of Leases                                      | 409 |
| C.1: Sales Masquerading As Leases                            | 410 |
| C.2: Why True vs. False Leases Matter                        | 411 |
| C.3: Finance Leases                                          | 414 |
| C.4: Consumer Leases                                         | 418 |
| C.5: Simple Leases                                           | 421 |
| Sec. D: Creation of UCC Article 2A Lease                     | 422 |
| D.1: Offer & Acceptance                                      | 422 |
| D.2: Firm Offers in Lease Agreements                         | 422 |
| D.3: Article 2A's Statute of Frauds                          | 422 |
| D.4: Article 2A's Parol Evidence Rule                        | 423 |
| D.5: Battle of the Forms                                     | 424 |
| D.6: Modification of Leases                                  | 424 |
| Sec. E: Warranties in Lease Agreements                       | 424 |
| E.1: Warranty against Interference & Infringement            | 424 |
| E.2: UCC Article 2A's Express Warranties                     | 425 |
| E.3: Implied Warranty of Merchantability                     | 426 |
|                                                              |     |

#### CONTENTS

| E.4: Implied Warranty of Fitness for a Particular Purpose                      | 426        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| E.5: Disclaiming Warranties against Interference & Infringement                | 426        |
| E.6: Special Rules for Warranties for Finance Leases                           | 427        |
| Sec. F: Cumulation & Conflict of Warranties                                    | 427        |
| Sec. G: Third-Party Beneficiaries of Lease Warranties                          | 428        |
| G.1: Alternative A Jurisdictions                                               | 428        |
| G.2: Alternative B Jurisdictions                                               | 428        |
| G.3: Alternative C Jurisdictions                                               | 428        |
| Sec. H: Unconscionability in Lease Agreements                                  | 429        |
| Sec. I: Risk of Loss, Title & Delivery Terms                                   | 429        |
| I.1: Risk of Loss in Absence of Breach                                         | 429        |
| I.2: Risk of Loss in Event of Breach                                           | 430        |
| Sec. J: Performance of Leases                                                  | 430        |
| J.1: Acceptance                                                                | 431        |
| J.2: Installment Performance Standard for Leases                               | 431        |
| J.3: Rejection of Leased Goods                                                 | 431        |
| J.4: Cure by Lessor                                                            | 432        |
| J.5: Revocation of Acceptance                                                  | 432        |
| Sec. K: Excuses in Lease Agreements                                            | 432        |
| Sec. L: Default by Lessor & Lessee                                             | 432        |
| L.1: Overview of Lessor's Remedies                                             | 434        |
| Sec. M: A Closer Examination of Lessor's Remedies                              | 436        |
| M.1: Action for Rent                                                           | 437        |
| M.2: Entering into a New Lease                                                 | 437        |
| Sec. N: Lessee's Remedies                                                      | 437        |
| N.1: Cancellation                                                              | 438        |
| N.2: Recovery of the Rent & Security Which Has Been Paid                       | 438        |
| N.3: Cover & Recovery of Damages                                               | 439        |
| N.4: Lessee's Damages                                                          | 439        |
| Statutory Provision: Lessee's Measure of Damages                               | 439        |
| 2A-519. Lessee's Damages for Non-delivery, Repudiation, Default                | 120        |
| & Breach of Warranty in Regard to Accepted Goods                               | 439        |
| N.5: Lessee's Incidental & Consequential Damages                               | 441        |
| Sec. O: Lessee's Right to Specific Performance<br>Sec. P: Fixtures & Accession | 442<br>442 |
| Sec. Q: Third-Party Rights with Lease Transactions                             | 442<br>442 |
| Part II: Cross-Border Leases of Goods                                          | 442        |
| Sec. A: Choice of Law & Forum                                                  | 443        |
| Sec. B: Business Issues                                                        | 443        |
| Problem Set: Chapter Eleven                                                    | 443        |
| 11.1: True vs. False Lease                                                     | 444        |
| 11.2: Risk of Loss in Finance Leases                                           | 444        |
| 11.2: Kisk of Loss in Finance Leases                                           | 444        |
| 11.4: Choice of Law in a Business-to-Business Lease                            | 444        |
| 11.5: Risk of Loss in Leases                                                   | 444        |
| 11.5: Risk of Loss & Destination-Type Lease Contract                           | 445        |
| 11.7: Finance Lease, Personal Injury & Warranty Damages                        | 445        |
| 11.8: Breach of Warranty Actions against the Suppliers                         | 445        |
| Summary                                                                        | 448        |
|                                                                                |            |

#### Part Three The Concepts & Methods of Licenses

| Chapter 12 The Licensing of Information                           | 453        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Part I: Domestic Licensing Transfers                              | 456        |
| Sec. A: Licensing to Transfer Information                         | 456        |
| A.1: Sidestepping the First Sale Doctrine of Copyright Law        | 457        |
| A.2: Granting Clause                                              | 458        |
| A.3: Choice of Law & Forum Clauses                                | 458        |
| A.4: Term for Payment                                             | 459        |
| A.5: Scope of Licensing Agreement & Number of Users               | 459        |
| A.6: Different Media                                              | 459        |
| A.7: Licensee's Right to Updates                                  | 460        |
| A.8: Termination Clause                                           | 460        |
| A.9: Breach & Termination                                         | 461        |
| A.10: Mass-Market License Agreements                              | 461        |
| Sec. B: The Uniform Computer Information Transactions Act (UCITA) |            |
| B.1: Introduction to UCITA                                        | 464        |
| B.2: The Purposes of UCITA                                        | 469        |
| Gap Filler Rules                                                  | 469        |
| Formation Rules                                                   | 470        |
| Sphere of Application, Preliminary Concerns, Mandatory Rules      | 470        |
| B.3: Scope of UCITA                                               | 471        |
| B.4: UCITA Definitions                                            | 471<br>471 |
| B.5: Electronic Data Interchange<br>B.6: Exclusions from UCITA    | 471        |
| B.7: Hybrid or Mixed Transactions                                 | 472        |
| B.8: UCITA's Choice of Law Principles                             | 474        |
| B.9: Federal Preemption of UCITA                                  | 475        |
| B.10: Online Contract Formation Rules                             | 476        |
| B.11: Enforceability of Mass-Market License Agreements            | 477        |
| B.12: Access Contracts                                            | 478        |
| B.13: Statute of Frauds in License Agreements                     | 479        |
| B.14: Warranties of Authority & Quality                           | 479        |
| B.15: UCITA's Canons of Contract Construction                     | 485        |
| B.16: Modification of the License Agreement                       | 487        |
| B.17: UCITA's Gap Fillers                                         | 487        |
| B.18: Transfer of Interests & Rights                              | 487        |
| B.19: UCITA's Performance Standards                               | 488        |
| B.20: Mass-Market Performance Standards                           | 488        |
| B.21: Risk of Loss & Excuses in License Transactions              | 489        |
| B.22: Assignment & Anti-Assignment                                | 489        |
| B.23: Breach of the License Agreement                             | 490        |
| B.24: UCITA's Remedies for Licensors & Licensees                  | 492        |
| Sec. C: International Licensing of Information                    | 495        |
| C.1: International Licensing Of Information                       | 495        |
| C.2: International E-Commerce Rules                               | 495        |
| C.3: Licensing & Choice of Law in the European Community          | 496        |
| C.4: Licensing of Software under UCC Article 2                    | 500        |
| on Electronic of continue under Coordinate 2                      | 500        |

#### CONTENTS

|      | C.5: Software Licensing under CISG                                | 501 |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 9    | Sec. D: International Considerations in Licensing                 | 503 |
|      | D.1: Forum Selection Clauses in Consumer Contracts                | 504 |
|      | D.2: Jurisdiction, Choice of Law & Forum                          | 505 |
|      | D.3: Rome II's Convention on Choice of Law for Torts              | 506 |
| 9    | Sec. E: Substantive Law Issues in Cross-Border License Agreements | 507 |
| 9    | Sec. F: Cross-Border Licensing Concepts & Methods                 | 507 |
| 5    | Sec. G: ALI's Principles of the Law of Software Contracts         | 508 |
| 5    | Sec. H: Towards Cross-Border Licensing Rules                      | 508 |
| 1    | Problem Set: Chapter Twelve                                       | 510 |
|      | 12.1: SSL's Computer Contract                                     | 510 |
|      | 12.2: Enforceability of Clickwrap Agreements under UCITA          | 510 |
|      | 12.3: European Cross-Border Jurisdiction, Choice of Law,          |     |
|      | Choice of Forum                                                   | 510 |
|      | 12.4: SSL's Terms of Services Agreement                           | 511 |
|      | 12.5: Scope of UCITA                                              | 512 |
|      | 12.6: Attribution Process                                         | 512 |
|      | 12.7: UCITA & Releases                                            | 512 |
|      | I. European Cross-Border Jurisdictional Issues                    | 514 |
|      | II. European Choice of Law                                        | 515 |
|      | III. Enforceability of Online Contracts                           | 516 |
| Summ | ary                                                               | 518 |
| dex  |                                                                   | 521 |

Index

#### xix

## Table of Cases

#### International Courts & Arbitral Tribunals

- Australia, Queensland (*Downs Investments v. Perwaja Steel*) 54A1. Germany 30 August 2000 Oberlandesgericht [Appellate Court], 354
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http://cisgw3.law.pace.edu/cases/9511 29g1.html, 332

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- AKA Distributing Co. v. Whirlpool Corp., 137 F.3d1083 (8th Cir. 1998), 59
- AMF, Inc. v. McDonald's Corp., 536 F.2d 1167 (7th Cir.1976), 298
- Archer Daniels Midland Co. v. Brunswick Cty., 2005 U.S. App. LEXIS 4314 (4th Cir., Mar. 15, 2005), 51
- Bende v. Crown Recreational, Inc., 548 F. Supp. 1018 (E.D. N.Y. 1982), 268, 269

*Bonebrake v. Cox*, 499 F.2d 951 (8th Cir. 1974), 57

- Brattleboro Auto Sales, Inc. v. Subaru of New England, Inc., 633 F.2d 649 (2d Cir. 1980), 59
- Carl Beasley Ford, Inc v Burroughs Corp, 361 F Supp 325 (ED Pa, 1973), 287
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- Delhomme Indus., Inc. v. Houston Beechcraft, Inc., 669 F.2d 1049, 1058 (5th Cir. 1982), 328
- Dorton v. Collins & Aikman Corp., 453 F.2d 1161 (6th Cir. 1972), 122
- East River S.S. Corp. v. Transamerica Delaval, 476 U.S. 858 (1986), 203, 381-382
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- *Filanto v. Chilewich*,984 F.2d 58 (2d Cir. 1993), 113
- Frigaliment Importing Co. v. B.N.S. Int'l Sales Corp., 190 F. Supp. 116 (S.D. N.Y. 1960), 14
- Garwood Packaging Inc. v. Allen & Co., 378 F.3d 978 (7th Cir. 2004), 94
- Group, Ltd. v. Bostek, Inc., 942 F. Supp. 716 (D. Mass. 1996), 375
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### Preface

When I answered that I came from far away, The policeman at the roadblock snapped, "Where's that?"

He'd only half heard what I said and thought It was the name of some place up the country. And now it is—both where I have been living And Where I left—a distance still to go Like starlight that is light-years on the go From far away and takes light-years arriving.

Seamus Heaney1

Recently, I received a letter from a former student who is currently an associate in a large Boston law firm thanking me for including the Convention for the International Sale of Goods (CISG) in my Sales and Leases course at Suffolk University Law School. He described how he recently handled two international sales cases centering on CISG practices and was grateful for being able to spot these issues. Forewarned is forearmed. All business lawyers in the new millennium need a basic understanding of international contract law to serve their client's interests.

This book is a product of research that I conducted while teaching international contract law and international sales law at Suffolk University Law School in Boston and in its summer program at the University of Lund in Sweden from 2000 to 2006. I learned a great deal from Patrik Lindskoug and Ulf Maunsbach of the University of Lund Law School. During the summer of 2005, I taught international contract law in Mexico City on the campus of *Escuela Libre de Derecho (ELD)* in a five-week program sponsored by the University of San Diego's Institute on International and Comparative Law.<sup>2</sup> In the summer of 2007, I taught U.S. Commercial and Contract Law at Eötvös Lorand University in Budapest, Hungary, as part of Suffolk's LL.M Program for international business lawyers. This book is the result of my experience teaching and researching international contract law as well as my other work with business lawyers and academics in Europe and Mexico.

Most law students are preparing for legal careers that require an understanding of international contract law as well as domestic or national law. Business attorneys practicing in the twenty-first century need a good understanding of the potential applicability of the CISG if a contract for the sale of goods involves a party in another nation. In-

<sup>1.</sup> Seamus Heaney, Poem, The New Yorker (Dec. 26, 1994), at 88.

<sup>2.</sup> San Diego's summer program is an intensive, five-week study abroad program based in Mexico City at Escuela Libre de Derecho (ELD). Stephen Zamora and his co-authors describe the freestanding ELD as "one of Mexico's most respected law schools." STEPHEN ZAMORA, JÓSE RAMÓN Cossío, LEONEL PEREZNIETO, JÓSE ROLDÁN-XOPA, DAVID LOPEZ, MEXICAN LAW (2004).

#### PREFACE

creasingly, law schools are coming to the realization that the sale of goods is multihemispheric, as the sun never sets on a global marketplace. Worldwide Internet business-to-business transactions alone reached \$6 trillion in 2005.<sup>3</sup> The study of CISG is already central to the law school curriculum throughout Europe. All students at the University of Lund in Sweden take a required course on CISG, as do students at many other law schools around the globe. Increasingly, United States law schools are realizing the importance of teaching their students about international commercial law.

This book uses practical examples and explanations to compare and contrast Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) Article 2 with CISG but also covers the leases of goods, the licenses of information, and procedural and localization issues in international contracts. This book is appropriate for a course in international contract law, sales and leases, or comparative commercial law. This book illustrates domestic and international commercial law in action through the hypothetical activities of an import/export company, Suffolk Sales and Leasing (SSL). SSL not only sells goods but also has a leasing division, licenses software, and renders consultation services throughout Europe. SSL has a subsidiary in Lund, Sweden, called "Lundia," which directs sales, leases, and licenses to many countries of the European Community. Europe has been chosen for cross-border comparisons because many international contract principles apply to the 27 members of the European Community:

Europe is a prize market, easier to access than ever before. Too many U.S. exporters, especially small and medium sized enterprises, avoid it because the technical requirements for entry seem too complicated, too difficult, or too expensive. U.S. manufacturers who have successfully accessed the European market know that the time to understand the European system is well worth the effort. The European Union alone is filled with affluent consumers, approximately 370 million of them. But the European market is a large area that comprises not only the 15 countries that presently make up the European Union (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom), but also the three countries that complete the European Economic Area (EEA) (Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway, i.e., EFTA countries except Switzerland). In addition, there are approximately 11 other Central and Eastern European countries, such as the Czech Republic and Poland, which are candidates for future membership in the European Union. These countries are rapidly adopting European Union laws, standards, conformity assessment procedures.4

SSL is a 24/7 company and its website is the instrumentality for selling or leasing goods and licensing software. The use of the hypothetical teaches practical as well as doctrinal principles of domestic and international contact law. The SSL hypothetical is a pedagogical device to teach students that they can best understand international contract law in context through comparisons of the domestic and international commercial law. The take away point from the SSL hypothetical used throughout the book is this importance of preventive law in a sophisticated commercial law practice.

<sup>3.</sup> Gartner Group, Worldwide Business-to-Business Internet Commerce to Reach \$8.5 Trillion in 2005, at http://www4.gartner.com/5abpit/prssroom (last visited June 8, 2007).

<sup>4.</sup> National Institute of Standards, A Guide to EU Standards and Conformity Assessment: Introduction to Europe: A Single Market. NIST SP 951 http://ts.nist.gov/Standards/Global/pg1.cfm (last visited Dec. 26, 2006).

### I: UCC Article 2 vs. CISG

A contract is any promise, if when broken, will give the non-breaching party a remedy at law. UCC Article 2 governs B2C contracts for the sale of goods as well as business-to-business (B2B) sales contracts. The most common type of contract is when a seller agrees to sell goods and the buyer agrees to pay money. Suppose a consumer purchased a power pack from Suffolk Sales & Lease's (SSL) website. The consumer buyer was contractually bound by the rules of the SSL auction. As the highest bidder in the online auction, the consumer promised to pay the agreed price for the power pack. UCC Article 2 governed the eBay contract. The sale of the power pack transfers absolute title to personal property in exchange for the price. If a commercial party purchased hundreds of powerpacks from another entity in a foreign country, the operative law would likely be the Convention for the International Sale of Goods (CISG).

### II: Leases & Licenses: Domestic vs. International

The primary emphasis of this book compares UCC Article 2 and CISG, though there will also be coverage of leases and the licensing of information in Part II. UCC Article 2A governing the lease of goods shares much common ground with Article 2. UCC Article 2A updates and tailors rules developed for the sale of goods to leases.

This book also examines UCC Article 2A on leases of goods. The American Law Institute and the National Conference of Commissioners of Uniform State Law (NC-CUSL) approved UCC Article 2A for consideration by state legislatures in 1987. The majority of states adopted UCC Article 2A within a few years, and the new Article was last amended in 2003. The emphasis will be on how UCC Article 2A rules for scope, formation, warranties, risk of loss, performance, and remedies compare with UCC Article 2. "UCC Article 2A-Leases govern over \$260 billion a year in lease transactions, accounting for roughly one-third of all capital investment each year in the United States."<sup>5</sup> Prior to the widespread adoption of UCC Article 2A, courts applied UCC Article 2 by analogy. UCC Article 2A imports many of the concepts and methods of UCC Article 2; however, there are important differences.

UCC Article 2A, for example, has an expanded definition of unconscionability, defines special rules for consumers, and articulates different warranty rules for finance leases.<sup>6</sup> UCC Article 2 follows the American rule when it comes to attorneys' fees whereas UCC Article 2A, for example, provides for the recovery of attorneys fees for lease contracts found to be unconscionable. Part II of this book examines the concepts and methods of UCC Article 2A and the law of licensing with a discussion of cross-border international issues.

<sup>5.</sup> Edwin E. Huddleson, "Leasing is Distinctive" at http://preview. pdesigner.com/huddleson/Articles.jsp (last visited June 7, 2007).

<sup>6.</sup> A consumer transaction" means a transaction in which (i) an individual incurs an obligation primarily for personal, family, or household purposes. This definition first devised by the Federal Trade Commission is the definition used in thousands of federal and state statutes and regulations. *See*, e.g., M.G.L.A. ch. 93A (Massachusetts unfair and deceptive trade practices act). This definition is consistent with the European Union definition of consumer being someone outside his or her

Part I covers the latest developments in domestic and international sales. Chapter 1 of Part II addresses domestic and international leases whereas the focus of Chapter 2 of Part II is on the licensing of software and other digital information. This chapter is unique because of its emphasis on practice pointers in addition to an international approach, which is of immense practical value. Here, the international materials are less comprehensive because to date, there is no international convention covering leases of personal property so Article 2A is the most relevant template. Similarly, there is little by way of international codification of the licensing of software. Since licensing is the chief method of transferring value in the new global economy, it is important to learn about how to transfer rights in software and other intangibles.

Chapter Two of Part II covers the Uniform Computer Information Transaction Act (UCITA) in detail and uses UCITA as the template for licensing software and information-based assets. Many of the concepts and methods of the UCITA model statute reflect best practices in the business community, but the statute has been adopted in only two states, Maryland and Virginia. Nevertheless, UCITA is a useful template to structure software licenses and other transfers of information for domestic as well as cross-border transactions. Part II includes a brief discussion of the problems of cross-border leases and licenses, because United States law is so dominant when it comes to leases and licenses.

Each chapter features Practice Problems that help students and attorneys alike to identify and solve commercial law conundrums. The practice problems and the examples and explanations feature model answers, which will help the student master the concepts of domestic and international sales, leases, and licenses through self-study. I am writing this book during a period in which both UCC Articles 2 and 2A are under revision. In 2003, the American Law Institute (ALI) and the National Conference of Commissioners on State Law (NCCUSL) promulgated revisions to Article 2. To date, no state has adopted the revisions and it is unlikely that any jurisdiction will adopt the revisions in its present form. State legislators have the final say about whether Revised Article 2 will be adopted and if so, under what conditions. UCC Articles are frequently adopted with scores of non-uniform amendments. The Uniform Commercial Code, as a result, is less uniform than its name suggests. As I write this book, Revised Article 2 is dead on arrival, a casualty of the politics of law reform. Many of the revised Article 2 provisions offered substantive improvements in the law making it more adaptable to ecommerce. Special interests pledging to block adoption of the revised Article 2 at the state legislature level have consigned the draft to the ashbin of commercial jurisprudence. The draft is a significant law reform project that tailors UCC Article 2 rules drafted in the 1940s and early 1950s to the age of the Internet.

Furthermore, there is brief mention of the revisions to UCC Article 2 and 2A but the overwhelming emphasis is on current United States and international contract law, not the future path of the law. Twenty-nine states have enacted Revised UCC Article 1 as of July 1, 2007. Proposed changes will be mentioned where relevant but the focus will be on the law of sales and leases currently in effect in most states. Individual instructors may select particular subjects with which they wish to cover, in the order of their choosing from the parts of the book. This book is dedicated to the law student of the new

trade or profession used in countless directives. See, e.g. Brussels Regulation on Judgments & Enforcement of Judgments in Civil and Commerical Matters (2003).

millennium who needs to understand the role of sales, leases, and licenses in a global world economy.

Michael L. Rustad Boston, Massachusetts, and South Burlington, Vermont

## Acknowledgments

I am indebted to the University of San Diego Mexico City Summer Program and Suffolk University Law School's Summer Program at the University of Lund for inspiring my interest in international contract law. In the summer of 2007, I benefitted from discussions with my business lawyer students in Budapest, Hungary. I co-taught a course in international contracts with Patrik Lindskoug<sup>7</sup> and Ulf Maunsbach<sup>8</sup> at the University of Lund in 2006 and a course in international sales law in 2004 in Suffolk University Law School's summer program in Sweden. In 2000 and 2002, we taught an Internet Law class which compared and contrasted United States law with European Union provisions. Patrick and Ulf taught me the European perspective on matters of jurisdiction, choice of law, and problems of cross-border contracts. Professor Ann Lousin of the John Marshall Law School generously shared her teaching materials on Article 2 of the UCC. My Suffolk University Law School colleagues Herbert Lemelman and Jeffrey Wittenberg generously provided me with statutory materials on international contract law. Professor Lemelman taught me many insightful comparisons between the UCC, CISG, Principles of European Contract Law, and UNIDROIT's Principles of International Commercial Law. I would also like to thank Stephen Hicks Professor of Law and Director of Graduate Law Program at Suffolk as well as Bernie Ortwein and Russ Murphy, Directors of the Sweden program.

My research assistants at Suffolk University Law School, especially Daryl Abbas, George Atasanov, Danielle Bouvier, Nicole Chiesa, David Coughlin, Adela Cufe, Steven Cohen, Suzanne Dawley, Michelle Dhanda, Shannon Downey, Ellen Garnett, As'ad Hamid, Adam LaFrance, John Martin, Joann Nguyen, Karla Ota, Zachary Piccolimini, Jason Peterson, Ana Sa, and Jo-Na Williams made significant contributions to this work. Nicole Chiesa has provided excellent rearch and editorial assistance in the summers of 2006 and 2007. Shannon Downey's help has been extraordinary. Her research and editorial suggestions have contributed enormously to this work. Adam LaFrance provided critical research on CISG remedies and helped me organize cases and materials for the work as a whole. Nicole Chiesa edited the manuscript, performed research, and corrected page proofs in the summers of 2006 and 2007.

<sup>7.</sup> Professor Patrik Lindkoug's 2004 dissertation was a study of jurisdiction and choice of law in e-commerce transactions, *See* Lindskoug, Patrik (1965), Department of Law 1 October 2004, Carolinasalen, kungshuset, Lundagård, Lund http://theses.lub.lu.se/postgrad/search.tkl?field\_query1=pubid&query1=law\_40&recordformat=display (last visited June 7, 2007).

<sup>8.</sup> Professor Ulf Maunsbach's 2005 dissertation was a close examination of cross-border trademark infringement. *See* Maunsbach, Ulf: Svensk domstols behörighet vid gränsöverskridande varumärkestvister—särskilt om Internetrelaterade intrång/ (Swedish Jurisdiction in Cases on Cross-border Trademark Infringements—With Special Regard to Internet Related Actions), 2005, Lund University,Department of Law http://theses.lub.lu.se/postgrad/ search.tkl?field\_query1=keywords&query1=Private%20international%2 (last visited June 7, 2007).

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Brian Elworthy, a second-year law student at the Georgetown Law Center also served as a research assistant in the summer of 2006. Elynn Lo, a former JD-MBA student of mine, who lived in ten different countries and traveled to more than twenty countries, provided valuable editorial, research assistance, and insights from her experience in international and business law. Ronald B. Kaplan, Esquire, provided me with editorial assistance at the galley stage. Also, I want to thank Keith Sipe, Karen Clayton, and Linda Lacy at Carolina Academic Press for their steadfast commitment to this work. My wife, Chryss J. Knowles, also deserves thanks for her editorial suggestions. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the contribution made by our daughter, Erica Knowles Rustad, a 2006 graduate of the University of Miami and a second-year law student at Fordham University Law School. Erica's fresh perspective and critical eye improved and enriched my work.

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