



# LWI LIVES

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*LWI Lives* is a regular electronic publication of the “Faces of LWI” Committee, which explores and communicates the emerging identity of LWI and its members. We have in common the commitment to being the best legal writing professors that we can be. But we are multi-dimensional people with different strengths, interests, curiosities, and gifts. By profiling individuals in our community, we hope to expand and develop our understanding of who we are and what we aspire to be.

*Headed in the Right Direction*



By Tamara Herrera

“North to the Future” is Alaska’s state motto, but Alaska native Alyssa Dragnich has turned that motto on its head by continually heading South to her future. Although Alyssa grew up in Alaska, most of us know her as the always-beaming legal writing professor from Florida, the Sunshine State.

For more on Alyssa, see page 2.

*Content to Have Found a Law School Home*



By Bob Brain

Anne Enquist is a nationally known legal writing expert. But how much does the legal writing nation really know about her? You might know that she is a “Writing Advisor” in Seattle’s University’s No. 1 ranked Legal Writing program, primarily working with students referred to her by her writing colleagues in a one-on-one setting. But why does she tell students that she is not their “Legal Writing” Professor? And why is she at Seattle, when she started her career at the University of Puget Sound, and never left? For the answers to these questions, and more . . . read on.

For more on Anne, see page 4.

*Legal Writing in the Middle East: Staying Connected Through Travel and Technology*



By Olympia Duhart

He’s a long way from home, but Conrad Sturm feels connected and content.

Sturm, a native of Toronto, is in his fifth year teaching at Qatar University College of Law. He serves as Director of the school’s Legal Writing and Advocacy Skills Program, where he directs a team of seven full-time legal research and writing professors.

For more on Conrad, see page 6.

## Alyssa Dragnich, continued

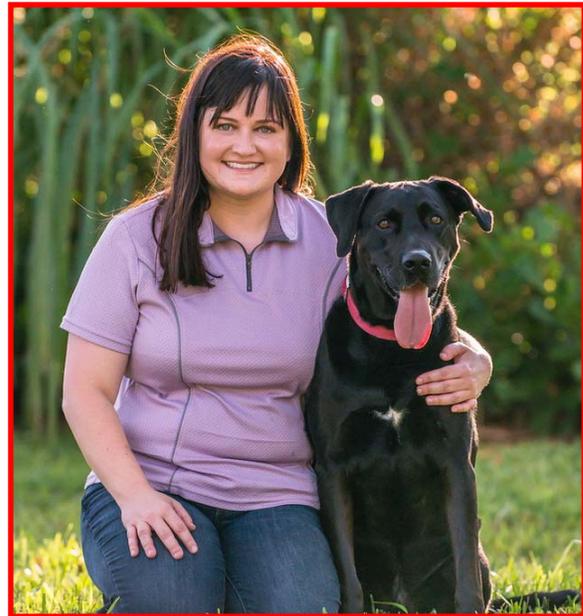
“[E]ven though I lived in the ‘big city’ of Anchorage, we routinely had moose in our backyard and the occasional black bear. Lots of snow and only about five hours of sunlight per day in the winter, so you can see why I escaped to Miami!” Miami wasn’t the first stop on her professional journey, though. Alyssa headed to Duke for her undergraduate studies in political science and then attended the University of Chicago for law school where she was Articles Editor for the *Chicago Journal of International Law*. Like many legal writing professors, the next stop on her professional journey was practice. Specifically, Alyssa joined the firm of Steptoe & Johnson LLP in Washington, D.C., where her practice focused primarily on the regulation of crude oil and petroleum products pipelines before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. But, true to her sunny nature, Alyssa was drawn to pro bono work, too. Notably, she successfully obtained grants of political asylum for clients from Rwanda and Cameroon, and she also worked with a client on obtaining Social Security benefits.

**“One of the best things about this job, in my opinion, is that there are ways to make it fresh and interesting every year. I can’t see myself getting bored.”**

In all of her work, Alyssa has always enjoyed writing and editing the best. “If I hadn’t gone to law school, I think I would have been a book editor. In many ways, teaching legal writing is the perfect job because it allows me to combine my love of writing and editing with my law degree.” It should come as no surprise, then, that Alyssa has repeated her pattern of hard work along with pro bono opportunities in her career as a legal writing professor.



The handsome Wyatt.



Alyssa and Romeo

After a brief time at The Dickinson School of Law as Assistant Director, Career Services, Alyssa joined the University of Miami School of Law faculty in 2010 as Professor of Legal Writing. “At Miami, I primarily teach the first-year legal writing course. I have also developed two upper-level electives, one for students writing law review articles and one for students who still need extra help with their basic writing skills.” Alyssa also presents at conferences regularly and writes articles for various publications, including law reviews and bar publications. You may even have most recently noticed her name as the contact person for the 2016 Southeastern Legal Writing Conference. As for Alyssa’s favorite part of the job: it is working with students. “I love working with students. That’s the best part of my job, day in and day out. I especially like working with struggling students and being there for their light-bulb moments.”

But working with students is not Alyssa’s only passion. She is a “rescuer.” Alyssa is a panel member of Florida Foster Care Review, Inc., and she is a regular volunteer at the Labrador Retriever Rescue of Florida. “I’m dangerously close to ‘Crazy Cat Lady’ status. Or maybe ‘Crazy Animal Lady’ is more apt. I volunteer with dog and cat rescue groups, and with that seems to come a lot of pets. Last summer, I had five nursing kittens and their mother living in my spare bedroom for months. Thankfully they all found homes. The permanent residents in my house are two labradors and a grumpy old cat who bosses them around.” The dog pictured with Alyssa is Romeo, and the other dog is Wyatt, who Alyssa notes is handsome but “badly behaved.”

It should come as no surprise that because she is someone who thrives on going in all directions, Alyssa also loves to trav-

## Alyssa Dragnich, conclusion



el. “I love to travel. Last spring, I took a cruise down the Rhine River. Perhaps the best part was stopping in Strasbourg, France, where I spent a semester studying abroad in college. I’m hoping to make my next trip Colombia.” And the good news for us is that Alyssa plans on making legal writing a permanent stop in her professional journey. When asked where she sees herself in five or ten years, Alyssa enthusiastically shared the following. “Hopefully [I am] still teaching legal writing. One of the best things about this job, in my opinion, is that there are ways to make it fresh and interesting every year. I can’t see myself getting bored.”

As for any chance that she would move back north? “I do try to go back to Alaska to visit every few years—in the summer.”

**Favorite type of food/restaurant?** I love all types of food! My favorite restaurants are small-plates style so that I can try many different things. And no good meal is complete without a good bottle of wine.

**Favorite type of music?** When I was living in small town Pennsylvania, I started listening to country music, and it’s stayed with me as a favorite.

**Favorite band/song?** I have trouble picking a single favorite song, movie, book; I don’t even have a favorite color! Perhaps that means I’m fickle ...

**Favorite legal writing teaching memory? (or piece of advice)** I’m not sure if this counts as a memory because it happens many times every fall, but I love when my former students return after their first summer job and say “My summer internship was just like our class!” It always make me smile.

**Favorite law school memory?** I went to the University of Chicago, which is land of law and economics, although the professors did a good job of not being overbearing about it and other theories were certainly also taught. When I was a 3L, I went to Starbucks and proceeded to spill my coffee all over the floor. The kind barista not only cleaned up the mess I made but also gave me a free replacement coffee. I said “Wow, you are rewarding the wrong behavior. I just made a big mess and you gave me a free coffee. You should reward the customers who don’t create extra work for you.” Then I realized I had been indoctrinated into the law and economics world and it was time for me to graduate! And of course the barista thought I was weird (which I was).

**Favorite memory of growing up in Alaska?** The best adventure I ever had in Alaska was going to Katmai National Park, which is one of the premier places in the world to see brown bears in the wild. Over 2000 bears live in the park, and you can get incredibly close to them. It was an amazing experience.

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“I love to travel.”  
Alyssa in Amsterdam



LegalWriting  
institute

## Anne Enquist, continued

So there you were, sitting at your desk at the University of Puget Sound in 1993, when you got a knock on your door . . .

An administrative assistant walked in and handed me a memo from the President of the University to the law school faculty saying there was a mandatory meeting with the faculty at 1:00 pm, and that all classes were to be suspended that day so we could attend. I had never seen anything like that before and couldn't imagine what was going on.

I went in the hallway and at each office doorway was one of my colleagues, reading the same memo, equally perplexed. No one said anything, but we all ended up in the Faculty Lounge, and someone suggested, "Do you think they sold the law school?" That wasn't as far-fetched as it sounded because the University President had gotten rid of some graduate programs already and was trying to transform the university into a small, undergraduate liberal arts college, which she felt was the school's strength.

We began speculating who might buy the school and one likely contender was Seattle University. So we got hold of our ex-Dean, who had a very good contact with one of the Trustees. He called up his contact, and asked the question like you are supposed to, "I just heard the law school has been sold to Seattle University. Is it true?" The Trustee confirmed it, saying that the Board had met in a confidential session over the weekend.

So now we knew what was coming when we walked into the 1:00 meeting, but the President didn't know she was about to face a room full of angry lawyers. As soon as she told us the law school had been sold to Seattle U, one of my colleagues said, "We are not interested in talking to you any longer. We want to talk to the people from Seattle U." The President then walked out, and the President of Seattle University came in from the hallway – and got a standing ovation from the faculty. It was an amazing moment. He apologized for the secrecy – saying the University of Puget Sound required it – but then told us that no one would lose their jobs; that rather than cut our benefits to match what they had at Seattle University, the school was going to increase the benefits at Seattle U to match ours; and that he and his team had been studying the law school for some time and thought many of our programs were

Of all the many fortunate things that have happened to me in my career, including getting involved in teaching law students and being on the ground floor of the Legal Writing Institute at its first meeting at our law school, the very best thing that has happened to me is getting to know and work with Laurel [Oates]. . . . You should be profiling Laurel, not me.

"gems," including the Legal Writing program.

[How many miles is Seattle from Puget Sound? And how did the transition go?](#)

Seattle is only about 30 miles from Tacoma, and many professors already lived in Seattle, so that part of the move was good for them. Some of our Tacoma alumni were upset, but Seattle is a great city with a vibrant legal market, which was good for the law school. What's more, Seattle University welcomed us with open arms, even building us a beautiful new law school building. For those students who were in the transition, we vowed to give them "the best of both" schools so overall, the sale of the law school was a positive experience.

[That's quite a story. But so is the story about how you got into teaching law students. Can you share it with us?](#)

I have an M.A.T. degree, which is a Masters in Teaching English. I was teaching in the English Department at the University of Puget Sound when the Chair of the English Department asked me if I would be interested in helping out at the law school. The Dean of the Law School, Dean Tausend, believed it would be an employment advantage for his students to be good writers.

I told him I thought of myself as an English professor, not a law school professor. I didn't have a law degree. But the Chair of the English Department had been helping out at the law school for a year already and he said he wasn't a lawyer either, but there was an interesting niche in working one-on-one with law students to improve their writing. He thought I'd be good at it since I enjoyed working one-on-one with my English students. I said I'd try it for a year.

At the end of the year, Dean Tausend asked me to work exclusively for the law school. I wasn't sure, but I was several months pregnant with our first child and he said that I could have complete control over my work schedule. As anyone who has tried to balance family life with work knows, that was an amazing offer and a perfectly timed enticement. I suppose if I had been older and wiser, I might have also asked for more money, but the offer to control my work schedule was irresistible.

## Anne Enquist, conclusion

And there you have been ever since. Did you ever think about getting a law degree?

Not seriously. The first 5-10 years I was teaching at the law school people would come by and tell me they thought I would be a great lawyer. I'm sure they meant it as a compliment, but I never wanted to be a lawyer. I love being an English professor. Writing, and teaching about writing, are my passions. The fact that I get to do those things in an interesting a field like law is just a bonus.

Do your students ever remark on your lack of a law degree?

A few do, but never negatively; they say they like the idea that I have a different perspective. I tell them that I am not their Legal Writing Professor. Someone else teaches them how to read cases and develop legal analysis. I am a "Writing Advisor," someone who is there to diagnose their writing problems and help them develop strategies for solving them.

There are so many things I want to ask you about, so let me wrench myself away from this story to ask you about the Burton Awards. How was it to share a stage with Jay Leno – or maybe I should be asking Jay Leno what it was like to share a stage with Anne Enquist?

The Burton Awards is a fantastically glamorous event at the Library of Congress. There is an interesting mix of people, including Supreme Court justices, students, big law firm partners, and more. Justice Stevens won a writing award the year I received my award, as did many high-powered attorneys and even some law students. There are many Burton award categories. My Burton award was for Outstanding Contributions to Legal Writing Education.

I was so honored to be among the award winners that year. My family, my Dean, and my colleague and co-author, Laurel [Oates,] all came, and they had my Dean introduce me. And yes, Mr. Burton always hires an "A" list celebrity for entertainment after dinner. It was Jay Leno my year.

Did he make any lawyer or writing jokes?

We were all waiting for them, but he did not tell a single one, although he was hysterically funny. But Mr. Leno was very gracious and when we asked for a picture, he came right over and took one with us.

I regret that we only have time to get into one other area. I want to ask you about your collaboration with Laurel. Were there other legal writing books out when you came out with yours? And how did your partnership come about?

There were a few books out when we wrote ours, but we found that we kept writing our own materials, so writing a book seemed like a natural development. It has always been easy and a delight working with Laurel because she has a tremendous work ethic; she is a gifted teacher; and she has a deep dedication to the profession. You should be profiling Laurel, not me.

Of all the many fortunate things that have happened to me in my career, including getting involved in teaching law students and being on the ground floor of the Legal Writing Institute at its first meeting at our law school; the very best thing that has happened to me is getting to know and work with Laurel.

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Anne, Laurel Oates, Jay Leno and Dean Clark at the Burton Awards



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## Conrad Sturm, continued

The school is located in Doha, Qatar, more than 7,600 miles away from the United States. But Sturm, who brings his high energy and affability to his students in Qatar, says that the experience continues to be exciting and enlightening. “It’s been going pretty well here,” says Sturm, 39, Clinical Assistant Professor. “Do I miss home? I don’t miss the cold weather, no. But do I miss family and friends? Yes, to a small extent. The good news is I see them a lot. We have a very flexible schedule. And with the internet I can talk with everyone so easily. People just don’t seem that far away anymore.”

Sturm says he was attracted to teaching in Qatar because of the unique opportunity it offered. Though there are a few challenges he must navigate, he says the overall experience has been overwhelmingly positive. “Although I had hesitations given the regional turmoil, I saw what I believed to be a great opportunity — a real “diamond in the rough” as one of my LRW team colleagues described. The opportunity to learn from such an experience, to design and manage an LRW program from the ground up, and to essentially create the field of LRW in Qatar and the Middle East sounded very exciting,” Sturm says. “After learning more about the country and the law school, I was convinced that the upside of the experience would be far greater than any perceived risks.”

Below, Sturm shares his thoughts about staying connected while teaching legal writing abroad. He specifically credits the wonders of technology, frequent trips home and the comradery cultivated by teaching conferences — especially those directed at Legal Research and Writing professors — with helping him stay plugged in to the legal writing community stateside.

### What is the most surprising thing you’ve learned about the students in Qatar?

I can’t say that there is really anything surprising about the students. It is, however, very interesting to see how cultural differences work their way into students’ perceptions.

### How is it different than teaching in the United States?

Most notably, one has to be aware of the culture and the differences presented by it. It is a high-context culture and so one has to spend time learning about it.

### What is your teaching background?

I’ve taught primarily LRW courses since January 2005. Before joining Qatar University in 2011, I taught Juris Doctor students at the Ave Maria School of Law (U.S.A.), the University of Alberta Faculty of Law (Canada), and the Queen’s University Faculty of Law (Canada). I also taught Master of Laws (LL.M.) students at the Northwestern University School of Law in Chicago.

### What is the biggest challenge you face teaching so far away from home?

Nowadays, I don’t believe that distance creates serious challenges. Moreover, Qatar, as an emerging economy, is growing very quickly. It is catching up with the developed world and so various challenges are being minimized. That said, I would say that not living in a western culture with familiar western approaches presents surprises. Go for a drive around the city, for example, and you’ll see what I mean. While English is the predominant language, there are also language barriers presented by varying levels of English language competency.

### How often do you come home?

About every three months for a week or two. I am also in Naples, Florida, for the months of July and August.

Conrad in  
class  
(left);  
Doah at  
sunset  
(right)





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## Conrad Sturm, conclusion

### What do you do for fun?

Almost all the things I did in the States and Canada, although I travel a lot more. In 2015, for example, I made trips to Munich, Zurich, and London and made stops in Toronto to see family and friends on five occasions. I also attended LRW conferences in L.A., Memphis, and Chicago and visited my vacation home in Florida four times. In Doha, I play tennis and beach volleyball, dine at nice restaurants, go to movies, enjoy exhibitions, meet up with good friends at great places both indoors and outdoors and keep in touch with family and friends via the internet. The weather from November to May is ideal for an outdoor lifestyle. In the summer, well, it is a good time to return to the States!

### How do you stay plugged into the Legal Writing community?

Almost entirely via the LWI Listserv, LWI website, colleagues, and friends at various conferences. In 2015, I was happy to be at the LWI One-Day workshop at USC Gould, ALVD Conference in Memphis, and the Global Legal Skills Conference in Chicago.

### What is the most important lesson you try to impart to your students?

To think critically and exercise the highest levels of professionalism. As they are undergraduate law students (i.e., they enter the Bachelor of Laws program straight from high school), these are often skills that are underdeveloped.



“The weather [in Doha] from November to May is ideal for an outdoor lifestyle.”



### How will these experiences in Qatar inform your teaching once you return to teach in the United States?

It will definitely make me a better teacher, particularly when it comes to international students. I think the experience of directing a program is also very helpful. It's given me the opportunity to get experience in management and team-building.

### Any exciting experiences outside the classroom?

Dune bashing was quite an experience. Jump into an SUV, let some air out of the tires, and with an experienced driver, drive quickly up and down hills of sand without getting stuck. Take a left straight down a dune, or reverse backwards down a dune, and try to hold onto your breakfast!”

### What is your advice for people thinking about teaching legal writing abroad?

“The biggest challenge you will face is probably yourself. Can you be at a physical distance from family and friends? Can you adapt to a different culture, different climate, and an absence of some (or perhaps many) of the comforts of home? Can you adapt to institutions that may do things very differently? Next, realize that in teaching legal writing abroad, you are probably going to face many of the challenges our LRW pioneers faced in the U.S. This is primarily because the field of LRW is still in its infancy in most parts of the world.

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## UPCOMING LEGAL WRITING EVENTS

**March 11-12, 2016**  
Sixth Annual Capital  
Area Legal Writing  
Conference  
University of Maryland  
Carey School of Law

**March 18-19, 2016**  
16th Annual Rocky  
Mountain Legal Writing  
Conference  
University of Arizona  
James E. Rogers College of Law

**July 10-13, 2016**  
2016 LWI Biennial  
Conference  
Portland Hilton and  
Executive Tower

Check out these websites for more  
information on what's happening!

<http://www.aals.org/aals-events/>  
<http://www.lwionline.org/>  
<http://www.alwd.org/>



Next month in *LWI Lives*, read about:



**Kristin B. Gerdy**  
BYU



**Michael D. Murray**  
Michigan  
(Visiting)



**Nantiya Ruan**  
Denver

**Selection and Presentation Process:** We believe it is important for the members of LWI to know our process for creating the newsletter. The Committee is organized into three teams, and each is responsible for selecting, proposing, and writing the three profiles for a particular issue of the newsletter. To ensure a diverse newsletter, the teams propose the names of the selected individuals to the Co-Chairs to ensure that there is a breadth of coverage for each issue. Additionally, the Co-Chairs are keeping a master list of all the profiles, so that we can ensure a wide range of coverage over time.

The Faces of the LWI Committee exists to allow us to learn about the interesting lives of our colleagues. For that to happen, we want and need a diverse selection of legal writing professors to profile. If you have someone in mind that we should put on the list for a future newsletter, please feel free to contact any of our members at the email addresses below. If you could include a note on why you think the individual's profile would be particularly interesting, it will help us in developing priorities.

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