



## Inside Legal Blogs

[By Brooke Chappell]

Everybody knows everyone in the blogosphere. Or the blawgosphere, at least. The number of cross-citations between blawgs that happens every single day is amazing.

For example, let's start over at [Legal Blog Watch](#), where Robert J. Ambrogi likes the lengthy list Paul L. Caron of TaxProf Blog has assembled of blawg literature for first year law students, and links to [said links list](#). On the same day, Caron also [links](#) to a law review citation study in which he is listed as one of the most linked-to legal bloggers, and does something of a "it's an honor just to be nominated in the company of these fine bloggers" speech, linking to each. [Many of these link back to him at some point](#).

So what, you ask. Everyone's reading everyone else's blog, but with the exception of the advice being given the 1Ls, it's all just people doing little bows in each other's direction. So why are you linking us to all these instead of to actual content?

Well, that's exactly why. One of the primary issues in the Great Blogs vs. Legal Reviews Debate (or what some members of the community are trying to turn into a Great Debate, anyway) is whether blog entries have the same depth of analysis as is required for articles in law reviews. The answer, of course, is almost certainly "no." Law review articles take ages to write; blog entries take an hour or two at most. And a large part of that time is probably taken up checking to make sure you've got all the links you need.

But then, all this interlinking going on is pretty classic lawyerly behavior. If there's one thing you learn in law school, it's how to compile interconnected opinions and be able to produce them for inspection; if there's one thing you have to do as a lawyer it's interact with other

people in both argument and agreement. And with blogs, looking up these citations and seeing the original argument is near-instantaneous. Instead of footnotes to another journal you have to dig out and hope you've got the right issue of, you've got masses of links that get you where you need to go immediately. And since they're all offering recommendations and opinions on each other, it becomes an internal community within the legal community itself.

Basic stuff, of course. But reading that all the above-mentioned cross-references, I remembered seeing [this article](#) a few weeks ago at LawCrossing, which states, "While one-third of Internet users say they have read one, the other two-thirds say they do not know what one is." So...who exactly are these people, and what are they doing with their Internet usage?

While you ponder that mystery, ponder the sheer entertainment value of the way all this interlinking allows outrage to be used, and spread from blog to blog. On August 22, [Forbes.com](#) published an opinion piece from editor Michael Noer titled [Don't Marry Career Women](#), the argument of which was...exactly what the title suggests. One can't help suspecting that the actual purpose of this article was to spark "debate" in the helpfully linked [reader discussion area](#); the name for this kind of behavior elsewhere on the [Internet](#) is [trolling](#) and usually is responded to with the injunction "don't feed the troll."

Certainly, at any rate, [Forbes.com](#) got a lot of free attention out of it all. Wrath and mockery unsurprisingly rained down for the next several

days, with [BoingBoing](#) and [Gawker](#) connecting many to the piece. The latter created a [parody](#) of the story's attached slideshow, which seems to have been taken down at the original site. So many others around the internet have followed suit that Kevin Heller at [Tech Law Advisor](#) suggests Forbes put the article under a [CC license](#) so they can gather even more publicity.

Meanwhile, the original article has been placed side by side with a companion piece by fellow Forbes writer Elizabeth Corcoran, due, says the page's new introduction, to the "heated response." This is titled "Don't Marry Lazy Men," and in accordance with that title falls at about the same level of subtlety as the story it claims to be refuting. I am left, in consequence, wondering whether my suspicion that it was all done from the beginning as a ploy for publicity means I'm too cynical, or not cynical enough. Possibly I just don't want to believe that prominent writers in major media sources can be that ingenuously dumb. No, I don't know where I've been for the last twenty years either.

Anyway, that's the news for this week from the world of blawgs. I'll note, in closing, that one of the many, many sites commenting on the Forbes piece and the kerfluffle which followed was [Bag and Baggage](#), maintained by appellate and intellectual property lawyer Denise Howell. Howell herself has been the subject of [a lot of blogging recently](#), concerning her [departure from her position at Reed Smith](#); [Legal Blog Watch's](#) Carolyn Elefant congratulated her Friday on her new job at [zdnnet.com](#). The new blawg, launched Thursday, is called [Lawarithms](#), and will be one to watch.

See you next week!