

Sophia Hlavaty\*

## The Relationship Between StudZR and U.S. Law Reviews: A Twentieth-Anniversary Reappraisal

### Abstract

Angloamerikanische Studierendenzeitschriften dienten als eine Inspirationsquelle für den Gründungsprozess der StudZR. Als fester Bestandteil der angloamerikanischen rechtswissenschaftlichen Studienkultur und Praxis sind diese *Law Reviews* auch hierzulande Vielen ein Begriff. Anlässlich des zwanzigsten Jubiläums der StudZR soll ein Überblick über ihre U.S.-amerikanischen Vorbilder verschafft werden. Dafür werden die Geschichte und aktuelle Entwicklungen sowie die heutige Bedeutung der *Law Reviews* dargestellt. Im Zuge einer vergleichenden Darstellung von Arbeitsweise und Organisationsstrukturen werden Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede der StudZR und der angloamerikanischen *Law Reviews* herausgearbeitet.

Anglo-American student journals served as an important source of inspiration for the founding of StudZR. Long established as a cornerstone of legal education and scholarly practice, law reviews are familiar to many in Germany as well. On the occasion of StudZR's twentieth anniversary, this article offers an overview of its U. S. predecessors. It traces their historical development, examines contemporary trends, and reflects on the role law reviews play today. Through a comparative exploration of editorial practices and organizational structures, the similarities and differences between StudZR and its Anglo-American counterparts are brought into focus.

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\* *Sophia Hlavaty* is a visiting student from 2025-26 in the Faculty of Law at the Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg. She holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honors), with distinction and Phi Beta Kappa, from Stanford University, and intends to pursue a Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree in the United States. She is a member of the StudZR editorial staff.

## A. Introduction

A symposium for the twentieth anniversary of the *Studentische Zeitschrift für Rechtswissenschaft Heidelberg* (StudZR) is an occasion for reappraisal. In the inaugural edition of StudZR, the founding editor-in-chief *Nicolas Noblen* established a relationship to law reviews in the United States with the statement that StudZR is guided „*am Konzept des amerikanischen Law Journals*“<sup>1</sup>, which was reinforced in the address from Professor *Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Peter-Christian Müller-Graff, Ph.D. h.c.*, then-Dean of the Faculty of Law, „*Inspiziert von dem Literaturtypus der amerikanischen Law Review [...] beinhaltet diese Heidelberger Initiative [...] ein hoch interessantes Experiment.*“<sup>2</sup> However, as *Noblen* insisted, this was to be done „*ohne es zu kopieren.*“<sup>3</sup> The following article takes the occasion of the twentieth anniversary to survey the evolution of the relationship between StudZR and its transatlantic model. An overview of the practice in the United States<sup>4</sup>, refreshed with contemporary developments<sup>5</sup>, provides a foundation in order to appreciate the subsequent comparison traced throughout the publication cycle<sup>6</sup>.

## B. Historical Overview of U.S. Law Reviews

In the United States the tradition is that law reviews are based at law schools, a postgraduate institution, and edited by independent organizations of law students.<sup>7</sup> The charter of a student-edited law review often makes explicit a dual purpose of serving as a forum of legal scholarship oriented to the world and a training experience for students. Law schools in the United States customarily have a flagship law review, for instance, the *Yale Law Journal* or the *Harvard Law Review*, accompanied by specialized law reviews, for instance, the *Yale Journal on Regulation*, the *Harvard International Law Journal*, and so forth. Contributors of legal scholarship to the student-edited law reviews are primarily judges, professors, practitioners, and law clerks. While debates on the practical

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<sup>1</sup> *Noblen*, Editorial, StudZR 2004, i; translation: “by the concept of the American Law Journals”.

<sup>2</sup> *Müller-Graff*, Geleitwort, StudZR 2004, iii, translation: “Inspired by the literary type of the American Law Review [...] this Heidelberg initiative [...] involves a highly interesting experiment”.

<sup>3</sup> *Noblen* (Fn. 1), p. i, translation: “without copying it”.

<sup>4</sup> See below **B**.

<sup>5</sup> See below **B. III**.

<sup>6</sup> See below **C**.

<sup>7</sup> In the U. S., “undergraduate” refers to the first university degree (Bachelor’s), whereas “graduate” or “postgraduate” refers to subsequent advanced degrees. A degree in Law is not offered at the undergraduate level but rather is a postgraduate professional doctorate, the *Juris Doctor* (J. D.), and thus requires a prior Bachelor’s degree. The J. D. is typically a three-year degree.

merits continue, law reviews have proved to influence the consideration of legal issues at the highest levels. A recent study found that the overall citation rate of law review scholarship in the *United States Supreme Court* opinions during October Terms 2013 through 2023 was 34.0 %.<sup>8</sup>

### I. Nineteenth Century: Emergence

Student-edited law reviews emerged in the late nineteenth century to a reception predominantly of skepticism. The first student-edited law review was the Albany Law School Journal founded in 1875 at Albany Law School, New York.<sup>9</sup> As would become the signature outline of early flagship law reviews, the Albany Law School Journal contained sections devoted to education, such as lecture summaries, moot court reports, and club announcements; academics, such as case law analysis; and news of worth to the legal community.<sup>10</sup> The journal lasted one year.<sup>11</sup> A decade later, the second student-edited law review, the Columbia Jurist, appeared at Columbia Law School, New York, organized accordingly, though without knowledge as to the existence of its predecessor.<sup>12</sup> The Columbia Jurist sustained only three volumes yet owes its legacy as a decisive step largely to motivating Harvard law student *John Jay McKelvey* to commence the Harvard Law Review, first published in spring 1887 with that hallmark structure of early reviews.<sup>13</sup> The transformation of the structure alongside the import for the prospect of consonance with StudZR will be discussed later.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Newton/Hennessy*, A Significant Shift to the Right: U.S. Supreme Court Justices' Citations to Law Review Articles During October Terms 2013-2023, p. 5, 19.5.2025, available: <http://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5195073> (last accessed on 12.1.2026); The U.S. Supreme Court's October Term is its annual legal session, which extends, by statute, from the first Monday in October to the Sunday before the first Monday in October of the following year.

<sup>9</sup> *Cramton*, "The Most Remarkable Institution": The American Law Review, *Journal of Legal Education* 36 no. 1 (1986), p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Snygert/Bruce*, The Historical Origins, Founding, and Early Development of Student-Edited Law Reviews, *UC Law Journal* 36 no. 5 (1985), 739 (764).

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 764.

<sup>12</sup> The correspondence is evident from the editorial of the first issue: "We shall publish every week the Moot Court Case, the decision of the Judge in full, and a complete list of the cases cited. The important notes dictated by the Professors in each class will also appear, thus forming, at the end of the year, a valuable collection of notes and reports. We shall make it a point to publish all news that can interest Law Men. Important cases recently adjudicated will find a place in our journal, and persons of acknowledged merit, in and out of the College, will be regular contributors." *The Columbia Jurist* 1, no. 1 (1885) p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> *Snygert/Bruce* (Fn. 10) p. 768.

<sup>14</sup> See below **C. I.**

## II. Twentieth Century: Rise to Prominence

The founding of the Harvard Law Review was a triumph rewarded with the opening of a new era in legal scholarship in which law schools participated eagerly with the widespread establishment of student-edited law reviews that comprised a mighty force of conviction in the enterprise. The succeeding two decades witnessed the inauguration of counterpart law reviews at five of the then most prestigious law schools in the United States, namely, Yale (1891), Pennsylvania (1896), Columbia (1901), Michigan (1902), and Northwestern (1906).<sup>15</sup> Subsequent flourishing of the law review at progressively distanced law schools arose. Present estimates record over 650 student-edited law reviews in the United States, including specialized law reviews.<sup>16</sup> Elite reviews consider several thousand submissions annually.<sup>17</sup> The tide has also reached colleges with the appearance of undergraduate law reviews, for instance, the Columbia Law Review distinguished from the Columbia Undergraduate Law Review, to which solely undergraduates contribute and oversee, though at times with engagement from a professorial board. The fascination of even younger minds with legal scholarship is ongoing as undergraduate law reviews in turn have begun to hold essay competitions for high school students around a civic or ethical prompt often with legal weight.

## III. Twenty-First Century: New Horizons

Entrance to the twenty-first century saw the flagship law reviews undergo contemporary development. The presiding theme is the increased election of students from historically underrepresented backgrounds in the legal field to positions of preeminence on flagship law reviews. To take the case of the Harvard Law Review, the shift dates back to 1990, when *Barack Obama* became the first Black president of the review.<sup>18</sup> A sequence of related achievements then unfolded at the turn of the century. For the review, 2007 marked the first Latino president, 2017 the first Black female president, 2021 the first Muslim president, 2022 the first Latina president, and 2023 the first Indian-American female

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<sup>15</sup> See *Snygert/Bruce* (Fn. 10) p. 779.

<sup>16</sup> *Rostron*, The American Law Review Market: Background and Publication Strategies, Max Planck Law, 5.5.2021, available at: <https://law.mpg.de/event/the-american-law-review-market-background-and-publication-strategies/> (last accessed on 12.1.2026).

<sup>17</sup> See e.g. *Seabrooks*, State of the Review, Harvard Law Review, 27.5.2025, available at: <https://harvardlawreview.org/state-of-the-review/> (last accessed on 12.1.2026).

<sup>18</sup> *Stern*, Obama first made history at Harvard Law, Harvard Law Today, 1.11.2008, available at: <https://hls.harvard.edu/today/obama-first-made-history-at-hls/> (last accessed on 12.1.2026).

president, with each election drawing national coverage.<sup>19</sup> The scope of diverse leadership extends to gender. In 2020, for the first time, the flagship law reviews at the top sixteen law schools in the United States all elected a female editor-in-chief.<sup>20</sup> Initiated by *Farrab Barra*, the editor-in-chief of the Duke Law Journal, the editors-in-chief published the commemorative edition “Women & Law,” which features pieces from prominent lawyers, as recognition of victories currently and not yet secured on the path to equality.<sup>21</sup> Recent changes to flagship law reviews also include their sponsorship of public interest fellowships,<sup>22</sup> expanded participation with the recruitment of paid undergraduate interns,<sup>23</sup> and issuance of a joint letter that commits to eliminating the so-called “exploding offers” that demand the author respond to an offer of publication within days, hours, or minutes.<sup>24</sup>

### C. Comparison to StudZR

Having reconstructed the contemporary law review field in the United States, the relationship to StudZR can be assessed.

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<sup>19</sup> *Harvard Law News Staff*, Harvard Law Review elects Crespo as new president, Harvard Law Today, 5.2.2007, available at: <https://hls.harvard.edu/today/harvard-law-review-elects-crespo-as-new-president/> (last accessed on 12.1.2026); *Halper*, Law Review Elects First Black Woman President, The Harvard Crimson, 31.1.2017, available at: <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2017/1/31/imeime-umana-law-review/> (last accessed on 12.1.2026); *Cho*, Hassaan Shahawy '16 Elected Harvard Law Review's First Muslim President, The Harvard Crimson, 16.2.2021, available at: <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2021/2/16/review-elects-first-muslim-president/> (last accessed on 12.1.2026); *Brandes/Roosevelt*, Priscila E. Coronado Elected as Harvard Law Review's First Latina President, The Harvard Crimson, 4.2.2022, available at: <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2022/2/4/law-review-latina-president/> (last accessed on 12.1.2026); *Lemann/Shab*, Harvard Law Review Elects Apsara Iyer as 137th President, The Harvard Crimson, 6.2.2023, available at: <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2023/2/6/harvard-law-review-iyer/> (last accessed on 12.1.2026).

<sup>20</sup> *Gross*, For The First Time, The Journals At The Top U.S. Law Schools Are All Led By Women, Forbes, 11.2.2020, available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/elanagross/2020/02/11/the-journals-at-the-top-us-law-schools-are-all-led-by-women-for-the-first-time/> (last accessed on 12.1.2026).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> See e.g. *Harvard Law Review*, The HLR Fellowship, available at: <https://harvardlawreview.org/fellowship/> (last accessed on 12.1.2026); *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, The Public Interest Fellowship, available at: <https://pennlawreview.com/public-interest/> (last accessed on 12.1.2026).

<sup>23</sup> See e.g. Yale University, "Yale Law Journal Undergraduate Internship," Yale Department of Economics.

<sup>24</sup> A copy of the letter is available on *Stanford Law Review*, Exploding Offers, available at: <https://www.stanfordlawreview.org/submissions/> (last accessed on 12.1.2026).

## I. Content and Form

The opening source of divergence between StudZR and law reviews in the United States is the present content and form. Founded in 2004, StudZR retained the model of academic and educational articles published in a biannual print issue (the „*Gelbe Heft*“) until 2014, when it split into the printed StudZR-Ausbildung (the „*Blau*e Heft“) and the online StudZR-WissOn. StudZR-Ausbildung contains methodological and didactic articles, notably successful student exam papers accompanied by comments from the lecturer, whereas StudZR-WissOn contains essays and case law pieces intended for the broader legal sphere. The flagship law reviews in the United States have abandoned the spirit of express didacticism resonant with StudZR-Ausbildung that was visible through their section devoted to lecture summaries in the early hallmark structure. Instead, the sections have come to be “Articles,” “Essays,” which tend to be more provocative, “Notes,” “Comments,” “Features,” “Book Reviews,” and the occasional “Tribute,” combined according to the preference of each law review. The standard length of representative forms, including footnotes, is stipulated for Articles at 25,000 words, Essays at 15,000 words, and Book Reviews at 10,000 words.<sup>25</sup> As to contributor eligibility, some flagship law reviews, unlike StudZR, impose restrictions. The Yale Law Journal, for instance, does not take Articles or Essays written solely by current J. D. students at Yale Law School, or by authors who were J. D. students at Yale Law School during the submission window.<sup>26</sup>

## II. Editorial Philosophy

In the realm of editorial philosophy, StudZR reproduces the poles that structure the debate among law reviews in the United States. StudZR edits lightly the case solutions and didactic material selected for StudZR-Ausbildung but edits intensively the articles selected for StudZR-WissOn. Flagship law reviews in the United States are likewise divided on editorial philosophy. The contingent epitomized by the University of Chicago Law Review employs a “light edit” policy whereas the contingent epitomized by the Yale Law Journal employs an editing process described as “extremely intensive” with “global changes to the piece’s structure and substance.”<sup>27</sup> Methodology leads to the next point of concrete realization.

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<sup>25</sup> The word count represents the average for that form across elite law reviews.

<sup>26</sup> *The Yale Law Journal*, Submissions, available at: <https://yalelawjournal.org/submissions> (last accessed on 12.1.2026).

<sup>27</sup> *The University of Chicago Law Review*, Submissions to the Law Review, available at: <https://lawreview.uchicago.edu/submissions> (last accessed on 12.1.2026); *The Yale Law*

### III. Board Structure

The approach to editor recruitment is a further source of divergence between StudZR and the flagship law reviews in the United States as regards both the eligibility requirements and application procedure. StudZR editorship is open to students from all semesters. In the United States, while specialized law reviews might accept first-year students for the position of editor, the flagship law reviews consist solely of second- and third-year students, or put in the characteristic terms, respectively “2Ls” and “3Ls.”<sup>28</sup> The application for StudZR consists of the CV, a letter of motivation, and an interview. By contrast, candidates for flagship law reviews in the United States are customarily evaluated on the basis of a “write on competition” held in the spring of the 1L year, which measures capability in the analysis of legal scholarship, source and citation, among other skills. Grades, the CV, and a personal statement are factors according to the determination of each board.<sup>29</sup> In the case that a piece by a student is accepted for publication in the review the student might be admitted to the position of editor.<sup>30</sup>

With the achievement of an editor position students occupy a contrasting situation on the law review. StudZR editors are placed into the following departments: Didactics, IT, Case Studies, Reviews, and WissOn. In the United States, however, 2Ls are “Staff Editors,” retaining a generality that allows for exposure to a broad range of legal scholarship, and at the end of the year promoted to either a “Section Editor” or the Officer Board for 3L.<sup>31</sup>

### IV. Publication Schedule

The publication schedule that each law review pursues also differs. StudZR is a biannual publication whereas a flagship law review in the United States is often a monthly publication scaled from the fall to the summer, excepting December.

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*Journal*, About the Yale Law Journal, available at: <https://yalelawjournal.org/about-the-yale-law-journal> (last accessed on 12.1.2026).

<sup>28</sup> See e.g. *Columbia Law Review*, Membership Selection, available at: <https://columbialawreview.org/membership/> (last accessed on 12.1.2026).

<sup>29</sup> For instance, the first-year grade point average is a factor in the editor selection for the Columbia Law Review but not the Stanford Law Review. See *Columbia Law Review* (Fn. 28); *Stanford Law Review*, About the Stanford Law Review, available at: <https://www.stanfordlawreview.org/about/> (last accessed on 12.1.2026).

<sup>30</sup> See e.g. *Yale Law Journal* (Fn 27).

<sup>31</sup> See e.g. *Yale Law Journal*, Volume 135 Masthead, available at: <https://yalelawjournal.org/masthead/volume-135> (last accessed on 12.1.2026).

**D. Conclusion**

Considering the historical development of StudZR and the flagship law reviews in the United States from a comparative perspective brought a catalogue of differences to the fore. Yet a full comprehension of that catalogue requires ascertaining the consequently revealed divergence between the national systems of legal education and the law, which is ultimately at stake. While that advance demands contextualization at an extent more actualizable in a future study the present article can offer a potential frame. The twenty years since the founding of StudZR celebrated at the symposium are constitutive of an era of globalization, evoking the expansion of access to the internet, revolution of the smartphone, interdependence of health networks, to cite only a few examples. Perhaps, then, a future study could rethink the systematic divergence glimpsed through the law reviews as rather an opportunity for mutual inspiration.