

# THE LEGAL WORKSHOP

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## CONTACTS

Michael Montañó, Senior Production Editor, Stanford Law Review  
Phone: (210) 464-7886  
E-mail: mmontano@stanford.edu

Matthew J.B. Lawrence, Managing Editor, New York University Law Review  
Phone: (401) 316-8579  
E-mail: mjl409@nyu.edu

## LAW JOURNALS BAND TOGETHER TO LAUNCH WEB MAGAZINE

The Legal Workshop aims to revitalize legal scholarship

STANFORD, Calif., April 21, 2009—A consortium of America’s most influential law reviews today launched The Legal Workshop ([www.legalworkshop.org](http://www.legalworkshop.org)), a free, online magazine featuring articles based on legal scholarship published in the print editions of seven participating law reviews: *Stanford Law Review*, *New York University Law Review*, *Cornell Law Review*, *Duke Law Journal*, *Georgetown Law Journal*, *Northwestern Law Review*, and *University of Chicago Law Review*.

The Legal Workshop features short, plain-English articles about legal issues and ideas, written by an author whose related, full-length work of scholarship is forthcoming in one of the participating law reviews. But The Legal Workshop does not house a collection of abstracts. Instead, it offers an engaging alternative to traditional academic articles that run 30,000 words with footnotes, enabling scholars to present their well-formulated opinions and their research to a wider audience. In addition to making legal ideas understandable, The Legal Workshop seeks to house the best of legal scholarship in one place—making it easier for readers to find the best writing about all areas of law.

“It’s really the best of both worlds,” said Dahlia Lithwick, the Stanford Law alumnus who covers the Supreme Court for *Slate* in a highly influential column. “The general public can be better engaged with the latest thinking about the law while knowing that what they’re reading is serious scholarship; not just fad or opinion.”

A not-for-profit joint venture, The Legal Workshop was started and is operated by current and former student editors of the law reviews. The idea for collaboration surfaced in 2006 when student editors struggled to identify viable Internet strategies for their journals, and Joe Edelheit Ross, who was president of the *Stanford Law Review* at the time, came up with the core idea. Rather than attempt to develop and run a stand-alone website, which the law journals at Harvard and Yale have since tried to do, law review editors at Stanford envisioned a web magazine that would offer a wider selection of content culled from several top journals. Editors at NYU

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quickly signed on to the idea and joined Stanford editors in taking the lead to create an online legal scholarship magazine.

Since the 1950s, law reviews have been an influential factor in federal court decisions, in shaping public policy, and in the hiring and tenure of law faculty. For example, a Stanford Law Review article published in 1949 has been cited in 12 major Supreme Court opinions, including the 1965 landmark case *Griswold v. Connecticut*, which recognized a right to privacy. Unlike in any other academic discipline, law professors are not published by peers—they are published in law reviews that are operated and edited by law students. Many law review presidents and editors have gone on to achieve great success and wield great influence: Barack Obama was the first black president of the *Harvard Law Review*; Brooksley Born—who warned against impending global economic crisis and was awarded the John F. Kennedy Medal of Courage this year—was the first woman president of the *Stanford Law Review*; former Chief Justice of the United States William H. Rehnquist, and former Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor—the first woman Supreme Court justice—were both *Stanford Law Review* editors.

In recent years, however, law reviews have been losing their influence and readership. Some attribute this steady decline to impenetrable jargon and arcane subject matter. But other factors, such as limited availability and the rapid pace of legal developments in an electronic world, have played roles as well.

“The problem is that most law reviews make little effort to reach non-academic audiences. And because they still effectively help professors gain tenure—‘publish or perish’ is here to stay—there is little incentive to innovate,” said Michael Montañó, the Stanford Law School student who led the website’s development. “But as a profession we owe it to the public to produce work that is relevant to society as a whole.”

“Our goal was to provide free legal scholarship in a format accessible to laypersons,” said Matt Lawrence, an NYU Law School student integral to the website’s launch. “Legal blogs cover the free part and have rapid reaction times, but they often tend to be attuned solely to the needs of experts.”

According to Lithwick, “The web has been waiting for something like this, and we can rightly rejoice that it is finally here.”

The Legal Workshop is named after the practice by which scholars often develop their work in small-group dialogues. All seven of the law schools currently participating in the venture appear on U.S. News and World Report’s list of the top fifteen law schools in America. Other top schools are actively seeking membership.

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## SOURCES AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT

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Phone: (210) 464-7886

E-mail: [mmontano@stanford.edu](mailto:mmontano@stanford.edu)

Matthew J.B. Lawrence, Managing Editor, New York University Law Review

Phone: (401) 316-8579

E-mail: [mjl409@nyu.edu](mailto:mjl409@nyu.edu)

For comments from Stanford Law School faculty, including the dean:

Judith Romero, Associate Director of Media Relations

Phone: (650) 723-2232

E-mail: [judith.romero@stanford.edu](mailto:judith.romero@stanford.edu)