

## A Symposium Issue that Begs Revising

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As I sit down to reflect on the 30th anniversary of the LWI Board's decision to establish a peer-edited journal to develop and advance the discipline of legal writing and what I might say as one of the grateful few who have served as Editor-in-Chief of that Journal, my mind is flooded with memories. From Editorial Board retreats in a conference room on the Stetson campus where we developed and refined our mission and later worked with the editorial board of *Legal Communication and Rhetoric: JALWD* to ensure that both publications had complementary but not overlapping objectives; to reading hundreds of submissions looking for the most insightful and meaningful scholarship to publish or the newer scholars to mentor; to long nights poring over page proofs looking for one last typo or citation error before sending the final version to the printer, the experiences were many and the memories are great.

If I had to choose a pivotal experience in the life of the Journal while I served as EIC, it would be the Legal Writing Institute's 25th anniversary celebration and symposium held in November 2010. As part of the event, the Editors of the Journal and the *Mercer Law Review* organized a day-long symposium at the Mercer Law School in Macon, Georgia to reflect on the history and look toward the future of both LWI and the discipline of legal writing. This invigorating and insightful symposium brought together national leaders in the legal writing profession spanning the past twenty-five years. The proceedings of that symposium and articles stemming therefrom would later be published in Volume 16. As we now celebrate 30 years of a peer-edited Journal and the scholarship that has flowed from that Journal, this Symposium issue begs revisiting. I hope this short summary of its contents will pique your interest and lead you to its pages.

The Symposium began with a panel reflecting on the history of LWI and the professionalization of legal writing. Professors Laurel Oates, Jill Ramsfield, and Mary Beth Beazley spoke about the vision that has blossomed into the dynamic and inventive field of legal writing pedagogy, beginning with the "fairy tale" story of the beginning of the LWI as a place for those who love legal writing and value its place in the profession, and moving on to highlight the importance of empirical surveys to assess legal writing teaching in United States law schools, and concluding with reflections about how LWI and legal writing faculty had helped overcome common misconceptions that writing cannot be taught and that there is no need or possibility for the development of expertise in legal writing and therefore no need for scholarship or a legal writing profession.

Building on the history and vision for the future, Professors Marilyn Walter, Sam Jacobson, and Carol Parker reflected on becoming an “excellent teacher” and what that looks like, from using peer review as a way to teach students how to act professionally in collegial relationships and to be good editors of their own work by editing the work of others, to assessing our abilities to pay attention and focus in a multi-media world, to rising to the challenge to define a “signature pedagogy” for legal writing. The articles memorialize this panel and build upon the discussion that day, and they continue to provide relevant cause for reflection as we work to improve our classroom performance.

The Symposium’s Luncheon Speaker was Professor J. Christopher Rideout, a founder of LWI and the Journal’s first Editor. Professor Rideout’s address, “Individuals and Community, Discipline Building, and Disciplinary Values: The First Twenty-five Years of the Legal Writing Institute,” was an engaging journey through concepts of community and professionalism and left the audience eager to think about and discuss the ideas he presented. Following his remarks, Professor Rideout was named the first recipient of the Mary S. Lawrence Award. Both Professor Rideout’s thought-provoking address, enriched in essay form, and the presentation of the Award along with celebratory essays about Professor Lawrence are included in the Symposium issue.

No Journal Symposium would be complete without a discussion of scholarship, and we were fortunate to have the trio of Professors Linda Berger, Linda Edwards, and Terrill Pollman share their wisdom and insights. Their panel and the resulting article on the rhetoric, voice, and community of legal writing scholarship both summarizes where we have been and urges us to continue to make strides forward in our professional scholarship. Answering the question why we write and why legal writing faculty should be engaged in scholarly “conversations” with one another about the substance of legal writing; challenging us to focus scholarship on legal rhetoric; articulating the concept of voice in legal writing scholarship; and reflecting on the audience for legal writing scholarship both “inside” and “outside” the legal writing community, these three scholarship experts urged us forward. Personally, it is exciting to re-read this article with the scholarship of the past seven years in mind—it’s clear that we have risen to the challenge presented.

The day concluded with a panel focusing on the development of legal writing as a profession within the legal academy. Professors Suzanne Rowe, Susan Duncan, and Eric Easton shared informative and insightful comments on issues of professionalism, status, and standards. This panel produced three noteworthy articles. First, Professor Suzanne Rowe gave the audience an overview of the vast empirical surveys that have been performed by LWI and ALWD to

assess the teaching of legal writing in American law schools. She challenged the organizations to revise future surveys to address key challenges in the academy. The fruits of that challenge are visible in the 2017 Survey that was conducted in May of 2017. Next, Professor Susan Duncan summarized key developments in the standards governing American law schools focusing on those that directly impact the teaching of legal writing. Finally, Professor Eric Easton helped participants to think “outside the box” about program design and teaching models. Again, not only are these articles interesting to revisit to see how far we’ve come, but they continue to provide insights and opportunities for further development and improvement.

Just as many of the speakers and attendees came home from the Symposium excited and invigorated after a jam-packed day of ideas in Macon on that beautiful November day in 2010, I hope that we can all look back at that volume with seven years’ hindsight and again catch the vision of legal writing—its teaching, scholarship, and professionalism—and in whatever way we can, build on the energy and intellectual rigor that we were all able to experience together.

My time as Editor-in-Chief of the Journal is one of the highlights of my academic career to this point. I served as EIC for four volumes 15-18 (from 2009 to 2012) and Assistant EIC for two years prior under EIC James Levy. My four volumes would not have been possible without the dedication of my four amazing Assistant Editors in Chief: David T. Richie, Pamela Lysaght, Terrill Pollman, and Brooke J. Bowman. They brought vigor and creativity to their positions, attacked their work with care and conscientious perfectionism, and they remain some of my dearest professional colleagues. Please know of my gratitude to you. Here’s to another 30 years of legal writing excellence with the Journal.