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Editor's Note

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In *Last Writes? Re-assessing the Law Review in the Age of Cyberspace*,[1] Professor Bernard Hibbitts suggests that law reviews are destined for extinction – and soon. No longer will authors submit articles to student editors. Instead, they will do as he has done – post their scholarship on the Internet *sans* editorial controls. This proposal may seem radical, but the technology that makes it possible exists today.

Professor Hibbitts's proposal deserves discussion. Accordingly, the editors of the 1995-96 and 1996-97 *Akron Law Review* organized this Special Issue to consider the impact of Web-based self-publication and the future of law reviews. As student editors, we have the most to lose if Hibbitts's vision becomes a reality, and some may wonder why we would choose to "legitimize" Professor Hibbitts's proposal by highlighting it in this Special Issue. As student editors, are we not making the hangman's job easier by tying our own noose? Perhaps so, but we are standing at a threshold and must look into the future of law reviews – whatever that future may hold.

We begin this issue with a brief abstract of *Last Writes?*, the article that began as an electronic manuscript and is now available in the *New York University Law Review*. The first response to this article comes from Professor David Rier, whose expertise as a sociologist is in the sub-specialty of patterns of academic publication. We asked Professor Rier to evaluate the suitability of unedited electronic dissemination of legal scholarship. Professor Rier responds that although some fields arguably have an immediate need for the very latest scholarly works, law is probably not among them. Nonetheless, he suggests changes in the model of law review scholarship. His recommendations for improving the legal literature include peer rather than student editing, and an end – whether gradual or sudden – to the practice of sending unlimited, multiple submissions of manuscripts to law reviews.

Next, Professor Howard Denemark addressed the validity of the criticism that there are too many legal articles and too many law reviews. He traces the evolution of this criticism from its inception through today, concluding that the substance of such a complaint is chimerical. He posits that if Web-based self-publication becomes the norm in legal scholarship, there will be more articles published, but with a proportional decline in quality.

Professor Richard Delgado, one of the most prolific writers of law review articles in the nation, discusses his attitudes towards law review editors and also concludes that authors are better off with than without them.

Professor Gregory Maggs predicts that sooner or later, publication on the Internet will become an accepted alternative to the traditional method of law

1. (Version 1.0, Feb. 5, 1996) <http://www.law.pitt/hibbitts/last.htm>; (Version 1.1, June 4, 1996) <http://www.law.pitt/hibbitts/lastrev.htm>; reprinted with further revisions in 71 N.Y.U. L. REV. 615 (1996).

review publication. However, Professor Maggs envisions that when this becomes the norm, student editors will continue to perform many of their current functions, even if they are no longer involved in the business of publishing printed works.

Professor Thomas Bruce acknowledges the various benefits of publishing on the Internet, but notes that this medium does not capture some of the benefits available with print publications, such as permanency of a work in printed form. He also predicts that third parties will continue to exert editorial selection of articles on the Web by the construction of hot-links and "pick lists."

Professor Trotter Hardy also addressed the permanency issue and argues that any benefits obtained by allowing an author to continuously update his or her work on the Web introduces several novel problems. For example, if multiple versions of the same article are available online, which version does one reference? The first one? The last one? All of them? Professor Hardy acknowledges that these problems are not insurmountable, but that they do add an additional layer of complexity to Professor Hibbitts's "simple" proposal.

Professor Henry Perritt concedes many of the shortcomings Hibbitts cites with the current law review system, but argues that radical changes to the system as it currently exists will not necessarily increase the quality of law review articles. To the contrary, self-publishing will make the quality of articles worse.

Professor William Ross, author of several law review articles as well as three books, discusses the institutional bias in the law towards writing law review articles, and concludes that book writing is a viable – yet underutilized – alternative for professors seeking an escape from law review editors.

The last article in this Special Issue is from Professor Hibbitts, who responds to the previous authors in a comprehensive defense of the proposals originally articulated in *Last Writes?* Finally, an Epilogue will enable me to express some final thoughts on the predicated demise of law reviews and their editors.

The *Akron Law Review* would like to thank all of the authors who contributed to this issue. Although this Special Issue is a part of Volume 30 (1996-97), this project was originally conceived by the 1995-96 Editorial Board and would not otherwise have been possible. A special debt of gratitude is owed to Professor Howard Denemark at the University of Akron School of Law, whose enthusiasm for this project helped provide the institutional memory between the 1995-96 and 1996-97 Editorial Boards to make this project a reality.

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