

TO: LWI Board of Directors
FROM: Catherine J. Wasson
DATE: May 1, 2008
RE: Teaching Resources Committee – Report for 2006-2008 Biennium

Committee Charge

The Teaching Resources Committee, new in 2006, was given the following charge: “compile teaching resources on frequently asked topics to include on website or problem bank.”

Committee Progress – Update

As stated in my year-end report, we decided to begin our work by creating two resources for our members: (1) an organized compilation of discussion threads from the LWI listserv archives, and (2) a bibliography of major resources in the field. The former is a rich source of tried-and-true advice from a large group of experienced teachers. The latter will lead members to some of the best scholarly work in our field. Between the two, a member should be able to find help for almost any problem and learn about almost any subject relevant to the teaching of legal writing.

The bibliography is done (Linda Berger did this piece, and it is wonderful). Natalie Tarenko has pulled out several threads of general interest, and has also created an additional list of resources not found in the archives. She is formatting those now. As for the year-by-year compilations, we are making steady, but slow, progress. Ted Becker and I - especially Ted - have helped out a couple colleagues who got off to a slow start, but at this time of year the remaining work on this part of the project is going slowly. Here is how the various members of the committee are faring with their respective compilations:

2002 Ted Becker – Finished
2003 John Mollenkamp – In progress (being formatted)
2004 Jessica Price – In progress (more than half way through)
2005 Mary Trevor – Finished
2006 Chris Trudeau – In progress (c. half done, est. complete by 5/8)
2007 Catherine Wasson – Finished

Reflection & Suggestions for 2008–2010

This has been an interesting experience, to say the least. In retrospect, we set an agenda that was overly-ambitious: to comb through the entire archives and gather the

threads on teaching-related topics to make them accessible to our members. I still think that the goal is a good one – I would have given anything to have had easy access to that kind of information when I began teaching. And we all know that questions are often raised on the listserv that have been discussed in earlier threads, but that most members never delve into the archives. So the goal is sound, but the committee ran into problems because we underestimated the time commitment that this task required. Thus, after 18 + months, we still have not been able to launch the finished product. With 20/20 hindsight, it would have been better to set up a Teaching Resources website or link first, and then to roll out additions to it as they were finished, rather than trying to launch everything at the same time.

Taking advantage of that hindsight, I suggest that the committee for 2008-2010 be composed of two or three interested members of the present committee and two or three new members with computer and website expertise. Such a group will be well-equipped to (1) finish the initial work of compiling all the relevant threads in the archives, and (2) post the material in an attractive, user-friendly format. Ideally, these tasks would be carried out simultaneously during the summer. We have a lot of very good raw material now, but need some technically-minded people to help us get that material out to our members.

I strongly suggest that technological expertise and creativity be given top priority when making assignments to this committee for the next biennium. I also encourage the Board to limit the number of committee members to five or six at most. I would be pleased to remain as chair or co-chair of this committee to provide continuity. I will have a much more manageable teaching package next year, and access to some good technical support. A couple other members of the present committee might also be interested in continuing, if asked.

Preparation for Committee Session at Indianapolis Conference

We have not yet made any plans for the Committee Fair on Wednesday, July 16th. I plan to participate in the fair, but the members of the committee have not discussed the details yet. I have sent an email to all members of the committee, seeking volunteers who might want to work on a poster. My pending job change and relocation may prevent me from getting personally involved in that project, but nothing has been decided yet. I will update you when I have more information from the other members of the committee.