



Call for Nominations for the Teresa Godwin Phelps Award

On behalf of the Legal Writing Institute and the Phelps Award Selection Committee, I am pleased to issue the Call for Nominations for the [Teresa Godwin Phelps Award for Scholarship in Legal Communication](#) for works published between January 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025. The deadline for nominations is **11:59 Pacific Time on February 27, 2026**.

Award Criteria

The [Teresa Godwin Phelps Award for Scholarship in Legal Communication](#) highlights LWI's discipline-building priority. This annual award recognizes outstanding scholarship that strengthens the discipline of legal communication. Naming the award in honor of Terry Phelps recognizes her consistent support for and encouragement of others' scholarly work and her own exemplary scholarship in narrative, international human rights, and legal rhetoric, including the foundational article that nourished and influenced all subsequent study of the field, *The New Legal Rhetoric*, 40 Sw. L.J. 1089 (1986). This article was the essential introduction to the idea that legal writing was itself a field worthy of serious study.

For the purposes of the award, discipline-building scholarship includes (a) scholarship on the theories, principles, practices, and conventions of legal communication and (b) scholarship fostering the development of legal writing and research as an independent field of study.

Eligibility for the Phelps Awards is defined by the content of the scholarship—the discipline of legal communication—and not by the author's faculty status, level of experience, or area(s) of teaching. The award is meant to set aspirational standards for others who produce scholarship in the field. The award is not meant to honor instructional materials, such as textbooks.

The sole criterion for the award is the quality of the individual work of scholarship. The selection committee and the LWI Board will focus solely on whether an individual work is specific to the discipline of legal writing and on whether it makes an outstanding contribution to scholarship in the discipline. Neither the selection committee nor the Board will consider the author's long-term contributions to the field or contributions in service, program design, teaching, or improving status for the legal writing field.

The selection committee may recommend, and the Board may give, more than one award for any given year.

Eligible Works

To be eligible for this year's award, an article or book must have been published in its final form in 2025 and must be nominated through the process described below. As noted above, instructional materials, such as textbooks, are not eligible.

The publication year assigned by the publisher determines eligibility, regardless of whether the work is actually available in that year. However, if the final form of the work is not actually available to the public in the year of its official publication date, and if, as a result, the selection committee lacks time to consider the work before making the award(s) for that year, the selection committee may evaluate the work for an award in the following year, despite the official publication year.

Examples:

1. A draft of an article is posted on SSRN in October 2024, and the final form of the article is published in print by a law review. The law review's issue is dated February 2025. The article is eligible for consideration for an award for works published in 2025.
2. A law review has a "Fall 2025" issue, but the law review is running behind and does not actually publish that issue, either in print or online, until March 2026. In this instance, the article is eligible for either an award for works published in 2025 or an award for works published in 2026, but not both. If time permits, the selection committee will consider the article for an award for 2025 publication. If time does not so permit, the committee will roll it over and consider it next year for an award for 2026 publications, despite its official publication date.

Eligible Recipients

Any person, except a member of the current selection committee, is eligible to win the award. The author's faculty status, level of experience, or area(s) of teaching will not be considered.

Selection Process and Nomination Deadline

The selection committee includes legal writing scholars and prior award winners. The current Committee Chair is Nantiya Ruan (UNLV). Current Committee members are Robert Anderson (Denver University), Michael Blasie (Seattle University), Brenda Gibson (Wake Forest), Susan McMahon (UC Irvine), Christine Venter (Notre Dame), and Kathy Vinson (Suffolk).

For works published in 2025, the nomination deadline is **February 27, 2026**. Please email nominations to Committee Chair Nantiya Ruan at nantiya.ruan@unlv.edu.

Nominations must be in writing, must briefly summarize the reasons for the nomination, must provide a copy of or link to the nominated work, and must be received by the deadline above. The selection committee will **not** accept nominations by the author of the nominated work or by

any member of the selection committee.

The LWI Board plans to announce the Phelps Award winner(s) at or before the 2026 Biennial Conference. The winner will be recognized at the 2026 Biennial.

Questions? Please contact Nantiya Ruan, Chair of the Selection Committee.