



# LWI LIVES

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Feel free to reach out to any one of us if you have questions about this edition.

*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.

## Kim Nayer—Always Managing Knowledge



*By Jennifer W. Mathews*

It’s fitting that Kim Nayer’s Twitter bio combines superhero alter-ego Peter Parker and Marian the Librarian—with a dash of Jack McCoy from *Law & Order* for good measure. Kim has been managing legal knowledge with heroic dedication for all of her professional life. As a law librarian, research lawyer, legal writing professor, and social media contributor, one thing remains constant: She is always deeply engaged in the process of locating, analyzing, and conveying information effectively.

*For more about Kim, see page 2.*

## Salinas Uses Past Struggles to Inspire Future Lawyers



*By Rebecca Rich*

O.J. Salinas is a first-generation college graduate who wanted to quit law school after his first year. He is now a published author and the first and only Hispanic to ever hold a full-time faculty position at the University of North Carolina School of Law.

*For more about O.J., see page 4.*

## Susan Thrower: Coming Home to the South



*By Elizabeth Berenguer*

Susan Thrower is a Virginia native, and although she’s lived in Chicago for the last twelve years, her heart has never left the south. In 1996, Susan began her academic career as a legal writing instructor at DePaul in Chicago, Illinois. Four years later, she eagerly made her way back to DC as the associate director at both American University and George Washington, but her time home was cut short in 2004 when she advanced her career to become the director of legal writing at DePaul.

*For more about Susan, see page 6.*

## Kim Nayer, continued

Kim was an undergraduate science major at University of Alberta and found her experience there prepared her well for law school and a legal career. “Having a science background has been very advantageous,” she says. “The rigor of science prepared me for logical analysis, and the structure of lab reports for legal writing.”

She went on to complete law school at Osgoode Hall Law School, part of York University in Toronto, Ontario. After graduating, she practiced in civil litigation for two to three years but did not find it suited her long-term goals. She realized that what she found most energizing was discovering legal solutions. “I knew how to approach solving a problem,” she says, “and I realized that I wanted to focus on that part of lawyering.”

Kim worked briefly as a research lawyer on a contract basis, but soon found herself employed in-house by a law firm in Edmonton, Alberta, as a research and knowledge management lawyer. “This was in the late 1990s,” Kim says. “Knowledge management was in its very early stages. My firm was interested in building an in-house database of firm legal research and firm work product, and that was a challenge I enjoyed.”

Kim recognized that there was a difference between legal information, or bits of data, and legal knowledge, which is the product when a lawyer adds skill and thought and judgment to that data. “Knowledge has value,” she says. “Firms don’t generally charge directly for a piece of knowledge in a database, but what lawyers offer clients are knowledge-driven solutions. Knowledge management systems are a way for firms to make work more cost effective later.”

A good knowledge management system isn’t just a set of legal memoranda, says Kim. “It should also include things like an annotated contract, showing why a particular word choice mattered. Or opinion letters or annotated precedents.”

While she was working there, Kim also reorganized the firm’s law library, and that stimulated her interest in taking classes part-time at the University of Alberta toward a Masters of Library and Information Studies degree. “I enjoyed the classes and could see how they were contributing to the set of skills I could offer. My firm supported me in getting the graduate degree, which I completed in 2001.”

Kim had been informally teaching legal research and writing to firm attorneys in her role as firm librarian and research lawyer. It was while she was earning her MLIS degree that she first taught legal research and writing in a formal educational setting. “The coverage was mostly research, because that’s where the class was focused in the late 1990s. But it gave me a wonderful practical opportunity to put what I knew to wider use. It was fun to be able to go into a classroom and use my experience and my firm’s reputation to add some real-life context and weight to the lessons I was teaching.”



Kim canoeing in one of her favorite places, Jasper, Alberta, Canada, while on a family vacation to celebrate her parents’ golden anniversary in 2015

After completing her MLIS, Kim continued practicing as a research attorney, working in Toronto for several years. She then moved with her family to Victoria, British Columbia, right around the time of the economic downturn in 2008-09. Given the job market, she was delighted when an opening for a law librarian was posted at the University of Victoria. “It’s good to have a library degree handy,” she notes with a bit of wry humor, like someone who has prudently stashed a Clif bar in her backpack.

As a librarian, Kim did some research training with students, but she was also interested in a larger teaching role. When the school unexpectedly needed someone to step in and teach two sections of legal research and writing, she was excited to step in. “I love working with first-year students,” she says. “I remember this course from when I attended law school, and I enjoy giving the class some practical grounding.”

Kim was promoted to the roles of head law librarian and associate university librarian in January 2015. She quickly discovered that maintaining a full teaching load at the same time was too intense. She decided to step out of her role teaching the first-year legal research and writing class. Then, to her shock, her father died unexpectedly and tragically. “I was very close to my father. He was a social studies and history teacher, and we shared a deep love of teaching. After he died, I heard from

## Kim Nayer, conclusion



some of his 30 years' worth of students who were upset about his premature death. They wrote wonderful things about him and how approachable he was. Some kids even said he was the reason they stayed in school. It was quite often the students who did not do the best academically who loved him the most."

That resonated with Kim's own experience with her students, and she realized at this time of deep loss that she wanted to maintain her first-year legal research and writing class for another year. "I was completely overworked, but I wanted that connection with the first-year students. I wanted the sense that I was making this experience less stressful for them."

Although she has since stopped teaching the first-year class, Kim still teaches an upper-level writing class and enjoys the flexibility that it offers. "Other than a major writing requirement, the sky is the limit!" she says. "I like having students work on some writing that is more outward-facing, since they could be asked to do that for client development at a firm or at a professional presentation." Toward this end, she has integrated blogging assignments—with an access to justice focus—and offers students the opportunity to publish on Slaw.ca, a Canadian blog, or to provide commentary on CanLII, which is a wide-ranging collection of Canadian primary and secondary legal information (the Canadian analogue to the Legal Information Institute coverage of U.S. law run out of Cornell). Drawing upon her experience with knowledge management, Kim also introduces upper-level students to legal research management tools such as Zotero, LearnLeo, and Lexbox.

Kim maintains an active social media presence both personally and professionally. She is a frequent contributor at Slaw.ca, a collaborative blog billed as "Canada's online legal magazine," and she maintains not only a personal Twitter account (@kimnayer), but she also started Twitter accounts for the University of Victoria Law Library (@UVicLib) and for the University of Victoria Faculty of Law Legal Research and Writing Program (@UVicLRW). "There are strong communities of legal information professionals and law library professionals on Twitter," says Kim. "I've learned so much and made so many contacts and friends!"

Kim has been at the forefront of recognizing the broader implications of social media in the legal classroom. In her classes, she teaches students how to use social media as a distinct legal research tool, and, in a dazzling meta-loop, she has actually blogged about covering social media as a research source in her classes. However, she is aware that the proliferation of social media outlets means there is "a lot of junk out there," and she specifically addresses that with her students, teaching them how to evaluate and filter such sources to use them effectively.

In her non-professional time, Kim enjoys family life with her husband and two children. She loves ("loves!" she repeats) to travel and meet new people. She is a film buff and freely owns up to being "Hamilton-crazy." She also enjoys writing book reviews and has reviewed books ranging from legal topics to South Asian literature to children's books.

You can reach Kim at [knayer@uvic.ca](mailto:knayer@uvic.ca).



A recent capture of Kim's personal Twitter profile page and avatar (@kimnayer)



LegalWriting  
institute

## O.J. Salinas, continued



O.J. with UNC's Hispanic/Latino oral advocacy team



O.J. with UNC's 2016-2017 client counseling teams

O.J. grew up in a small town in south Texas that was an hour from the border of Mexico. When O.J. left Texas to attend law school at the University of Dayton on a full-ride scholarship, he'd never seen snow before. He wanted to experience a new environment, and he felt that the scholarship was a great opportunity for him to help change his life and the lives of others. That new environment did not turn out to be as positive as O.J. had anticipated.

Although O.J. was getting good grades in law school, he did not particularly enjoy the law school experience. He hated being called on in class and struggled to adapt to the Socratic method. He was in awe at how freely students participated in class, even when the professor did not call on them. And as one of only a few Hispanic students in the law school, it was hard to overcome the sense that he just didn't belong there.

O.J. wanted to quit law school after his 1L year and become a therapist. But he decided to give law school one more try and came back for his 2L year after rethinking his "opportunity." At the time, Dayton had three semesters of required legal writing, and in the third semester, students completed a required oral argument. Students who did well continued on to compete in the intraschool moot court competition. In the fall of his 2L year, O.J. won the entire competition. He recalls, "While I was a 1L, I couldn't appreciate the benefits of the Socratic style of teaching, and that made me question whether I was capable of doing what lawyers do. It made me question whether I could be an attorney. It really wasn't until I won the competition that I really believed that I could be an effective oral advocate and do what lawyers do."

These early law school experiences inform the work that O.J. does now, as a legal writing professor and academic success specialist at UNC. He finds himself regularly sharing his personal story with students who are having a difficult time transitioning to the study of law. And in fact, the championship plaque from that moot court competition hangs on the wall in his office. He points it out and shares the accompanying story with students who are questioning whether law school and the legal profession are right for them.

After graduating from law school, O.J. moved back to Texas and practiced civil litigation for seven years. When the adversarial nature of a litigation practice began to take its toll, O.J. trained to be a mediator and eventually went back to school for a masters in counseling from the University of Texas at San Antonio ("UTSA"). This was in some ways a return to his educational beginnings as an undergraduate psychology and philosophy major at St. Mary's University in San Antonio. After receiving his masters degree, O.J. began teaching at UTSA in an academic support setting for undergraduates.

Ultimately, it was his academic support background that led to his transition into the world of legal writing. O.J. joined the faculty at UNC in 2011, when the law school transitioned from an adjunct based legal research and writing program to a full-time faculty program. At the time, UNC was looking for faculty who could contribute to both its newly developed legal writing program and established academic success program. O.J.'s unique background proved to be a good fit.

## O.J. Salinas, conclusion

At UNC, O.J. teaches legal writing and negotiation and works with students in an academic support role. He helps run UNC's Legal Education Advancement Program ("LEAP"), a voluntary pre-orientation program that helps incoming 1Ls transition to the study of law. He also coaches UNC's Client Counseling teams and the Hispanic/Latino oral advocacy teams. For the past two years, O.J.'s Client Counseling teams have won the ABA Regional Client Counseling Competition. O.J. also recently turned his client counseling wisdom and experience into a book, *A Short and Happy Guide to Effective Client Interviewing and Counseling*, published by West in 2016.

O.J. reports that the most rewarding part of his job is working with students in one-on-one settings and watching them progress, no matter where they begin when they start law school. A close second is working collaboratively with his legal writing colleagues at UNC, whom he states are not only great faculty devoted to teaching and training future lawyers, but wonderful friends as well. O.J. has also appreciated the strides that have been made in recent years both at UNC and nationally in law schools both recognizing the value of legal writing teaching and understanding the time and effort that it takes to do the job effectively. But he sees this issue as a continued challenge for the profession, and he hopes that law schools throughout the country continue to lessen the disparity between faculty who teach experiential courses, like legal writing, and faculty who teach podium courses.

When O.J. isn't working, he spends lots of time with his family. He and his wife Doris met while in college, and they were married in 2002. They have a daughter, Jordan, who is 11, and a son, Evan, who is 6. O.J. coaches Evan's YMCA basketball team, and he and his family enjoy cheering on the Tar Heels at various sporting events in Chapel Hill. O.J. and Doris also love Broadway shows. One of their first dates was going to see *The Phantom of the Opera* while they were in college, and last summer, they saw *Hamilton* in New York City.

Throughout his life, O.J. has loved helping people solve problems. It's what drew him to law school in the first place. O.J.'s years of practice, training as a mediator, and law and counseling degrees have prepared him to help his current students solve the many and various problems that law school presents—and to spot and take advantage of the opportunities as well. As one of Hamilton's famous songs says, O.J. did not "throw away his shot." He doesn't want his students throwing away their shots either.

You can reach O.J. at [osalinas@email.unc.edu](mailto:osalinas@email.unc.edu).



O.J. with his kids and wife:  
Evan, Jordan, and Doris



O.J. coaching YMCA basketball

## Susan Thrower, continued



## Blue, DeSean, and the Redskins . . . just a few of Susan's passions

Susan has long desired to return home to the south, and in 2016, she finally landed back here as the director of the first-year legal writing program at Campbell University, Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law in Raleigh, North Carolina. Though not her native state, she finally feels back home since Raleigh is just a short drive from her picturesque home in Virginia. Fortunately, she has the flexibility to travel on weekends and other times off to recharge and visit her family.

She finds the best way to relax is to get moving, and she especially loves hiking in the woods near her Virginia home. A nurturer and animal lover, Susan also decompresses by snuggling with her cat, Blue. This pewter-colored beauty is quite a talker and during chilly winters he wraps around Susan like a snuggly scarf. He is also her grading companion who reminds her to take frequent breaks so she can scratch his back and rub his belly. In the picture, you can see his "ok, it's time to stop grading now!" face.

One of her great passions is football. On any given Sunday in Autumn, you'll find Susan cheering on her beloved Washington Redskins. She's held season tickets (see the photo with the great view?) since 2004 and rarely misses a game. Once, she even gained access to the tunnel where she got to watch the team take the field. As you can see from this photo, she was up close and personal with wide receiver DeSean Jackson! She describes football scientifically and loves how the strategy reveals three-dimensional calculations on the field. Football also brings happy memories of time spent with her father.

Susan holds a bachelor degree from the University of Virginia and a juris doctorate from Wake Forest. Before entering academia in 1996, she practiced in the areas of bankruptcy and secured lending. She has also consulted for the American Bar Association's Center for Professional Responsibility. She began teaching legal writing in 1996, briefly served as associate director at George Washington, and directed the program at DePaul. In summer 2016, she joined the faculty at Campbell University, Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law where she is revitalizing the first-year legal writing program.

My first conversation with Susan occurred in the spring of 2016 shortly after we both accepted teaching positions at Campbell Law School. She was slated to direct the first-year legal writing program, and I was hired to develop and direct the upper-level program. At the time, I was nervous about working side-by-side with her to develop the legal writing program at Campbell. I had never met her and did not know anything about her. I wasn't even sure our approach to education would be synchronous. I asked her if she wanted to chat on the phone, so we could figure out how we would parse the curriculum to build a coordinated and cohesive program. She thought that would be a good idea, so we set up a time to chat.

That first call lasted nearly two hours—far longer than I expected—because we were getting along so well. The first thing I noticed about Susan was her voice. It's beautifully melodic. She doesn't merely speak, either. Rather, she paints vivid pictures with words. She also patiently listens and strives

## Susan Thrower, conclusion

to understand perspectives outside of her own. Of course, we discussed work, but we also enjoyed a comfortable rapport and friendly conversation. Within just a few minutes, I quickly realized we approached education, leadership, and curriculum design from the same place. My fears were allayed, and though we started off as strangers, by the end of that phone call we had laid the foundation for a great friendship.

Back in the fall, we began meeting once a week on Wednesday evenings to discuss all sorts of work-related matters: students, classes, curriculum, and other things like that. These conversations most often occurred at a little place called Whiskey Kitchen located just a few blocks away from the law school. Depending on the day of the week, we call our time together Terrific Tuesdays or Whiskey Wednesdays. Our conversations have evolved far beyond just work matters, too. Now we discuss everything from family to politics to movies or books. It's nothing strange for us to occupy a table for 3 or 4 hours on any given night.

Our weekly meetings have become an essential tradition for us. After classes are wrapped up and student panics quelled, Susan and I lock up our offices and step out into Raleigh. Since August, we have watched the leaves as they changed from green to a kaleidoscope of fall oranges, yellows, and red. We watched those same leaves fall from the trees into a patchwork quilt warming the ground against winter's chill. Now, we see spring emerging as the trees bud, the tips of tulips break soil, and the sweet song of birds echo all around us.

Lately, Terrific Tuesdays have become far more about socializing than working. Two of our friends routinely join us to share plates of farm fresh treats and toast the ups and downs of life. The contrast of rustic wood and bright white walls is unexpectedly warm and inviting. The South's charm emanates from all corners—the servers light up when they see our familiar faces, the pet-friendly patio buzzes with laughter, and the fire crackles from the pit. Seasonal treats like organic beets and farm fresh cheese delight our palates while southern staples like biscuits with pork cracklin' and homemade butter fill our bellies. (Susan, a vegetarian, kindly reserves her share of meat for those of us who will eat it.) Of course, no night can end before we order at least one slice of shoofly pie.

Since that first conversation, Susan has become my dear friend. We share a vision for the legal writing program at Campbell and together shoulder the responsibility of realizing it in full. I have never enjoyed such a pleasant symbiotic working relationship with anyone, and I'm honored to work side-by-side fostering Campbell's legacy of exceptional lawyering. She willingly shares advice, her bowl of candy is never empty, and her arms are always ready to distribute a warm hug. She is kind, compassionate, thoughtful, and wise. She encourages me and is loyal, hardworking, and selfless. I'm grateful she's made her way home and that the South has welcomed her back with open arms.

You can reach Susan at [thrower@campbell.edu](mailto:thrower@campbell.edu).



Susan's bucolic home in Virginia

## UPCOMING LEGAL WRITING EVENTS

**April 22, 2017**

Southeast Regional Legal  
Writing Conference  
Stetson University  
College of Law

**April 29, 2017**

LWI Biennial Moot Court  
Conference  
John Marshall Law School

**May 19, 2017**

Empire State Legal  
Writing Conference  
New York Law School

**May 23-25, 2017**

5th Annual AASE  
National Conference  
Texas A&M School of Law

**July 11-13, 2017**

6th Biennial Conference on  
Applied Legal Storytelling  
American University Washington  
College of Law

**July 19-21, 2017**

ALWD Conference 2017  
University of Minnesota Law School

**August 25-26, 2017**

7th Annual Western Regional  
Legal Writing Conference  
Seattle University School of Law

**September 15-16, 2017**

Central States Regional Legal  
Writing Conference  
Indiana University McKinney  
School of Law

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

<http://www.lwionline.org/>

<http://www.alwd.org/>

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

## Scheduling Change!

Be on the look out for  
our NEW summer  
editions in  
June and August!

**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 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 keep 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 who we should put on the list for a future newsletter, please feel free to email any of the committee members listed below. If you could include a note explaining why you think the individual's profile would be particularly interesting, it will help us in developing priorities.

## Committee Members



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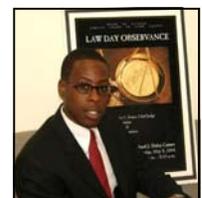
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