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## Sheppard Mullin Straddles Pacific With China Outpost

By Drew Combs  
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LOS ANGELES — Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton announced Monday the opening of an office in Shanghai, China, marking the first international foray for the Los Angeles-based law firm.

“We have so many clients asking us to do work over there, and we got tired of referring that business out,” said Guy Halgren, chairman of the firm. “A footprint in China allows us to provide the services that our clients require on both sides of the Pacific.”

Lawyers in the Shanghai outpost practice in a variety of areas, but concentrate on international dispute resolution and cross-border investment matters, Halgren said.

Sheppard Mullin’s new office is headed by partner David Huebner, who joined the firm’s Los Angeles office in 2005 from the now-defunct Coudert Brothers, where he was chairman for four years.

Halgren said Huebner’s past experience supervising Coudert’s China offices as firm chairman and his practice focus on international dispute resolution made him the ideal choice to lead Sheppard Mullin’s China initiative.

Huebner has been joined in the new office by special counsel William Zheng and legal consultant Michael Zhang, who both came to Sheppard Mullin from a Chinese law firm.

Special counsel Xudong Ni, currently practicing in Sheppard Mullin’s Washington, D.C., office, also will relocate to Shanghai.

The office is already “consulting” three foreign corporations looking to invest in China, Halgren said.

“We don’t ever open a new office or new practice group without there being a material client need,” said Halgren, who declined to name any of the companies



Daily Journal file photo

David Huebner will lead Sheppard Mullin’s new office in Shanghai, China. Huebner supervised China offices when he was chairman at now-defunct Coudert Brothers.

that firm lawyers in China are working with.

Sheppard Mullin follows in a long line of American law firms setting up shop in China that began when Coudert Brothers opened a Beijing office in 1979, soon after diplomatic relations resumed between the United States and the People’s Republic of China. The firm established a presence in Shanghai in 1986.

Other firms with offices in China include Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, which was acquired in large part from Coudert Brothers; DLA Piper; and Latham & Watkins.

In November, Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman announced it received a license to practice in China. Four months earlier, Thelen Reid & Priest announced it received its license.

“It is a rapidly expanding market that continues to get deeper in terms of its talent base,” said Edward H. Tillinghast, a

New York-based firm partner in Sheppard Mullin’s China practice. “But I think we can add something. We are focused on a narrow group of opportunities where we have strength in the United States.”

Tillinghast offered cross-border mergers and acquisitions and restructuring as two examples of investment-related work the firm will pursue.

Sheppard Mullin was founded in Los Angeles in 1927. The firm has nearly 500 attorneys practicing at 10 offices in California, New York, Washington, D.C., and now Shanghai.

And while it may not be the first foreign firm to open up shop in China, Sheppard Mullin’s chairman is quick to point out they are certainly not the last.

“We are in no way late to the party,” Halgren said. “There are a number of firms still in the licensing process and well behind us.”