

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

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I write as both someone very familiar with—and yet once again new to—the LWI Biennial Conference.

How can that be?

As someone who began teaching in this field twenty-five years ago, I was fortunate to be able to attend many of the Biennials starting in the mid-90s. As a newcomer to this incredibly important field, I was thrilled over the years to meet terrific colleagues, share great teaching ideas, and generally learn the value and enjoy the closeness of the national and international legal writing community. The Biennials presented opportunities to strengthen or develop those relationships, to enjoy speaking and leadership responsibilities, and to grow my passion for integrating international legal issues into my skills courses. I loved every minute of the Biennials, and I treasure the friendships I made and the professional knowledge that I gained at them. I am beyond thankful for the strategies that I learned for improving the status of our legal writing program at Villanova Law, as well as for the many clever and tested classroom exercises that our colleagues shared over the years. I enthusiastically attended many Biennials—until the early 2000s—but then not again until 2018.

Interestingly, it was good fortune that kept me from the Biennials for many years. I had the opportunity to teach and direct a summer program abroad for ten years, which kept me from attending a number of Biennials until 2018, when I was able to trek to Milwaukee. As wonderful as it was to teach abroad, I had missed the camaraderie and stimulation of the Biennials. It was a treat to see the wonderful legal writing community again, to see new faces as well, and to get inspired and, hopefully, to inspire. That's when I became “new” to the Biennial experience again.

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In Milwaukee, I had the opportunity to introduce a new legal writing professor whom I'd met elsewhere to members of the LWI community, who welcomed her with open arms and with whom she was able to share her already broad knowledge and enthusiasm. In addition, I met up with a colleague from afar who, like me, has been working on a book project and was looking for a "writing buddy." We found one another, and hopefully we will complete our projects in tandem. In addition, when my dear friend and Villanova Law colleague Lou Sirico was unable to attend the Biennial, I was thrilled not only to be able to bring him a bright green bag of Biennial "swag," but also to send him a video of many of his LWI friends sending their best wishes. That's just the kind of community that the legal writing world generates.

So, for me, the Biennial is a place that offers so many benefits, both personal and professional, all leading to growth and opportunity for all who attend. I thank those who have nurtured me at these conferences over the years, and hopefully in years to come, and I hope that I can do the same for others as well.