

The First Law & Technology International Writing Competition

Abstract: In this two-part feature, Dr Matthew Terrell provides a brief introduction to a new initiative that was launched by Justis in 2017: the inaugural Law and Technology International Writing Competition. This was a competition aimed at attracting students to write a 1,000 word piece in the style of a blog entry. The winner was Róisín Costello from Trinity College Dublin and her article, entitled ‘The Tortoise and the Hare? Due Process and Unconstitutionally Obtained Evidence in the Digital Age’, follows this introduction.

Keywords: due process; evidence; constitutional law; technology; United States

In October 2017, Justis launched the first Law & Technology International Writing Competition. This competition tasked students to write a 1,000-word blog-style article for a grand prize of £2,000, in addition to three runners-up prizes of £250, plus international exposure through publishing the top articles.

As effective and persuasive writing is an increasingly important skill for students to develop before entering the workplace, this competition was designed to provide a platform to enable students to develop those skills and stand out from the crowd when applying for training contracts.

This inaugural competition came to an end in April 2018, after receiving entries from students at 34 universities across the world, including Harvard Law School, University of Oxford, University of Auckland and the Australian National University. The quality of entries was high throughout and the positive response from students for this opportunity ensured the success of this competition.

In this article, we would like to share our experiences from the first competition, the exciting plans and improvements for this year’s competition and the winning article from the 2018 competition by Róisín Costello from Trinity College Dublin.

GIVING STUDENTS A PLATFORM

Law students face a highly competitive environment when starting a career within the legal sector. That’s why at Justis we like to support the next generation of legal professionals where possible. This has included running events, webinars and providing online resources. Most recently we partnered with Emily Allbon from The City Law School, University of London, to run a ‘Legal Design Sprint’, to introduce students to this important emerging field of study, and give them the opportunity to gain

valuable transferable skills. Our writing competition was no different and was created as a way to help students stand out and showcase their skills within this highly competitive environment.

WRITING TOPICS

For the first competition, entrants were given the option to write about one of three areas: legal technology and the future of legal practice, how the law copes with technological innovations, and the mass impact of technology for providing new and easy access to legal information.

These areas were selected as they were all broad enough to allow entrants to explore topics that they found interesting, from the increasing proliferation of AI-based software in law firms through to the problems that access to the internet causes when jurors seek out or share information about a trial.

After the launch of the competition in October, students had two months to submit their entries before a deadline at the beginning of December. Following this, entries were narrowed down into a shortlist of fifteen entries; five from each category. These shortlisted entries were then sent to a panel of judges to determine the overall winner and three runners-up before the results were announced at the end of March.

The judging panel for the competition consisted of five people, with a range of experience. The panel consisted of Emily Allbon, Senior Lecturer in Law and Director of Mooting at the City Law School, University of London and founder of Lawbore, Masoud Gerami, Managing Director of Justis Publishing, Jennifer Walker, Head Librarian at County of Carleton Law Association in Canada, Liesel Weekes, President of the Barbados Bar Association, and David Wills, Squire Law Librarian at the University of Cambridge and Editor of Legal Information Management. The diverse perspectives they offered

ensured an impartiality of judgment, and entries were provided to them anonymously.

THE WINNING ENTRY AND RUNNERS-UP

The overall winner of the Law & Technology International Writing Competition 2018 was Róisín Costello, of Trinity College Dublin, which you can read below. Her entry, 'The Tortoise and the Hare: Due Process and Unconstitutionally Obtained Evidence in the Digital Age' explored the 4th Amendment in the United States, and the questions of what evidence remains regarded as unconstitutional in the era of the third-party doctrine. The runners-up were Patrick Alexander Hum from the London School of Economics, Secil Bilgic from Harvard University and Jae Jun Kim from the University of Auckland.

LAW AND TECHNOLOGY INTERNATIONAL WRITING COMPETITION 2019

Looking ahead, we are currently working on plans for the Law & Technology International Writing Competition 2019, with an aim to grow the competition further and continue with the same ethos of giving students an opportunity to develop and showcase their writing skills within a framework relating to the law and technology.

Róisín Costello, the overall 2018 winner, explains why students should enter next year's competition, and

provides advice for current students on writing original and creative blogs:

The competition offers an exceptional opportunity to expose your writing to Justis' international readership, and an associated impact for your research findings and ideas few students receive. The competition is exceptional, as the calibre of entries included on the shortlist this year illustrated and I can only imagine this will become even more evident in coming years. At an individual level, the discipline of distilling complex legal arguments and ideas into concise, approachable pieces for public consumption is a hugely valuable skill both in practice and, increasingly, for those entering academia who want to communicate the importance of their research to the populations affected by it.

Generally, my advice would be to write, not conversationally, but very clearly in direct, precise language. I think it is important to bear in mind you are not necessarily addressing an audience who have a pre-existing interest or experience of the subject you are discussing – or its importance. What may seem obvious to you is not necessarily so to an 'outsider.' There can also be a temptation to acknowledge and counter every argument and cram in a level of nuance that simply doesn't sit well with the medium. For what it's worth I think good blogs are highly precise in their use of language, have one clear, concisely articulated view or argument, a solution and a brief acknowledgement (if necessary) of the limitations of same.

Biography

Dr Matthew Terrell is Head of Marketing for Justis, and the driver behind the Law & Technology International Writing Competition. Prior to joining Justis, Matthew was the Co-founder and Chief Communications Officer for Call For Participants, an online research service used by over 600 universities around the world. Matthew was also a Start-up Mentor for both Virgin Start-Up, and Jisc's Summer of Student Innovation. Additionally, Matthew also has extensive experience in design, from conceptualising interiors for Madam Tussauds to working in the film industry as a Storyboard artist to Art Director. Matthew also holds a first-class honours degree in Industrial Transport Design, alongside a PhD in Consumer Innovation.