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LWI Lives is a regular electronic publication of the “Faces of LWI” Committee, which explores the emerging identity of LWI and its members. We have a common commitment to being the best legal writing professors 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 our understanding of who we are and what we aspire to be.

Ederlina Co: From Practitioner of Law to Professor of Law



By Byron Wardlaw

As a neophyte to the Legal Writing Institute, I enjoyed the opportunity to meet and interview Professor Ederlina Co. Both Professor Co and I are in our first year of teaching—she as an Assistant Professor of Lawyering Skills at University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law. Interviewing Professor Co gave me the opportunity to talk with someone else who has recently transi-

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Nancy Jones: A Writing Expert and a Musician—What a Duet!



By Janis Kirkland

Every time I attend one of the LWI Biennial Conferences, I come away with something that rejuvenates my interest in teaching legal analysis and writing to law students. This year, the inspiration came from Nancy Jones, who gave a presentation about an online grammar and style course she offers at the University of Iowa to summer legal externs as they scat-

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Kristin Knudsen: The Improbable Optimist



By Iselin Gambert

As soon as she finished law school at Santa Clara University, Kristin Knudsen packed all of her belongings into seven boxes and shipped them general delivery to Anchorage, Alaska. It was 1978. She had never before been to Alaska, and she had no job or friends waiting there for her. But she had always felt the romantic pull of Alaska because it is where her parents met and lived for a time before she

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Ederlina Co

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tioned from practice to the academic world. Here is our conversation regarding her previous practice, her decision to transition to academia, and her commitment to legal education:

LWI Lives Newsletter: Tell me about how you got into your line of work.

Professor Co: I loved my law school experience at Georgetown University Law Center. I knew from my first days there that I would eventually want to return to the academic setting to teach, but I wanted to practice law first. I started my legal career in the Insurance and Litigation practice groups at Wiley Rein LLP in Washington, D.C. A little more than a year after joining the firm, a junior staff attorney position opened up at NARAL Pro-Choice America, also in Washington, D.C. I went to law school because I wanted to work in reproductive rights, so I could not pass up the opportunity to join NARAL's legal department.

After several years with NARAL Pro-Choice America, I needed to move back to my hometown of Sacramento, California for family reasons. When I moved back to Sacramento, I joined then-Magistrate Judge (now United States District Judge) Dale A. Drozd's chambers at the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California. For nearly a decade, I worked exclusively on Judge Drozd's prisoner civil rights and habeas corpus cases. Not long after President Obama nominated Judge Drozd to be a district judge in 2015, McGeorge School of Law announced that it was looking for new faculty to join its Global Lawyering Skills program. After so many years in practice and clerking, the timing felt right for me to make the transition to teaching. I now teach Global Lawyering Skills I (legal research and writing to 1Ls) and in McGeorge's Prisoner Civil Rights Mediation Clinic.

LWI Lives Newsletter: What interests you about the legal writing discipline?

Professor Co: Having worked as a law clerk for nearly a decade, I understand and fully appreciate how important it is for attorneys to have strong legal writing skills. If an attorney is going to be an effective advocate, she or he has to be able to communicate complex ideas in writing. Helping transform a student's writing has been immensely rewarding to me, and I take great pride in knowing I am on the front lines of training new attorneys.

LWI Lives Newsletter: What led you to pursue a career as a legal writing instructor?

Professor Co: As I previously mentioned, I loved my law school experience, and I knew from my first days in law school that I would eventually want to teach. I went to law school because I knew having a law degree would help me be a more effective advocate on behalf of women, minorities, and other marginalized groups in society. I credit my professors with teaching me how to critically examine the law and how to use the law as a tool to advance social justice. My hope is that I will play the same role for many of my students that my professors did for me when I was a student.

LWI Lives Newsletter: What is the hardest part of teaching legal writing?

Professor Co: I am in my first semester of teaching. The hardest part of teaching is balancing class preparation with everything else I need to do. Class preparation takes more time than I could have ever imagined. Thankfully, the faculty at McGeorge and members of the legal writing community have been incredibly supportive and generous in their willingness to share their ideas, problems, and best practices.

LWI Lives Newsletter: What is the one thing you like about your career as a legal writing professor?



Ederlina Co (second from right) with United States District Court Judge Drozd (Center), staff attorneys, and clerks.

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Ederlina Co

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Professor Co: There is so much that I like about my career as a legal writing professor. I am particularly fond of my students. They are eager to learn, genuinely interested in the practice of law, and they have been a joy to get to know on a personal level. I am equally fond of the faculty at McGeorge. They have welcomed me warmly and supported me throughout my transition to academia.

LWI Lives Newsletter: What do you like least about your profession as a legal writing instructor?

Professor Co: Nothing.

LWI Lives Newsletter: Do you have a mentor who supports your endeavors and provides you with advice and insight as you develop your skills as a law professor?

Professor Co: Thankfully, I have several mentors. McGeorge Professors Hether Macfarlane and Mary-Beth Moylan have supported me in my class preparation, problem development, and overall transition into academia. I have also kept in touch with my legal research and writing professor, Professor Diana Donahoe, and she and others at Georgetown have offered me a steady stream of advice and best practices for teaching legal research and writing.

LWI Lives Newsletter: What process did you use, if any, to identify and select a mentor?

Professor Co: Professor Mary-Beth Moylan is the Director of Global Lawyering Skills at McGeorge School of Law, and she paired me with my faculty mentor Professor Hether Macfarlane. Professor Macfarlane has taught legal research and writing for more than twenty years, so she was a natural pick for someone like me who is new to teaching.

LWI Lives Newsletter: What led you to accept a teaching position with McGeorge School of Law at the University of the Pacific?

Professor Co: When McGeorge announced that it was looking for someone to join the Global Lawyering Skills faculty, I was already living in Sacramento, and I felt the timing was right for me to make the transition to academia. Once I met the administration, faculty, and some of the students at McGeorge, I was confident I could make a new home at the school. McGeorge values collegiality, community, and intellectual curiosity, so I am grateful to be a faculty member there.

LWI Lives Newsletter: In what ways does your law school support your creative teaching ideas and interests as a legal writing professor?

Professor Co: Professor Mary-Beth Moylan, McGeorge's Global Lawyering Skills Director, has been incredibly supportive of my efforts to create new legal research and writing problems based on current events. My first legal writing assignment for my students was an objective memo based on the tort of intentional infliction of emotional distress in the context of sexual harassment. The American Bar Association amended the model rules to prohibit sexual harassment in the practice of law this past summer, and I wanted to raise my students' awareness of both the new rule and sexual harassment in the workplace generally. Although my primary goal as a professor is to teach my students how to be effective legal researchers and writers, one of my other main goals is to prepare my students to enter the workforce and that includes preparing them for some of the challenges they may face as young attorneys.

LWI Lives Newsletter: What advice can you give prospective legal writing professors in order to achieve a successful legal teaching career?

Professor Co: I am still new to the profession, but I have already learned the importance of having good mentors and a supportive faculty and administration at your law school. There is a very steep learning curve in the first year of teaching, but having good mentors who can help you navigate the learning curve and a faculty and administration genuinely cheering

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Ederlina Co

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you on makes the first year transition to academia easier and enjoyable.

LWI Lives Newsletter: Why do you think it is critical for beginning legal writing professionals to become involved and engaged with legal writing organizations like LWI?

Professor Co: New professors have so much to learn about teaching. I have learned countless lessons about teaching, providing feedback to my students, and managing my time from the LWI community just by virtue of attending the LWI conference this past summer in Portland and being an active lurker on the LWI list-serve.

LWI Lives Newsletter: Who has been the biggest influence in your life, and what lessons did that individual impart to you?

Professor Co: The biggest influence in my life was my mom, Consuelo Co. She always spoke of the importance of having a good education, striving for excellence, spending quality time with family, and being kind to others. She demonstrated these values and qualities throughout her own life. I remember during one of the last conversations I had with her before she passed away, she asked me if I had started applying for teaching positions because I had expressed interest in teaching for so many years. At the time, I was not on the market, but I told her maybe I would start applying in a few years. Now, a few years later, here I am, and I certainly credit my mom with helping me get here.

LWI Lives Newsletter: What are the most important lessons you've learned in life?

Professor Co: In terms of career lessons, I have learned that having a strong work ethic, a proactive attitude, and a job you genuinely enjoy are crucial to success. In terms of life lessons, I have learned that practicing gratitude is necessary to keep perspective on pretty much everything.

LWI Lives Newsletter: What are you most proud of?

Professor Co: Professionally, I am most proud of where I am standing right now so to speak. As a friend once said to me, it is nice to be able to look backwards and forwards and like what you see. I am so proud of the work I did as a lawyer and a law clerk, and I am equally proud and enthusiastic about my new role as a professor at McGeorge School of Law. Personally, however, I am most proud of my family. My husband and I are raising two delightful daughters, ages 6 and 3. They bring such joy to us and to the world with their kind and generous spirits.

What an impressive legal career! From practicing as an associate attorney, to working as an advocate for reproductive rights, to serving as a law clerk to United States District Court Judge Dale A. Drozd, to now educating as a professor of law for legal writing at McGeorge School of Law. My conversation with Professor Co reminds me of the immense importance of our profession, including the vast opportunities our industry affords us all, but more importantly, the many challenges we face daily as we advocate for those less fortunate, and our tireless efforts to help right the many wrongs in our society through the use of the law. As law school professionals, we then are charged to commit to training future lawyers so they too will continue the efforts to help change our world into a better place for one and all.

If you'd like to get in touch with Ederlina Co, please contact her at eco@pacific.edu.



Ederlina Co and her mother, Consuela Co

Nancy Jones

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ter across the country to engage in various practice-based experiences. This course seems like an appropriate way to offer students an opportunity to improve their writing skills at a time when they want to impress their supervising attorneys and when we want them to represent our schools well.

When I approached Nancy about a profile for *LWI Lives!*, I learned that she has a Ph.D. rather than a J.D., which made me even more intrigued because I'd love to have someone with this writing expertise available to help my students. Nancy directs the Writing Resource Center at the University of Iowa College of Law, helping law students learn how to improve their writing, focusing largely on organization and clarity, but also assisting as needed with surface features such as correct grammar and punctuation. She reports that about 75% of Iowa's first year students work with the Writing Resource Center as they prepare their papers. Upper-level students work with the Center, as well, although these student often are focused on efforts to fine-tune writing samples and cover letters.

Nancy initially expressed reservations about whether LWI members would be interested in her profile, but I found our discussion stimulating. Within the first few minutes, I grabbed a "nugget" that I shared with my students in my next class. Nancy explained that when she was in high school, her father, a patent attorney, would occasionally bring his briefs home for her to read. He realized that if she could not understand them, the necessary clarity of expression was missing. I've always told my students that a reasonably intelligent non-lawyer should understand their analysis. Now I have a story to link with that premise . . . and we all know that a story makes information memorable and leaves a greater impression.

In addition to teaching writing, Nancy seems to have two key interests that stand out: music and travelling to fascinating places. Nancy is quite active in her church and, for the past 10 years, has enjoyed being part of the bell choir there. She finds this activity satisfying both because the goal is to produce beautiful music and because it requires precision in the combined effort of each participant. Each bell ringer has a crucial role and must listen carefully to everyone else so as to come in at exactly the right moment, at exactly the right volume, and with exactly the right note.

In our conversation, Nancy linked music with some of her favorite vacations. She spoke of traveling through Europe and visiting the old cathedrals, with their splendid organs. In fact, she indicated that if she were to repeat her life with an alternate profession, she would be an organist traveling the world, playing the organ in each of the great churches and cathedrals.

Nancy's love for fascinating places began with travels during what she described as a "past life." In her twenties, Nancy lived in Madrid, teaching English to Spanish students. She also had a job teaching in the Department of Defense school system, first in what was then West Germany and later near Cambridge, England. Nancy chuckled at how those positions fostered

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Nancy Jones

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an ability to deal with the unpredictable. She recalled one instance, for example, when a much-anticipated shipment of textbooks and classroom materials turned out to contain 10 bass drums instead. Nancy also noted that those positions allowed her to be “footloose and fancy free,” commenting that at one point she could pack all her possessions in her Volkswagen Beetle. She also recalled that those positions provided a great launching-off point for visits to other locations in Europe, such as Florence, Paris, and Corfu, all quick flights away.

Nancy identified her more recent “favorite places” as Iceland, which she says is “not icy,” and Greenland, which she described as “not green.” In keeping with her interest in organs and great cathedrals, Nancy mentioned Hallgrímskirkja, the largest church in Iceland, as one of the special places in that country. The wonderful organ in this very modern church, she says, compares favorably with the organs in the classic cathedrals in other parts of Europe. In western Greenland, Nancy enjoyed the sparse

population and dramatic scenery, including huge icebergs that regularly break off from the Ilulissat Ice Fjord (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), sometimes filling the bay. One of Nancy’s favorite memories was an evening cruise beyond the bay with about a dozen other people in a small wooden boat, sliding among the icebergs with the rich colors of a two-hour sunset as a backdrop. (Above the Arctic Circle, summer nights are very short, sunsets very long.).

Nancy and her husband have two sons in their mid-twenties. One son is completing a program in Fluid Power Engineering Technology in Minneapolis. The other is an entrepreneur in the San Francisco Bay area. Although neither child is carrying on Nancy’s interest in teaching writing, both are musicians in their own right. One is a cellist, and the other makes and plays guitars. And with trips to such places as the Boundary Waters, Baja California, England, Spain, and Scandinavia under their belts, they seem destined to have a life of travel themselves.

If you’d like to get in touch with Nancy, please contact her at nancy-lyn-jones@uiowa.edu.

Kristin Knudsen

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was born. She’d grown up watching her parents’ old Kodachrome slides from their life there: photos they’d taken out the windows of airplanes, of whales being butchered, of fishing trips, of their little hunting cabin near Haines. There was a photo of her mom doing a cheesecake pose on top of a Jeep near a marshy area by the river. “We thought it looked like so much fun,” reminisced Kristin, and so off she went, tucked into a tiny Mazda with two school friends and a guy they’d met who was headed to Alaska for a backpacking trip. The rest of Kristin’s life was about to begin.



Denali, October 1980

going to sleep outside,” he announced in terror, “there’re animals out there!” They continued onward, eventually spotting a black bear in the berry bushes in Canada. “I never saw Marsha get out of a sleeping bag so fast in my life!” remarked Kristin, and from then on there were two people camping out in the Mazda each night.

By the time they got to Denali National Park, Kristin needed a break from her friends, and she decided to make her own way to Anchorage from there. For the next three days, she hiked along with a full view of the mountain before her, unobscured by clouds. “It was the most awesomely beautiful, won-

derful place to be. It was fabulous. It was so uplifting, in the best kind of a sense, in the way that only intensely open country can do for you.”

Kristin eventually met up with her friends in Anchorage,

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The drive north was eventful, perhaps more so for Kristin’s traveling companions than for her. She’d grown up camping, but her two school buddies were Angelenos who hadn’t spent much time outdoors. Somewhere in Oregon, one of them came across a raccoon. “I’m not



Kristin Knudsen

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where it was pouring rain. After one night at their campsite, Kristin knew she needed to find both a job and an apartment. She printed out her resume and went door to door. But lawyers were scarce in Alaska at that time, and within a week she had landed a job with a solid labor law firm. “It was a good fit. I never looked back.”

Kristin eventually moved from the firm to the attorney general’s office, where she worked in the special litigation section for 17 years. She did a few stints as a hearing officer for the state department of labor, and eventually she became the first chair of the department’s Worker’s Compensation Appeals Commission. It was there that she first got involved in studying legal writing, through the National Judicial College, where she was sent for training. Kristin hadn’t had any formal legal writing training during law school, so the intensive training she received there was eye opening. “[Having] that consciousness of exactly what you’re saying, that everything matters, was amazing.”

In 2010, her term at the appeals commission having ended, Kristin went to the National Judicial College full time to get her master’s in Judicial Studies. Her professors wanted her to stick around and do a PhD, but she instead applied to the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) Justice Center to teach legal writing. She wasn’t planning on becoming a full-time academic, but an adjunct course in the spring of 2012 led to a full-time job, and the rest is history. She currently

What is the University of Alaska Anchorage Justice Center?

Alaska’s legislature established the University of Alaska Anchorage Justice Center in 1975 with the mandate to provide statewide justice-related research, education, and service.

To that end, it offers undergraduates the opportunity to graduate with a bachelor of arts or a minor in Justice or in Legal Studies. It also trains paralegals, offering both an associate of applied sciences degree and a post-baccalaureate degree.

Finally, faculty members produce research in areas including violence and violent crime, law and the courts, substance abuse, rural justice issues, homelessness, policing, and juvenile justice. Both the **Alaska Justice Statistical Analysis Center** and the **Alaska Justice Information Center** are housed in the Justice Center.



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Taking a break while back-country cross-country skiing. It’s still a great way to get out in the winter, but Kristin’s gear is better: No more wooden skis or bamboo poles!

serves as Legal Studies Coordinator at the UAA Justice Center and is in the process of preparing her tenure file.

What makes Kristin’s job interesting is that she is teaching legal writing in a state without a law school. “I sometimes struggle with [comments like], ‘Oh, you’re just training paralegals, just teach them to fill out a form,’ etc. That’s not it at all,” Kristin laments. “I’m trying to teach a 1L type analysis—pushing it as far as I can push my students. Some have gone to law school and said, ‘They’re not as hard as you were!’” Students enroll in her program for a whole host of reasons, and Kristin tries to inspire and challenge each of them. “What we’re training here are *people*. . . . We have people using this to find out if they want to go to law school and get pre-law training. And then there are people that will be the mid-level people, who used to have a year of law school, who do regulatory compliance, etc.” One of the goals of the program is to train people for those mid-level careers who will stay in Alaska. “Getting kids back after they’ve gone to law school is a big problem. They go [out of state], spend three years somewhere else, and do they want to come back to Alaska? No, not once they’ve tasted the big city life!”

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Kristin Knudsen



The photo to the left shows a whale being cut up for distribution to families in a village along the lower Kuskokwim River in 1950. At the time, plastic bins were not available so people used 55 gallon drums to carry materials from place to place. Notice the teeth in the whale's head. It is probably a killer whale.

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Despite brief stints living in the lower 48 (first to Portland, Oregon, to accompany her husband while he went to law school, and then to Reno, Nevada, to attend the National Judicial College), Alaska is truly home to Kristin, and it is clear that she savors it in all of its raw beauty and has learned how to make the most of its extremes. Raising her two daughters in Alaska, she made sure to always have “lots of festivities during winter to keep things going.” From Thanksgiving forward, one festival or another was always right around the corner, from filling her daughters’ shoes with candy for St. Nicholas Day to building a bonfire on New Year’s Eve to cheering the dogs on during the Iditarod. “Kids stand along the route, rooting ‘Bootie! Bootie!’” Kristin explains. “Mushers [that’s the name for the people who race the dogs] have sacks of old dog booties. They throw the booties to the kids, and they scramble for the dog booties. It’s sort of our version of Mardi Gras—like the beads.”

Perhaps nothing brings winter to life more than the aurora borealis, or northern lights—a sight that, despite seeing it countless times, Kristin still finds magical. The first time she saw it, she walked out of her basement apartment, looked up, and was frozen in place. “It was so beautiful. Huge, dripping curtains of color. And there were all these shades of yellow into chartreuse and green. Not just curtains, you’d get these shooting colors—like some sort of alien ship was leaving a trail of color behind it. To me, it was like, wow! This is so magical! That the sky is just dancing. That’s what it feels like: like it’s alive and dancing.”

Appreciating life and the world in all its extremes, both high and low, dark and light: that’s something Kristin has mastered. In the summer, she says, despite days of never-setting sun, “in the back of your mind, winter’s coming—so I can’t [put anything off until] later.” When I asked her whether she has a philosophy or attitude she strives to live by, Kristin paused for a moment. “I don’t think it’s a bad thing to be improbably optimistic,” she said. “I have been such the beneficiary of such wildly improbable events. It’s completely improbable that I would end up here today. Totally improbable that I would go to law school. Or get in a car and drive to Alaska in the mid-70s. That was not the normal thing, you know? I think a lot of allowing improbable things to happen is a good thing. Staying open to those kinds of events is a good thing. I guess I’m an improbable optimist. I think that’s not a bad way of living.”

If you’d like to get in touch with Kristin Knudsen, you can email her at kknudsen@alaska.edu.



Kristin’s first fish in Alaska.
36 pounds of King Salmon!

What have you read lately?

Legal writers are always looking for something interesting to read. For this issue, we asked a group of our colleagues—the members of the LWI Board—to recommend a few books they have loved. Here's what they had to say:



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Linda Berger,
Past president

The Underground Railroad by Colson Whitehead. I read this stunning novel during the first few weeks of school this fall. Whitehead's images and words seem almost carved into my memory.



Kim Holst,
Secretary

I recently read *The Portable Veblen* by Elizabeth Mckenzie. It's a fun and somewhat quirky book about a woman named Veblen who is recently engaged and encountering several obstacles and questions about whether she's on the right path for her life. And, there are conversations with squirrels.



Mary Bowman

Over the summer, I was reading a lot of early U.S. history, including Ron Chernow's biography *Hamilton* and two books by Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Brothers* and *The Quartet*. It's amazing how relevant that history is to politics today, and not just to fans of the Hamilton musical.



Iselin Gambert

Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants by Robin Wall Kimmerer. A magical and gorgeouss read. The stories it tells, through both an indigenous and scientific lens, opened my eyes to the wonders of pecans and asters and maple trees in ways that will never let me look at plants the same way again.



Bob Brain

A Great Reckoning by Louise Penny. It's the latest book in the Armand Gamache series. I have "binge read" the Gamache books since one of my colleagues suggested one for me. Louise Penny makes Canadian life near the Vermont boarder come to life and makes me want to live there—and I hate the cold.

Sue
Painter-
Thorne

Sy Montgomery's *The Soul of an Octopus: A Surprising Exploration into the Wonder of Consciousness*. The author immerses herself into the seemingly alien world of octopuses and reveals they are more than the unthinking blobs they are often portrayed to be. In the process, she—and the reader—learn more about consciousness itself.



Kim Chanbonpin,
President

I loved *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi. Imagine the DNA double helix structure; in exquisite prose, Gyasi's debut novel traces a 300-year family history following each strand from their initial separation in 18th century Ghana until their fated reunion in present-day California.



Kris Tiscione,
President-Elect

I just finished reading a wonderful trilogy of novels by Jane Gardem, the first of which is *Old Filth*. It's a wonderfully humorous and poignant series about an English barrister who began his legal career in Southeast Asia and lives out the end of his days in a small English town next door to his personal and professional nemesis.

UPCOMING LEGAL WRITING EVENTS

December 3, 2016
5th Colonial Frontier
Legal Writing Conference
Duquesne University
School of Law

January 3-7, 2017
111th AALS Annual
Meeting
Hilton San Francisco
Union Square

March 15-17, 2017
XII Global Legal Skills
Conference
Monterey, Mexico

May 23-25, 2017
5th Annual AASE National
Conference
Texas A&M School of Law
Ft. Worth, TX

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/>

Scheduling Change!

We heard a little secret . . . many of you are saddened about the inability to read about our terrific community over the summer. So we've changed our schedule to relieve you from your sadness. We will now be publishing every other month, including the summer! Now you'll get a new edition every two months throughout the entire year!

Also, from now on, next edition's profiles will be a surprise! No more letting the cat out of the bag!

The **Faces of LWI** Committee exists to allow us to learn about the interesting lives of our colleagues. If you know of someone who we should interview, please email any committee member. Please include a short note explaining why you think the individual should be profiled.

Selection and Presentation Process: We believe it is important for LWI members to know our process for creating the newsletter. The Committee is organized into three teams, and each team is responsible for 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 keep a master list of all the profiles, so that we can ensure a wide range of coverage over time. If you think LWI Lives should feature a particular LWI member, please share your idea with one of the committee members.

Faces of LWI Committee Members



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