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Silence is Golden: Using a "Silent Scrolling Powerpoint" Series to Enhance Your Course Dynamic

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DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF LAW

LEGAL STUDIES RESEARCH PAPER SERIES



*Silence is Golden: Using a
“Silent Scrolling PowerPoint” Series
to Enhance Your Course Dynamic*

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2013

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SILENCE IS GOLDEN: USING A “SILENT SCROLLING POWERPOINT” SERIES TO ENHANCE YOUR COURSE DYNAMIC

Julia M. Glencer¹

I. AN IDEA & A PILOT

A few years ago, recognizing that my first-year Legal Research & Writing (LRW) students needed some targeted advice on the transition between college and law school, as well as general professionalism, I decided to take advantage of those moments right before class when the students were still settling into their seats. I love PowerPoint, and having then only recently discovered the option to time slides and have them run automatically,² I decided to pilot what I thought of as a “silent scrolling PowerPoint” on the pros and cons of joining a study group – something some of my students had already asked me about for advice.³ I figured this would be

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² I am not an advanced PowerPoint user by any stretch and my journey from plain white slides to useful animation and effective graphics has been a long one. I recognize that many educators intensely dislike and question the value of PowerPoint. But I have always found it to offer an outlet for creativity and inspiration, and it is undeniably a staple of the legal profession and something every law student should be familiar with and learn how to use. Additionally, I realize that the use of PowerPoint slides that advance automatically to distribute information is not a new concept (case in point: the main office of the law school where I teach distributes information to students on school-related activities on centrally-located televisions using PowerPoint slides). Nonetheless, this article is intended to demonstrate how I have used PowerPoint’s automatic advance feature to offer my first-year LRW students targeted information on many different topics of interest to them.

³ While many law schools hold informational sessions aimed at first-year students on topics such as study groups and time management, students will still approach an accessible professor – more often than not, their LRW professor – with specific questions. See e.g. Christine Pedigo Bartholomew & Johanna Oreskovic, Normalizing Trepidation and Anxiety, 48 Duq. L. Rev. 349, 370-372 (2010) (explaining how the nature of LRW fosters a unique one-on-one relationship between professor and student). First-year students especially appreciate targeted advice from someone they trust, who knows them on a more individualized basis.

an easy way to offer them all “food for thought” on a topic likely to be of common interest early in the Fall Semester without being too “preachy.” After all, the students could just ignore the “extra-curricular” slideshow if it did not capture their attention.

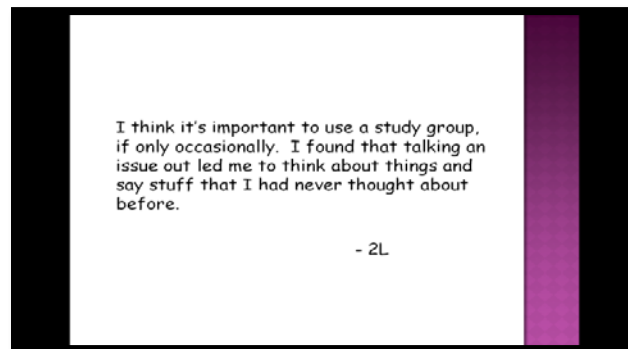
To prepare, I consulted a handful of law student guidebooks, seeking to gather the common wisdom on study groups. I envisioned myself as a clearinghouse for students with little time to read such materials and no experience against which to weigh the advice they contain. I also sent an e-mail to a select group of my former LRW students asking them to relay, in one or two sentences, some of their most memorable study group experiences (good and bad) because I knew that advice from “real” students in the building where I teach would likely be the most valued by the first year students even if those experiences were actually rather universal. I also thought back to my own study group (a few too many years ago now) and to how so many of my fondest memories from law school still center around it.

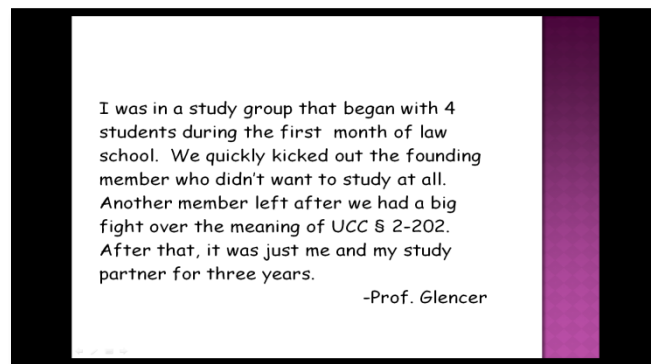
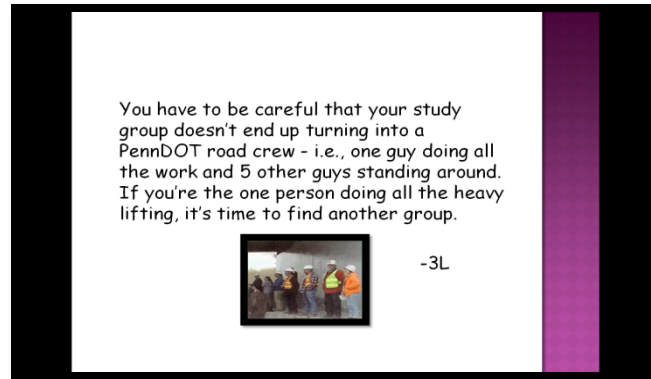
In a few hours’ time, I designed the pilot to contain 20 slides. Because they would advance silently while I stood in the back of the classroom to observe the students’ reaction, I was very conscious to make the progression of material seamless and logical. Specifically, I created a few introductory slides to tee up the very idea of a “silent scrolling PowerPoint” and the fact that I did not intend to discuss the slideshow during class.⁴ I then introduced the basic concept of a study group in the law school setting, the uses to which such study groups are best put, and finally, some advice on how to prevent a study group from devolving into an extended social hour. I dedicated the rest of the slides to the snippets of real student experience that I had gathered, and I added pictures to capture the essence of certain vignettes. I kept the text per slide

⁴ I tell my students the first day of class that my office door is always open should they wish to discuss anything related to law school. But because my LRW class time is so precious, I wanted to get across that I would not be taking class time to discuss topics covered in the silent scrolls.

to a minimum and arranged the slides to alternate between the more serious and the more humorous insights offered by my former students (identified only by “2L” or “3L” on the slides). I set the run-time per slide to between eight to twenty-five seconds depending on the amount of text displayed. I then watched the approximately four minute slideshow repeatedly over numerous days, stopping to tinker with the coloring, the wording, and the timing of certain slides to enhance readability, as I truly did plan to stay silent throughout the presentation and simply start class once the last slide faded out. Critically, I never offered my own thoughts in the slideshow as to whether it was actually advisable to start or join a study group; rather, I offered only “food for thought.”

I ran the pilot in the small window of time right before my second LRW class of the second week of September. At first, most of the students assumed I was setting up the day’s LRW material and continued to talk and settle in. But slowly, and especially after I left the podium, they noticed that the slides were advancing. A few nudged each other and nodded or pointed up at the screen. Even the few stragglers who wandered in with only two to three minutes to spare silently unpacked their laptops and notebooks, eyes on the screen. As I had anticipated, the students seemed to appreciate the slides setting forth the real student experiences the most:





The slide offering my own experience met with interest: More than half of the students turned to look at me in the back of the classroom, their faces registering one of two reactions: “*Who* fights over the meaning of a UCC section?” or “Oh, she does remember what this feels like.” As the slideshow ended, and I walked back to the podium, I felt the curiosity pervading the classroom. I closed the pilot, opened my LRW notes, and looked up.

“Uh, Professor,” ventured a student in the front row, “are you seriously not going to talk about that?” “That was a *silent* scroll, Mr. _____,” I responded briskly, adding a heavy stress. Some of the students laughed; a few shifted around. After a moment, a hand went up. “Professor, are you going to do that again? Because . . . well, that was really helpful.” A million ideas suddenly lit up in my mind. “Yes, Ms. _____,” I said firmly, “I will.” “So, what’s next, Professor?” someone called out. “You’ll see,” I said conspiratorially, “you’ll see.”

II. THE “GLENCER SILENT SCROLLING SERIES”

In the weeks that followed, I quickly created five more “silent scrolls” (or, as my students now call them, “SSPs”): one on studying and time management, one on strategies for “reading like a lawyer,”⁵ two on “interesting people in the law” (I featured Judge Richard Posner and the late Judge Edward Becker, both of whom authored important appellate opinions unearthed in the research process for my LRW assignments), and one on the reputational value in affixing one’s name, as the author, on a document. I built certain silent scrolls around a central text containing its own logical progression; those slideshows were quick and easy to create, with a title slide directly attributing the source. Others, built around more amorphous ideas, took shape over time from the research that I or one of my LRW Teaching Assistants (TAs) performed.

As those first few scrolls were well received, I set aside time the following summer to design an entire series of silent scrolls for the Fall Semester – one show per week for thirteen weeks.⁶ I asked each of my TAs to design a slideshow of their choice and together we created silent scrolls covering a variety of topics. The supply of ideas was virtually endless. I kept a binder of anything and everything I came across that might lend itself to this format, and I experimented with topics designed to reinforce material I was covering in LRW during any given week. The scrolls ranged from approximately 10 to 20 slides, with an average run-time of between 4 to 6 minutes. I consciously varied the tone of the scrolls as a way to build interest and suspense. Most of them (especially at the beginning of the semester) covered serious topics in a

⁵ This silent scroll is built on the reading strategies offered by Ruth Ann McKinney in Parts I & II of Reading Like a Lawyer: Time-Saving Strategies for Reading Law Like an Expert (Carolina Academic Press 2005). As further explained below, I have built a number of silent scrolls using material from a central text (i.e., ideas I know are valuable and want my students to see even if they do not have the time to read those texts in full).

⁶ In Duquesne’s LRW program, the Fall Semester course ends a week before the students’ other first year courses, and the Final Memorandum, which is the only graded assignment of the Fall Semester, is due during the fourteenth week of class.

serious manner, but a few were purposefully intended just for fun. Almost all of the silent scrolls have met with success, but a few, having positively sucked the air out of the room, have been sent back to the drawing board for revision.⁷

My most recent line-up of silent scrolls taken from the Fall Semester of 2012 appears below in chart format, arranged by “installment,” title, central attribution, and the purpose behind offering a scroll covering that specific topic at that particular point in the Fall Semester of my LRW course. My purpose in providing this chart is not to recommend this particular progression of topics but simply to demonstrate the variety of potential ideas, and how I have used this tool to enhance my course. And while my role as an LRW Professor certainly does lend itself to covering topics related to skills and professionalism, I strongly believe that the silent scroll tool itself can be used to enhance the coverage in any course and to positively impact the course dynamic between the professor and the students. After the chart, I identify the benefits of using this tool as I have experienced them. I then address some anticipated follow-up questions.

⁷ There was one silent scroll I scraped almost immediately as it conjured up emotions that were, as yet, too raw amongst first-year law students. It was based on the idea described by Professor David Dominquez, of Brigham Young University Law School, in Gerald F. Hess & Steven Friedland, Techniques for Teaching Law 329-334 (Carolina Academic Press 1999). In that snippet, designated as a “Specific Idea for the Teaching and Learning Environment #2,” Professor Dominquez described how he asked his upper-level students to reread and reflect upon the law school application “Personal Statement” they had submitted months before, explaining why they wished to be a lawyer. He then quoted some of his students’ reactions upon rereading those personal statements. In the silent scroll, I explained his purpose, asked my students to similarly reflect upon their reasons for attending law school, and then quoted some of Professor Dominquez’s students’ reactions. I quickly saw faces registering pain and discomfort and realized that the topic had misfired with my first-year students who were still knee-deep in the first year experience which some of the quotes from Professor Dominquez’s students were describing as overwhelming and painful. I still believe that Professor Dominquez’s idea is a terrific one and I do not necessarily shy away from covering some emotional topics in my scrolls, but the silent scroll tool did not work well for this topic at this time, likely because the students’ reactions needed to be talked through and acknowledged more directly.

GLENCER SILENT SCROLLING POWERPOINT SERIES:
FALL SEMESTER 2012

<u>Installment</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Central Attribution</u>	<u>Basic Point of the Silent Scroll</u>
First	<u>A Journey & A Fishing Rod</u>	Adapted from Ruta K. Stropus & Charlotte D. Taylor, <u>Bridging the Gap Between College and Law School: Strategies for Success</u> 3-13 (2d ed. Carolina Academic Press 2009).	<p>In Chapter 1 of <u>Bridging the Gap</u>, Stropus & Taylor talk about the “strange and foreign” environment encountered in law school and recall the adage that “teaching a man to fish” gives him the skills to feed himself for a lifetime. Built upon that idea as well as numerous direct quotes from this helpful text, this first silent scroll is dedicated to explaining the unique law school environment in which students will now be expected to teach themselves. (This past Spring, I was thrilled to see a student use the “teach a man to fish” adage very aptly as the theme of his Appellate Brief).</p> <p>In this first silent scroll, I also introduce the “Series” itself, informing students that we will never discuss the material from the silent scrolls in class, but that I will use this tool to cover a different topic of interest every week during the Fall Semester.</p>
Second	<u>Studying & Time Management</u>	Adapted from Stropus & Taylor, <u>Bridging the Gap</u> , at 133-140, as well as other law student guidebooks.	The second silent scroll, which also features material from Stropus & Taylor’s <u>Bridging the Gap</u> , explains how studying and time management issues differ in law school from the undergraduate experience. It also prompts students to carefully analyze and adjust their own study habits going forward into the Fall Semester.
Third	<u>Study Groups</u>	Numerous student guidebooks, including Helene Shapo & Marshall Shapo, <u>Law School Without Fear: Strategies for Success</u> 160-161 (The Foundation Press, Inc. 1996).	The third silent scroll is the original pilot. As noted, it offers advice on using and running a study group by compiling information from numerous law school guidebooks as well as real student insights from my former LRW students about the pros and cons of using a study group.
Fourth	<u>In Honor of Your Special</u>	Adapted from Mary Dunnewold, <u>Why Am I</u>	The fourth silent scroll is based on a wonderful article that a thoughtful colleague of mine,

	<u>Anniversary</u>	<u>Here? Six-Word Stories About the First Month of Law School</u> , 59 J. Leg. Educ. 653 (2010).	<p>Professor Al Peláez, copied and left in my mailbox, figuring I would appreciate it. In this article, Professor Mary Dunnewold collects “six-word” stories written by first year students at the Hamline University School of Law following a prompt issued by the LRW faculty in the Fall of 2008 to capture the experience of Hamline students after their first month of law school.</p> <p>I show this slideshow at the end of the fourth week of LRW as a celebration of the whirlwind month now behind us and the extreme transformation that is already occurring. The six-word stories I chose to highlight are the ones I thought would really resonate with my students. Inevitably, they cannot contain themselves and start yelling out their own six-word stories that make us all laugh.</p>
Fifth	<u>Reading Like a Lawyer</u>	Adapted from Ruth Ann McKinney, <u>Reading Like a Lawyer: Time-Saving Strategies for Reading Law Like an Expert</u> Parts I & II (Carolina Academic Press 2005).	Like every law professor, I am very concerned about the reading skills of entering law students. And like many LRW professors, I long for more time to devote to this topic. Thus, this fifth silent scroll is dedicated to the modern decline in basic reading ability and strategies for developing the deep and penetrating reading skills needed to succeed in law school.
Sixth	<u>Interesting People in the Law: Judge Richard Posner</u>	Research and draft slideshow compiled by a TA.	The research my students conduct for our Second Memorandum assignment uncovers a key opinion written by Judge Posner on behalf of a panel of the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. Students always have strong reactions to this opinion. Thus, they are intrigued to learn about the judge behind the opinion they are now analyzing and struggling to understand.
Seventh	<u>The Cranky Law Professor: Some Advice on Class</u>	Adapted from Austen L. Parrish & Christina C. Knolton, <u>Hard-Nosed Advice from a Cranky Law Professor</u> 38-43 (Carolina Academic Press 2010).	This is one of my favorite silent scrolls, but it does tend to ruffle some feathers. The “Cranky Law Professor’s” blend of hard-nosed advice and sarcastic tone matches my own and, in this silent scroll, I offer his insights on how to conduct oneself in the classroom: from preparation to active participation to proper attire. I dedicate this silent scroll to a student (since graduated) who let slip one day in my office (and certainly lived to regret it) that she had been skipping class in one of her courses because she was afraid of the professor. And

			the last slide in this silent scroll, through the guise of the Cranky Law Professor, identifies my own intense distain for “flip-flops” which more than 50% of the students sitting before me are still wearing in mid-October.
Eighth	<u>Building a Tent</u>	Adapted from Stropus & Taylor, <u>Bridging the Gap</u> , at 47-49.	This <u>is</u> my favorite silent scroll; it was fun to create and the students appreciate that it foreshadows the eventual end-of-the-semester exam-taking event about which they are now becoming intensely curious. This eighth silent scroll puts flesh on the question posed by Stropus & Taylor at the beginning of Chapter 4 in <u>Bridging the Gap</u> : “How do you put together a . . . tent for camping? Do you read the directions first or ask someone for help? Do you spread out all the pieces on the floor and dare to put them together one by one?” Using many pictures, this silent scroll prompts students to examine the skills of synthesis and assembly that they are learning but not necessarily yet able to put into practice.
Ninth	<u>Some Wisdom on Writing: Taken from “bird by bird”</u>	Adapted from Anne Lamott, <u>bird by bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life</u> (Anchor Books 1994).	A student once asked me after class if I had read Anne Lamott’s <u>bird by bird</u> , a book she had been assigned in a college writing course and thought I might like. I had not, but after I did, I created this silent scroll to capture some of Lamott’s funny insights on the writing process and the self-doubt it can inspire. I run this scroll when my students are feeling particularly overwhelmed by the Final Memorandum assignment and the “mountain” of potentially relevant case law they are amassing and wondering how to handle.
Tenth	<u>Interesting People in the Law: Judge Edward Becker</u>	My own research.	Having clerked for two different judges on the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, I had met and been extremely impressed by Judge Edward Becker, as a judge, as a writer, and as a warm human being. The students, many of whom are becoming curious about the experience of working with a judge, enjoy the “insider” tone of this silent scroll. To them, “Becker, J.” is just a name – not a man with a face, a host of endearing mannerisms, and a large “family” of former law clerks who loved him as a mentor.
Eleventh	<u>China Summer Abroad Program</u>	Research & photographs compiled by a TA who attended Duquesne’s China	I gave one of my TAs free rein to create this silent scroll based on his experience with our law school’s study in China program. I was floored by the beauty and the insight of the

		Summer Program during his 1L summer.	slides he created and numerous students were inspired to consider summer abroad programs more seriously than before.
Twelfth	<u>"X-Ref: Extreme Legal Citation"</u>	Adapted from "New Guide Takes Legal Citations to the 'Xtreme'" (posted on Laws for Attorneys.com on Aug. 30, 2010).	<p>A former TA sent me this article from Laws for Attorneys.com purporting to review a new "X-treme" legal citation manual designed for attorneys looking to "shoot their memos full of adrenaline." The new "X-treme" manual is said to be full of ridiculous formatting requirements such as denoting regulations promulgated by the Department of the Treasury as "T-Regz" or setting forth periodical abbreviations in color.</p> <p>I run this silent scroll right before my TAs host a cumulative Fall Semester citation review session aimed at helping students finalize the citation in their Final Memoranda. Inevitably, at least one student (yes, typically male) will raise his hand and ask "is this for real? Do I need to follow these rules too?"(thereby causing me "X-treme" despair!).</p>
Thirteenth	<u>"What's in a Name?"</u>	Research and draft slideshow compiled by a former TA.	<p>I created this scroll with a TA's assistance to reinforce a key point of professionalism: that an attorney's reputation is tied to his or her name and thus, the act of affixing one's name to a document is a solemn guarantee of quality. This is the last scroll of the Fall Semester, shown less than a week before the graded Final Memorandum is due. This slideshow tends to elicit a deadly silence as the students think about their own draft memorandum and whether they are ready to accord this much weight to their name in the FROM line.</p> <p>While many of the preceding silent scrolls have been lighter in tone, I aim to end the Fall Semester on a stricter note to remind the students that (1) while I can laugh at the law school experience and appreciate that writing is hard work, I will never lower my standards for their work product, and (2) these silent scrolls do offer useful information and guidance, designed to help them grow as independent professionals.</p>

IV. BENEFITS AND SOME FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS ANSWERED

A. Six Benefits of Using Silent Scrolling PowerPoints

After three years of experimenting with this tool, I have identified six benefits to be gained from the creation and use of silent scrolls – whether just a handful or an entire semester series.

First (and obviously, of course), this tool facilitates the transfer of information which the professor believes will help the students grow as future members of the legal profession. The type of information capable of being conveyed through this tool is virtually limitless. Moreover, it can be conveyed quickly in a way that does not impinge upon precious class time.⁸ Coverage depends largely on the professor’s own insight and creativity in identifying topics and designing the packaging (incidentally, the “creativity” of this tool from the professor’s perspective is also one of the six benefits!). I never use this tool as a soapbox. It has to be used thoughtfully, keeping the subject matter of the course and the needs of the students at the fore. But over the years, I have found that just about anything that interests me about the law is good fodder for a silent scroll: the legal profession and its daily tasks, legal education and the life of a law student, tales of inspiration from real lawyers, and the interaction of law and society.

Not every topic chosen by the professor will interest every student, but if the material is cogently related to the course, students will not question its relevance. A case in point in my Fall Semester lineup is the silent scroll covering snippets of Lamott’s bird by bird. Some students are simply not interested in writing generally. They view *legal* writing as something much more targeted and technical and thus see little value in discussing other kinds of writing or advice from other kinds of writers. Other students simply do not care for Lamott’s rather unique sense of

⁸ I run my silent scrolls in the few minutes right before class, but such slideshows could also be posted on a course-specific website (such as Blackboard). They could also be exported as movies, playable in a browser or on a smartphone.

humor.⁹ But because I added a slide noting that a first-year law student recommended the book to me and because many students actually do laugh and raise their hands after I run the silent scroll to ask what else Lamott has written, even those students who do not care for the slideshow never question its value and relationship to the course.

And while first-year LRW certainly lends itself to scrolls focused on issues related to the transition from college to law school, professionalism, and writing, this tool can be used by a professor teaching any law school course. In a course dedicated to health law, for example, a professor might use a silent scroll to (1) raise awareness of the many different career paths for a lawyer specializing in health law (i.e., with a law firm, in-house with a hospital or pharmaceutical company, at a public health agency, etc.); (2) illustrate the rationale for a statute by describing the stories that caught the public's attention and led to the legislative action (e.g., patients turned away from emergency rooms because they lacked insurance, charlatans selling "snake oil" remedies to desperate members of the public, etc.); or (3) put a human face on a case or a regulation by providing brief biographies of plaintiffs in leading cases (e.g., "right to die" cases, influential toxic tort cases, etc.) who influenced the path the law has taken.

Second, silent scrolls provide an opportunity to inspire students. Just as a marathon runner appreciates an aid station or a rock band at Mile Marker 9, law students engaged in their own mental marathon really do seem to appreciate a "side show" that acknowledges their questions, their concerns, and their fundamental curiosity about the educational experience that is

⁹ Lamott has long been described as having a wicked sense of humor, which comes through in snippets like these: "[Sometimes as you write] your mental illnesses arrive at the desk like your sickest, most secretive relatives. And they pull up chairs in a semicircle around the computer, and they try to be quiet but you know they are there with their weird coppery breath, leering at you behind your back. . . . [T]he panic mounts and the jungle drums begin beating and [you] realize that the well has run dry and that [your] future is behind [you]. . . . [S]it there for a minute, breathing slowly, quietly." Lamott, bird by bird, at 16-17.

transforming their minds and their lives. I run silent scrolls featuring *Interesting People in the Law* as a way to inspire students with real world stories of judges and lawyers who have made a lasting impact on the legal profession and who serve as role models for new lawyers. They are intensely curious about what the future holds – both in the big picture sense (“What is my role in society as a lawyer?”) and in the smaller sense (“What will my typical day look like? Will I sit in an office or run to a courtroom?”) Silent scrolls can also be used effectively to address some of the varied concerns raised in recent years by critics and reformers of legal education. For example, silent scrolls could be used to prompt students to think more about topics such as (1) the human element behind the cases and legal issues they read about; (2) civility among lawyers; (3) the business development angle of practicing law; (4) the value in pursuing pro bono work; and (5) work-life balancing and generational issues – to name just a few. In this day and age, when the legal profession and legal education are often maligned in the public eye, and where students are beset with negative information about lawyering and future job prospects, finding ways to inspire the law students who have chosen to sit in my classroom is important.

Third, silent scrolls can be used to positively impact the course dynamic and the professor/student relationship. For example, my classroom demeanor is serious and brisk, and I do not coddle students. While I care very deeply about their overall experience in law school and about writing as one of life’s most passionate activities, there is little room in my LRW schedule for discussing such in class. Yet, I know that passion for one’s subject matter is a cornerstone of great teaching and this tool gives me a way to express that without changing my basic hard-nosed approach to the classroom setting where I have an enormous amount of material to cover in a very short timeframe. By the time I introduce the silent scrolls – which

occurs after many, many hours of “LRW Bootcamp” during Orientation Week¹⁰ and at end of the first week of classes – the majority of students are already drained, wondering if they can handle law school, and more than a little apprehensive about me and the LRW tsunami washing over them. The first silent scroll, which offers them insight into the law school method and ways to prepare themselves for the incredible three year journey ahead, usually takes them by surprise. And as my Silent Scroll Series builds over the course of the semester, students realize that, whatever my classroom demeanor and however hard I am driving them in LRW, I am not numb to the fact that they are beset with uncertainty, struggling at times to stay interested and motivated, and wondering where all of this is leading. The silent scrolls I have created often reflect a different side of my personality and that seems to increase both the students’ interest in the course and their willingness to meet my demands.

In addition, because I often attribute an underlying idea for a silent scroll to a former student who inspired it, current students – many of whom are sitting in LRW convinced that I will *never* recognize any of their contributions – find the very act of recognition to be inspiring. For example, I run a silent scroll at the beginning of the Spring Semester called “Awesome Sentence” in which I recount the tale of a former student who created what I considered to be a breathtakingly beautiful sentence analogizing the factual situation in our Fall Semester Final Memorandum assignment to an existing case. It was a sentence that moved me to shout in a margin comment “Awesome sentence!” That sentence, however, was contained in an otherwise

¹⁰ At Duquesne, first year students are required to attend Orientation Week one week before the upper-level classes begin. This week, also known as “LRW Bootcamp,” features 9+ hours of classroom instruction, plus many hours spent in student teams and with the LRW professor in the law library learning to do hands-on, book-based research for an initial assignment. Students also complete an initial citation exercise and attend various training sessions, including sessions on Westlaw Next and Lexis Advance. All of these activities are in addition to regular “orientation-style” activities designed to introduce students to the law school and to each other. Students also have assigned readings to complete for their other courses, which begin the following week.

mediocre, poorly supported, and sloppy document that ultimately earned a C for the Fall Semester. The student author came to see me in early January, not quite sure how to interpret my glowing comment on that sentence. He asked: Was I being ironic? While *I* had not quite anticipated *his* reaction to *my* comment, his visit did give me the chance to explain (1) that I appreciate good writing in any context; (2) how sad it is when the writer capable of achieving such a beautiful sentence surrounds it with mess; and (3) that just because he earned a C in the Fall Semester did not preset my impression of what he was capable of producing during the Spring Semester. The “Awesome Sentence” silent scroll begins with a dedication to this student (who has since graduated); it also offers insights from Francine Prose’s Reading Like a Writer on the experience of finding and savoring a beautiful sentence.¹¹ It then collects some of the best sentences that I found in the Fall Memoranda (sitting at every grade level, A through C), which I had just returned a few weeks beforehand.¹² This silent scroll tends to breed renewed resolve – and that is a powerful way to begin a new semester.

Fourth, silent scrolls are useful in reinforcing the authority of my TAs, who are always in the process of forming relationships of authority and trust with my first-year students. LRW TAs are chosen for their demonstration of solid research, writing and citation skills, but they also tend to be vibrant individuals with many outside interests and great ideas. Each summer, I ask my incoming TAs to choose a silent scroll topic and bring it to life in a slideshow. They tend to jump at the chance, relishing the opportunity to research something a little out of the ordinary and exercise their creative juices. I coach them to keep the slideshow concise and engaging and, while I do exercise final editorial control (making suggestions mostly on progression, wording,

¹¹ Francine Prose, Reading Like a Writer (Harper Collins 2006).

¹² Every year, while I grade my students’ Final Memoranda in December, I keep a running list of the sentences I will wish to feed into that year’s version of the “Awesome Sentence” silent scroll.

and timing), I try never to step in front and I put their name on the title slide.¹³ TA-created scrolls have served to further endear the TAs to the students (and often to me as well) and to solidify their credibility as a source of useful insight. (In one instance, a TA showcased PowerPoint capabilities so vastly superior to my own that the students were quite amused. I made a point of noting that, immediately upon receiving his draft slideshow, I scheduled a meeting so he could teach me his tricks). In addition to the TA-created scrolls noted on the chart above, my TAs have created scrolls related to such varied topics as Paula Boggs, the General Counsel of Starbucks (a female “*Interesting Person in the Law*”), and the delight in re-reading Harper Lee’s To Kill a Mockingbird after completing the first year of law school.

Fifth, the silent scrolls give me a weekly opportunity to model the logical progression of material as well as the good citation habits I want all of my students to learn to use. For a silent scroll to run well with no verbal input, the text (and any pictures) on the slides must build together logically, with no room for interpretation other than what I intend and with obvious follow-up questions anticipated and addressed. I build the silent scrolls to operate like little stories with a complete “package feel,” facilitated by a well-defined beginning, middle, and end. All of these things are hallmarks of good writing and good presentation skills and the more they are modeled for law students, the better. In addition, it is beneficial for students to realize that I am as meticulous about proper attribution and citation format on these seemingly “extra-curricular” slides as I am with any other type of written work product.

¹³ Sometimes, especially if the silent scroll has become very serious, I will add my name in some limited fashion such as “slightly embellished by Professor Glencer” – less as a means of attribution and more as a sign that I recognize the seriousness of the content and have perhaps tried to lighten it up in some quirky way. I also sometimes suggest topics to my TAs based on something I know they have experienced but might not think to use as the base for a silent scroll.

And sixth, silent scrolls offer me a creative and expressive outlet for new and interesting ideas that differs in many respects from the creation of lectures, assignments, and exercises. While I do rerun certain silent scrolls from year to year, my antennae are forever up looking for ideas for new slideshows or different material for existing ones, and this gives me an additional incentive to stay current with my own reading on topics related to the practice of law, legal education, and writing. I also enjoy the research and design process that allows me to transform abstract ideas into something akin to a mini-short story. The creative process itself is inspiring, and teaching from a place of inspiration is always a worthwhile goal.

B. Some Anticipated Follow-Up Questions

Do the students really value these silent scrolls or might they feel like an unwilling and captive audience? This question reflects what has long been my biggest concern in using this tool, but after three years of assessment, I firmly believe that the students who value and enjoy my silent scrolls (which I strive never to use as a soapbox and to always reflect an even-handed treatment of the chosen topic) vastly outweigh the handful who find them tedious or heavy-handed. I base that belief on six observations:

First, with very few exceptions, students show up early on the days that I run silent scrolls; they are seated and ready to go by the time I hit the advance button, trusting me to offer them something of value. Some of them even take notes and ask if I would mind running the slideshow again. Second, they tend to laugh in the right spots and quickly fall silent when things get heavy. Third, they joke in my presence about “Glencer’s SSPs” and either try to guess or cajole me into identifying the next topic in the series.¹⁴ Fourth, they prompt me to post the silent scrolls in .pdf format on Blackboard, should I happen to miss one. Fifth, many of them have told

¹⁴ There is no reference to the topic of the silent scrolls or to the Series itself in my LRW Syllabi for either semester.

me directly how much they enjoy and learn from these silent scrolls and appreciate the time and effort it must take me to make them. And sixth, as second- and third-year students, some of them e-mail me ideas and almost all of them respond promptly to requests for whatever information I am gathering to create a new silent scroll based on student experience and input.¹⁵

Why the silent format? Undoubtedly, this tool could be used effectively in a non-silent format. PowerPoint facilitates the audio-recording of voice commentary and/or music to accompany a slideshow. I prefer to keep my scrolls silent, however, primarily because I believe in the power of silence as an effective pedagogical tool.¹⁶ In a typical classroom setting, the professor's voice dominates, delivering selected information, exerting control, and passing judgment.¹⁷ But silence, especially when used with adult students, can be used as a way of

¹⁵ Students often send me “summer” updates full of news about their first writing assignments for “real” legal employers as well as their related fears and achievements. This year, for the first time, a student sent me a picture of the desk he was given to use for the summer at a small law firm in a small county. I was delighted and sent out a request for similar pictures from students (provided they respect their employer's and clients' need for confidentiality). Knowing how much effort and angst had gone into securing these summer positions, and how uncertain the prospect of securing and then succeeding in such positions had been just a few short months beforehand, I figured that next year's LRW students would feel inspired just by seeing pictures of those desks early in the Spring Semester when the summer job hunt is at its height. Within 48 hours, the pictures started to roll in response.

¹⁶ See e.g. Adam Jaworski, The Power of Silence: Social and Pragmatic Perspectives (Sage Publications 1993). Arguably, my scrolls are not “silent” in that the students are reading and thus hearing the text on the slides in their own heads; they are also likely to be listening to their own “internal commentator” offer a running commentary on the information being conveyed. Still, I consider these scrolls to be “silent” in the sense that I, as the professor, am choosing to be silent during the presentation and allowing the slides to advance automatically without my voice and obvious physical presence.

¹⁷ See Margaret E. Montoya, Silence and Silencing: Their Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces in Legal Communication, Pedagogy and Discourse, 33 U. Mich. J. L. Ref. 263, 296-297 (2000) (noting how this reality is typically heightened in a law school classroom where the architectural design tends to highlight the presence and dominance of the professor and where the professor typically passes judgment on student participation through his or her own verbal response or purposeful silence).

promoting autonomous thought,¹⁸ heightening a contrast and/or producing a dramatic effect,¹⁹ and creating “‘inter-spaces’ for reflection.”²⁰ Silence reinforces my overall purpose in offering the scrolls – they are intended as “food for thought” on topics worthy of sustained reflection, but not subject to my overt dominance as the professor. Additionally, I prefer to minimize distractions so as to promote the close reading and processing of text.²¹

What is the time commitment involved? Like everything else, “that depends.” The time commitment was admittedly intense when I first started using this tool. In retrospect, I realize I fussed too much over the probable student reaction to the topics I had chosen and to the graphics I found to enhance the slideshows (in the early days, I spent way too much time looking for *just* the right picture on Google Images). But the time commitment lessened considerably after just a few months and now depends largely on the topic itself and the nature of the underlying material I envision using to support it. The more amorphous the idea, the longer it takes me to build the slideshow, whereas silent scrolls based on a central text – such as key portions of law student guidebooks or articles offering discrete ideas like the Dunnewold article on “Six Word Stories” – are a snap to assemble. I often dictate the text I wish to quote and the supporting citation directly

¹⁸ Ros Ollin, Silent Pedagogy and Rethinking Classroom Practice: Structuring Teaching Through Silence Rather Than Talk, 38 Cambridge J. of Educ. 265, 275-76 (2008). Ollin surveyed educators at different levels to find out how they purposefully use silence as a pedagogical tool. She reported that silence was most frequently used in higher education settings where professors wish to promote critical questioning and independent thinking skills. Id. at 275-76.

¹⁹ Id. at 270.

²⁰ Id. Ollin reported that some educators opt to allow the silent material, such as that written on a PowerPoint slide and particularly where it was designed to raise awareness or promote attitude change, to “speak for itself” and thus avoid any in-class, follow-up discussion. Id. at 273.

²¹ Ollin also interviewed students, noting that some complained that a professor’s voice can, at times, become “noise” that “intrude[s] on an individual’s capacity to think.” Id. at 271. Music can have the same intrusive, distracting effect, and I would not want music to inadvertently suggest that I favor certain material or viewpoints over others. Additionally, I do not see my role as a law professor as an entertainer of students.

into the slides using Dragon Dictation Software and then quickly find and add a few supporting pictures. In addition, I have simply gotten better over time at knowing which designs and fonts enhance readability and at selecting the right kind of background and glue to promote the ready transmission of information in the silent scroll format. My silent scrolls are not visibly fussy (in fact, if the slides are too busy, the benefits of using this tool may be lost, and the professor might end up looking like a showoff). Over three years, I have built up a repertoire of slideshows that I can swap in and out of the series in response to what I perceive to be a need for, or an interest in, a certain topic. Plus, I am always creating new slideshows simply because I enjoy the outlet and wish to keep my topics immediate.

Do I have a Spring Semester line-up? I am currently in the process of building a Spring Semester Series tied to the appellate brief-writing process, related issues of professionalism, and the summer job hunt as the three topics that subsume my students during the second semester of law school. My line-up already includes silent scrolls related to (1) Anne Enquist’s article, Unlocking the Secrets of Highly Successful Legal Writing Students,²² (2) the image of the Elizabethan era “bareheaded and barefaced lawyer” used in the Introduction to Judith D. Fischer’s book on ethical and effective brief-writing,²³ (3) the overuse of acronyms in brief

²² 82 St. John’s L. Rev. 609, 668-674 (2008). Duquesne’s LRW Director urges all of the professors teaching in our program to recommend this article to students at the start of the Spring Semester. Not wanting to take a chance on whether the students would make the time to read it, I have distilled its most useful points into a silent scroll to ensure that every one of my students will at least see those.

²³ Judith D. Fischer, Pleasing the Court: Writing Ethical and Effective Briefs xi-xiii (2d ed., Carolina Academic Press 2011) (reprinting the Introduction to the first edition).

writing;²⁴ and (4) excerpts on appellate decision-making from Justice Cardozo’s The Nature of the Judicial Process.²⁵ I also have scrolls in the works based on material collected in the Law Stories Series,²⁶ Thorns and Roses: Lawyers Tell Their Pro Bono Stories,²⁷ and Page Fright: Foibles and Fetishes of Famous Writers, a delightful book exploring many quirky topics such as the medium preferred by famous writers and the items they kept on their desks for inspiration in moments of block and despair.²⁸

V. CONCLUSION

In the Elements of Teaching, the authors submit that “[i]magination . . . yoked to learning and experience can carry students far beyond the reach of their own imaginative powers” by allowing them to “imagine themselves in other times, locations, and circumstances not

²⁴ This silent scroll was inspired by an amicus brief filed in conjunction with a case my husband (also a lawyer) was working on at the time. In the first paragraph, the brief writer set up no less than eight acronyms to refer to all of the different organizations (private and governmental) implicated in, or interested by, the underlying issue in the lawsuit. That paragraph made the reader’s head swim and thus served as an effective example of why the overuse of acronyms should be avoided. Subsequent slides collected the advice of legal writing texts on avoiding unnecessary acronyms and snippets of opinions wherein judges decried the overuse of acronyms in practitioner writing. Students reflectively want to use acronyms as a way to show they are “in the know,” without ever considering the needs of the reader; this silent scroll gives them reason to question that tendency.

²⁵ Benjamin N. Cardozo, The Nature of the Judicial Process 142-177 (Yale U. Press 1921) (reproducing Lecture IV which explores adherence to precedent).

²⁶ The Law Story Series, published by Foundation Press, is an excellent source of material for building scrolls that feature “the true, never-heard-before stories behind landmark cases.” <http://www.westacademic.com/Professors/StudyAids/ProductLines.aspx?tab=6> (product description) (accessed July 4, 2013).

²⁷ Deborah A. Schmedermann, Thorns & Roses: Lawyers Tell Their Pro Bono Stories (Carolina Academic Press 2010), provides particularly accessible and effective material for a silent scroll because many of the stories relay firsthand the impressions and emotions of the lawyers involved in the featured pro bono activities.

²⁸ Harry Bruce, Page Fright: Foibles and Fetishes of Famous Writers (Emblem 2010). I am also considering extending the opportunity to create a silent scroll beyond my TAs by asking my next section of LRW students to submit topic ideas and, if they would enjoy the opportunity, to create a slideshow based on an approved topic over the Winter Break for viewing during the Spring Semester.

immediately present to their senses and, for the most part, never previously experienced.”²⁹ The silent scrolling PowerPoint tool offers a creative and virtually limitless method of capturing the kind of imagination that can help law students envision themselves as diligent and inspired future lawyers. Searching for and researching promising topics, as well as designing the slides, also inspires the professor and, in the end, reflects full engagement – not only in the subject matter of the professor’s course, but also in the broader setting in which the course and the legal profession exist.

²⁹ James M. Banner, Jr. & Harold C. Cannon, The Elements of Teaching 67, 75 (Yale U. Press 1997).