Occasionally someone seeking to learn, or learn more, about international arbitration asks me what to read. When that happens, the first thing that comes into my mind is my father’s ready prescription for what a lawyer needs to know.

My father began his law practice in the first decade of the 20th Century and continued for sixty years. He always recommended that every lawyer should read, and re-read, “the Bible, Shakespeare, and land title documents.” These, in his view, provided the basic skills a lawyer requires. The Bible was needed as a source of moral values; Shakespeare to teach us to express ourselves clearly and felicitously. But why should we read land title documents? His answer was that reading legal documents, such as the deeds and easements necessary to trace ownership and encumbrances, teaches us to concentrate on details that, while dull, can profoundly affect what our clients get, or do not get, for their money. A consummate common law practitioner, he did not exclude court decisions, and his desk and brief bag were crammed with so-called “advance sheets,” paper bound periodicals that provided the latest decisions before their publication in the hard cover volumes that dominated his bookshelf (in contrast to the electronic means available today). Nor did he overlook treatises; indeed, he wrote one himself.1 But, during his long practice he considered the first three sources to be the vital foundations of legal skill.

My father has not been alone in these views. While I was writing this column, news came of the death of a great lawyer, Eliot Richardson. In his obituary, The New York Times recounted that when at the start of his career he was being employed as a law clerk by Justice Felix Frankfurter of the United States Supreme Court, “Richardson negotiated with Justice Frankfurter to be allowed to have an hour to himself each morning to read Shakespeare.”2

Although I believe that the three sources cited by my father continue to be of fundamental importance today for arbitrators and those who practice before them,

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I recognize the need to identify books that relate directly to arbitration. When asked to do that, I turn to my bookshelf, particularly the shelf immediately behind my desk that I can reach by stretching out my arm. If a book is kept there, it is one I use regularly. When I look at that shelf, I realize how different it is than it would have been twenty-five years ago. Then there were almost no books on arbitration. For English speakers, Domke on United States law and Russell on English law were about all that was available, and they each concentrated on domestic arbitration. Today, there are scores of books on international arbitration and they are accompanied by a vast literature of articles.

It is well to begin with a broad overview of the landscape of international arbitration. The book I suggest for that purpose is *Law and Practice of International Commercial Arbitration* by Alan Redfern and Martin Hunter, first published in 1986 and now in its Third Edition. As I wrote in the Foreword to the Second Edition, these authors “have wide experience as arbitrators, as lawyers in arbitration cases, and as leaders of institutions that administer arbitral proceedings. Moreover, they have been in the forefront in drafting new rules and laws.” Their book “is not only a welcome compendium of law, it also provides sound advice on ‘lawyering’ – the fine art of solving practical problems and avoiding pitfalls [and] it will be welcomed by lawyers engaged in drafting arbitration clauses and arbitrating cases, by arbitrators engaged in international proceedings and by national court judges deciding cases related to arbitration.” The recent Third Edition maintains that standard while providing the updating needed to reflect swift developments in the field.

Summaries, even excellent summaries, are not enough, however. For as Chairman Mao is reported to have said, one cannot fully appreciate a landscape seen from the back of a galloping horse. One must dismount and take the time to look closely at the individual plants and flowers. Reflecting that need, my bookshelf includes not only galloping summaries like Redfern and Hunter, but also indispensable source materials such as texts of national laws, treaties and court decisions relating to arbitration, synopses of arbitral awards (usually sanitized by the removal of the names of parties and other identifying information that would violate the privacy

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7 Ibid.