



# LWI LIVES

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Volume V Issue VI

August 2019

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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.

## Brad Desnoyer: Motivating Students & Comic-Book Villains



By Alexa Z. Chew

Brad Desnoyer appreciates the similarities between legal writing and writing comics. As Associate Clinical Professor of Law at IU McKinney School of Law in Indianapolis and a published comic book writer, his professional life involves both.

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## Adam Eckart: Taught to Teach



By Dyane O’Leary

Some children of school teachers steer clear of the profession; others lean toward it. For Adam, a new member of Suffolk’s Legal Practice Skills Program, the “professor” title was always something that belonged to his parents—until now.

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## Sue Liemer: Lawyering & the Arts—A Natural Collaboration



By Nancy Soonpaa

For Sue Liemer, Director of Legal Communication and Methods at Elon, artistic skills and lawyering go hand in hand: she first considered law school while working at Sotheby’s, she saw the striking similarities between learning dance and teaching law, and her scholarship includes analyzing the intersection between art and the law.

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**Contributors to this Edition:**

- Alexa Chew
- Dyane O’Leary
- Rebecca Rich
- Nancy Soonpaa

## Brad Desnoyer

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### 1. You've won several teaching awards. What about your teaching style do you think resonates with students?

This is so self-promoting, but the constant statement I hear from students is that I care deeply. And that's something I have found true of my legal writing colleagues across the country: We care. We care about our students as active learners. We care about our students as growing professionals. And we care about our students as people. After you care, everything else just falls into place.

I also try to get to know every student and ensure each student is learning. I begin the fall by having students sign up for lunches with me so that they can get to know me as a person and I can get to know them. The students know I am on their side. So when I give them plentiful feedback and criticism on their papers, they know I am not doing it to tear them down; I am doing it to refine their work and their thinking.

### 2. "Professor Desnoyer has written short Batman-related comic books for DC Comics" is a pretty rad thing to have in your faculty bio. How does comic-book writing compare with legal writing?

Well, legal writing has far fewer onomatopoeias. But what they both have in common is the need to know your subject matter.

For a comic you must (1) know the established characters, (2) ensure the characters act like themselves (as set by comic precedent), and (3) have a clear goal in mind for the characters' journeys. And to accomplish these goals, you have to sit down and creatively think about how you can tell a story with these beloved characters and say something believable. Only then can you actually set out to write.

#### Brad's Top Five Books

1. *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy
2. *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway
3. *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison
4. *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle
5. *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson

Just as comics require a knowledge of comic characters, legal writing requires a background understanding of law and policy. So often legal writers will set out without fully appreciating their case. They do not truly understand the law, and sometimes they do not even know what they really want. Rather, they write empty words, trying to fill the page; they are simply doing an impression of a legal writer. That is why it is so important to work with students on good topic and thesis sentences; they need to know how to synthesize a point into a sentence. Because if they can do that, they might actually know what they are writing about. And only then can they elucidate their point and write about it.

In the end, both comics and legal writing require having a goal and using precedent to reach that goal.

### 3. What's your favorite story that you've written?

My favorite was essentially a one-act play between Two-Face, Joker, and Humpty Dumpty (a third-tier villain and mentally unstable "repairman"). My goal was to tell a story about Two-Face and explain my theory of why he flips a coin to decide how to act. If you go back to his origins in the '40s (much like going back to the origins of a body of law), Two-Face is a tragic and deep figure. Two-Face was Harvey Dent—a prosecutor scarred by a mob boss; after the attack that left him scarred, Harvey essentially gave up on life and surrendered all notions of justice, love, and purpose in favor of chaos. To me, that's not a silly cartoon that needs a coin to decide whether or not to rob the Second National Bank of Gotham (which is what Two-Face became in the '50s and how some writers have falsely interpreted him since).

Over the years, writers have toyed with the idea of Harvey getting plastic surgery and curing himself. But I had another idea,

## Brad Desnoyer

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one that fit with my concept of why Harvey acts as he does. I had two characters (like two cases) to prove my point. The first was Joker. I have always interpreted Joker as a kind of prophet who has the goal of guiding characters to his cause and showing them the “joke” that all things work together serendipitously to reveal that there is no purpose—only chaos. The second character was Humpty, an underused character who could be the instrument for moving the story forward.

So in my story, I had Joker capture Two-Face and threaten him with something no one had tried before—scarring both sides of Harvey’s face. Humpty would be the surgeon. Being tied up, Harvey had to act without his coin and decide if he would save himself. And he does. He tricks Humpty into letting him go and having Humpty scar himself instead. In the end Joker has proven his point: Harvey never needed the coin. He just uses it as a crutch because, in the end, Harvey has always been in control of his decisions. In the end, he is not a villain obsessed with the number two; he is a man who gave up on purpose.



Brad with his wife

#### 4. You’re doing a neat empirical project about email memos. What drew you to the project? And how do you hope it will enrich our discipline?

A few years ago, I started assigning email memos to my students. At the suggestion of my mentor and former colleague Melody Daily, I reached out to practitioners to grade student responses. I gave each practitioner the research question and a rubric, but I also wanted to give them a model answer. I realized that while there are many texts and articles that discuss e-memos, none was based on an empirical study of how e-memos should look.



Brad’s kids Jake (6) and Max (3)

Worse, texts and articles differed in their advice. I know that every firm will do things differently, but I didn’t want to tell my students, “Well, you will figure out the right format in a few years.” So I began surveying attorneys with different model answers, asking what they liked and did not like about each sample. My upcoming article will detail the results of my study, along with the practice habits of how attorneys use email today.

There has been so much talk in recent years about creating “practice-ready” students and “experiential” learning. That is great. I love that. But I don’t want those words to be hollow—to be the equivalent of the hollow phrase “corporate synergy.” My hope is that my writing can make a difference in how we teach our students and help them get the foundation they need. Kristen Tiscione, Ellie Margolis, Katrina Lee, Joe Fore, and others have done great work in this area, and I just hope to contribute to the conversation being had by those brilliant scholars.

#### 5. What would you like to share about your spouse and kids?

The first time I proposed to my wife she said, “No.” We were in seventh grade. Throughout high school we were friends, but we dated other people. We went away to different colleges and stayed friends, keeping up through email. After college, I went to law school, and she went to Africa. When she came back after a year, she told me the person she missed most

## Brad Desnoyer

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of all was me. She is the only girl I have ever loved. And I knew it when I was 13. How could I not? Right now she is standing like a flamingo for no reason other than to make me laugh.

We have two boys: Jake is 6, and Max is 3. They are both wild, energetic ninjas with full hearts and a love for dragons, superheroes, and my wife. So essentially, they are just smaller versions of me. I remember being at a Halloween store with Jake when he was about 3. There was a dad there needlessly screaming at his kids for touching the merchandise. Jake picked up a faux axe and said, "Dad, we need to stop that guy." I nodded my head, smirked, and proudly thought, "That's my kid." I find myself proudly thinking that a lot.

### 6. Do you have any hobbies?

Hobbies? I have two little kids. My hobbies are reading children's books (try the *Dragon Masters'* series) and building with LEGOs.

If I do have free time, however, I try to discover music. A constant in my office is an open door and music pumping out. Thankfully, my office neighbor Cynthia Adams is extremely kind.

I am always trying to discover new artists and share my interests. I start my classes by giving the students a new song they should listen to and having one of them share a song of theirs. My goofy belief is that the best way to know someone's soul is to listen to their music.

To get in touch with Brad, you can contact him at [desnoyer@iu.edu](mailto:desnoyer@iu.edu).

### Brad's Top Five Bands/Musicians

1. Bon Iver
2. The National
3. The Decemberists
4. Mitski
5. The Midnight





## Adam Eckart

(Continued from page 1)

Adam's story starts where we'd all like to spend our summers: the quaint coast of eastern Maine. Born and raised in the small town of Machias, less than an hour from the Canadian border, Adam is the son of two University of Maine professors (now emeritus) who taught in the Recreation Management program of the state university. Machias boasts fishing and lobstering as industries and graduated—way back when—only 39 students in Adam's regional high school class.

Adam grew up working (paper route for years), playing (soccer, basketball, etc.) and learning (high school government club). Although no one in his family was a lawyer, he developed some interest in the legal profession early on through an internship at the local district attorney's office in Maine and as a runner-up in a state-wide student mock trial program.

From small-town USA to college with thousands of his closest friends, Adam attended the University of Connecticut. His parents were "Huskies," and Adam was raised a UConn basketball fan. Adam majored in Business and was active in UConn's sports marketing club. If you attended a UConn basketball game between 2002 and 2006, he just might have been the guy throwing a free t-shirt to you at halftime! Between designing the first email marketing campaign for UConn's performing arts center and working with the marketing group at a Chicago television station one summer, Adam crept closer to a career in marketing but never quite quelled his interest in the law. After another internship in a district attorney's office in Connecticut, he ended up adding a Political Science minor and exploring post-college decisions.

One of those decisions was whether to become a teacher, but it wasn't the right time. Not yet. Adam's excellence in his business courses and involvement in UConn's Phi Sigma Pi national honor fraternity earned him a job offer from Teach for America. But Adam wasn't sure teaching junior high school trigonometry was the next step for him, so he declined the opportunity and moved with friends to Boston.

Adam's first stop in Boston was the well-known large law firm Ropes & Gray. In what some might view as a "rags to riches" law firm tale, Adam started at Ropes with a temporary data entry position in the marketing department far, far, far away from the practice of law. Adam's work ethic and terrific personality quickly landed him a job as the full-time marketing coordinator. In that role for 3 years, Adam focused on the business side of legal practice: marketing technologies, web presence, email strategy, search engine optimization, etc. The next step? Law school of course! Working in the middle of a top-notch law firm was the water Adam's seed of interest needed to finally grow.

Suffolk Law's part-time evening program was designed for working professionals with an independent desire for a legal education, and Adam fit the bill. For 4 years, 7 days a week, Adam juggled the demands of his position at Ropes with the demands and opportunities at Suffolk. During that time, he transitioned to Ropes's Practice Development division and inched even closer to his goal of moving beyond the business of law to the practice of it. As a student at Suffolk, he squeezed in opportunities to combine his business experience with new legal experience, too, such as an internship in-house at a publicly-traded manufacturing company and an academic concentration focused on Business & Financial Services.

After graduation and the bar exam, Adam joined Ropes & Gray as an associate in its Antitrust group in Boston. While he did not follow the traditional Big Law hiring track, Adam's reputation at the firm spoke for itself, and he hit the ground running.



Adam with his husband, Prescott, and their kids: 4-year-old twins Caroline and Kent, and 2-year-old Jake

## Adam Eckart

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The Antitrust group fit Adam's interest in business and strong transactional skill set. For 6 years, Adam enjoyed a robust antitrust practice, examining almost every transaction the firm handled across any office around the world for potential antitrust or reportability issues. The subject matter (pharma, private equity, intellectual property deals) was almost as diverse as the locations of Adam's local counsel (China, Brazil, Mexico, India) or the times of his conference calls across international time zones (11 p.m., 2 a.m., 5 a.m.). Today, Adam's students love hearing his "war stories" from his work on a proposed merger (a merger that never happened) between the fantasy sports companies DraftKings and FanDuel or from his first deal working on a taxidermy buyout. Between the middle of the night conference calls, Adam managed to make time for transactional pro bono work as well, assisting various tax-exempt entities and working with the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition on a variety of matters, including helping transgender individuals manage documentation changes and legal questions associated with accurately documenting names and gender identities.

As much as Adam enjoyed his Big Law practice, the teaching fire still crackled. At Ropes, Adam mentored local law students through the Massachusetts LGBTQ Bar Association and helped train junior associates at the firm. In what would end up being a sign of things to come, Suffolk welcomed Adam back several times as a guest speaker to the first-year legal writing class and Antitrust elective. What's more, Adam enjoyed a one-year position as an adjunct professor in the Lawyering Program at Boston University School of Law and, in his words, "fell in love" with the law teaching role. Given the small size of the Antitrust group in Boston, the puzzle pieces were beginning to come together to reveal that it might be the right time for Adam to explore his next professional and personal move.

As much as Adam kept his connection with Suffolk from his time as a student, so too did Suffolk keep tabs on Adam. Adam's legal writing teacher Professor Shailini George counseled Adam after his graduation and stayed in touch. When Suffolk searched for a visitor in its Legal Practice Skills program in 2018, Adam was an easy choice, and the faculty was delighted to then welcome him as a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Legal Writing in 2019.

Adam's role at Suffolk combines his two off-and-on career paths and two of his professional strengths: business and mentoring. His fresh ideas for integrating transactional skills in the classroom and using simple, small teaching theories will benefit the hundreds of law students at Suffolk who, more and more, crave this instruction beyond the traditional "office memo" legal practice of old. Already the author of several Antitrust practice guide book chapters, Adam is excited to have the time and dedicated space to develop his legal scholarship.

In sum, Adam is more than ready to become a teacher and join the legal writing community. Indeed, it seems to have always been in the cards for him, given that in addition to his parents, his older brother is an elementary school principal and 3 of 4 grandparents were teachers. But to be sure, his most important title is not "Professor"; it's "dad" and "husband." Transitioning from private practice has offered Adam an award with far more prestige and wonder than Big Law could give: time, energy, and passion to focus on his family. These days, Adam and his husband Prescott chase after twins Caroline and Kent (age 4) and younger brother Jake (age 2). Between weekend trips to their home in Vermont or Saturday afternoons spent re-tiling and painting a bathroom at one of their investment properties in the greater Boston suburbs, Adam and his husband very well might be raising yet another generation of cherished teachers.



Adam with his kids at the White House

To get in touch with Adam, you can contact him at [aneckart@suffolk.edu](mailto:aneckart@suffolk.edu).

## Sue Liemer

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Sue's passion for the arts was well demonstrated to the legal writing community in a series of posts on the legal writing listserv in April, when Notre Dame Cathedral burned. She initially wrote,

I spent three months in college working in Paris, I read Hugo in the original, and I climbed those stairs back when few people knew you could do it and there was zero line. I also took a college course in Medieval architecture, so I knew the unique components of the building and could even identify it by its blueprint. In that same course we learned that the Gothic arches were a distinct improvement on the earlier Romanesque arches for fire retardation, and they do seem to have performed as intended. It's hard to comprehend how a building that survived the French Revolution and two world wars could succumb to some careless moment during repairs, but that is often when historic structures are most vulnerable. It is heartening to know that there is a place on the planet where firefighters understand the importance of saving artwork.

Later, she rejoiced in the news that the resident bees on the cathedral's roof had survived the blaze: "Bees are struggling all over the planet, and to know that they are still thriving on the roof of Notre Dame is such a lovely symbol of life continuing and rebuilding."

Sue's ability to move effortlessly between right-brain and left-brain analysis of the world began when she started dance classes at 8 years old. She danced through high school and college, and even was part of a true Greek chorus in the play "The Bacchae" her first year at Princeton. She has continued to take dance classes throughout her adult life. But don't think that she took dance classes purely out of love for the art; she learned that dance class excused her from required PE in high school and college. Also, her college dance classes, plus one lone Shakespeare course, gave her a minor in Theater and Dance at Princeton. Her major was in Comparative Literature, concentrating on drama, and for her required senior thesis, she translated a contemporary French play.

Those credentials led to her post-college jobs in advertising. That first job was at Young & Rubicam, literally on Madison Avenue, and the last one was at Sotheby's. She remembers talking to the Sotheby's lawyer who had to review every ad before it went out and realizing that every human endeavor intersects with the law. Sue wanted a job that would require her to always be learning and growing, so she decided to apply to law school.

Her next three years were spent at the University of Virginia School of Law, where she "just took courses that [she] liked" and thrived in a culture that assumed bar passage as a matter of course. And the arts quickly found her there. UVA has an annual student-produced show, "The Libel Show," which spoofs, parodies, and occasionally crosses the line in its humorous depiction of the faculty. She was a dancer, script writer, and, as a 3L, the associate producer (responsible, *inter alia*, for the all-night cast party).

After law school, Sue practiced law in Connecticut, as Commission Counsel for the state's Freedom of Information Commission. She sometimes led training sessions for state and municipal boards, explaining the state's progressive FOI laws, and discovered she liked teaching. She also served on a bar association committee that drafted and successfully lobbied for Connecticut's artists' moral rights legislation.



Three career legal writing professors who graduated in the same college class, at their 40th reunion in May: Sue, Joe Jackson (U. Florida), and Diane Edelman (Villanova)



## Sue Liemer

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Sue began law teaching in Fall 1990, and her teaching career has now spanned close to 30 years and four law schools. She currently directs the Legal Method & Communication Program at Elon University School of Law, having moved there after 17 years as the Director of Lawyering Skills at Southern Illinois University School of Law.

During those years in Illinois, Sue's two sons, who were often seen at legal writing conferences when they were little, grew up and charted career paths quite different from hers. "How I ended up with two STEM kids, I don't know," she jokes, although maybe their dad's RN background had something to do with it.

Son Jeremiah has a degree in Biology and works for the American Institute for Research in Washington, D.C. Son Quinlan has degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Math, and he works for SpaceX in Los Angeles. Sue comments that "one kid is trying to save the planet, and, in case that doesn't work, the other one is coming up with an escape plan."



Sue's sons Quinlan and Jeremiah in 2017

Sue was an early member and president of ALWD (the Association of Legal Writing Directors). She saw the importance of having a professional organization that focused on political issues affecting the legal writing community. She and other ALWD founders spent countless hours mapping out an agenda for change. That planning included identifying gaps in scholarship about status issues and then figuring out how to get those articles written. She also recalls sitting with colleagues Jan Levine (then at Temple) and Richard Neumann (Hofstra) at an AALS Annual Meeting in the mid-1990s as they floated an idea for a new citation manual—what's now the ALWD Guide. While Sue declined the offer to be its author, that first contract with the publisher has her signature on it, as ALWD President. Sue's understanding of changes in professional communication in the legal writing community also led her in 2005 to originate and then share editor credit for the Legal Writing Professors' Blog.

As she settles in at Elon, Sue has continued her scholarship linking arts and the law. She recently published an article based on Bloom's taxonomy that examines the relationship between kinesthetic learning and the law school curriculum, advocating for teaching enhancements that help students learn through physicality and spatial awareness. Indeed, she has always incorporated creative principles into her teaching: "We need to encourage students to use all parts of their brains to put things together in new ways." Regardless of whether theories about brain-sidedness or learning preferences have been debunked, she believes that teaching and learning in a variety of modes helps students to "shift gears" and learn to connect ideas in new ways.

Sue was also delighted to find connections between studying dance and teaching legal writing. Both, she observed, start with showing students "the shape of the thing," the big picture. Next comes learning discrete parts, then putting them together within a pattern, and then finally focusing on finer points of technique. As she says, one doesn't focus on polishing sentences with a student who hasn't grasped IRAC yet. All skills teaching, she believes, flows from a similar sequence of teaching and learning.

Her most recent writing project is a chapter for the Cambridge University Handbook on Social Justice and Intellectual Property Law, entitled "*Works of Recognized Stature under VARA: Recognized by Whom?*" She is analyzing who got to decide whether 5Pointz's graffiti art was a work "of recognized stature," a requirement for statutory protection under the federal Visual Arts Rights Act of 1991. (She notes that the district court judge called the plaintiffs "exterior aerosol artists.")

Sue brings to her professional life her avocations of drama and dance, blending them to create a seamless whole: intellect and art, law and dance, creativity expressed in whatever—and all—media.

To get in touch with Sue, you can contact her at [sliemer@elon.edu](mailto:sliemer@elon.edu).



## UPCOMING LEGAL WRITING EVENTS

**Central States Legal  
Writing Conference**  
Chicago, IL  
September 12-13, 2019

**Western Regional Legal  
Writing Conference**  
Santa Clara University  
September 21, 2019

**Global Legal Skills  
Conference**  
Arizona State University  
December 12-14, 2019

**2020 AALS Annual Meeting**  
Washington, DC  
January 2-5, 2020

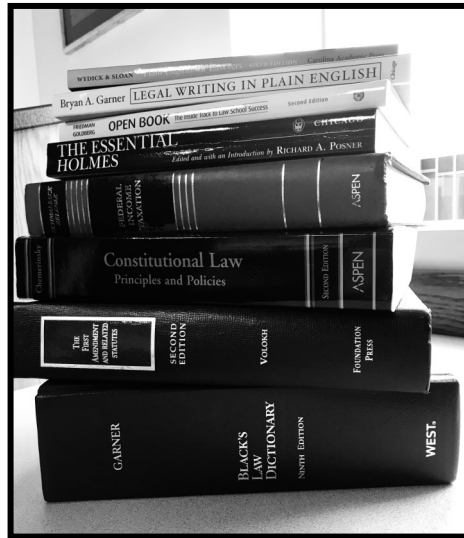
**Conference on Writing  
& Well-Being**  
University of Arizona  
January 9-12, 2020

**20th Biennial Conference,  
Rhetoric Society of America**  
Portland, OR  
May 21-24, 2020

**LWI Biennial Conference**  
Georgetown University  
July 15-18, 2020

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/>



## LWI Lives Selection Process

The LWI Lives Committee is organized into three teams, and each team is responsible for selecting, proposing, and writing the three profiles in each issue. To ensure a diverse newsletter, teams propose individual names to the Co-Chairs, and the Co-Chairs review the suggestions to ensure a wide range of coverage over time.

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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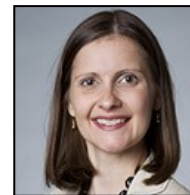
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