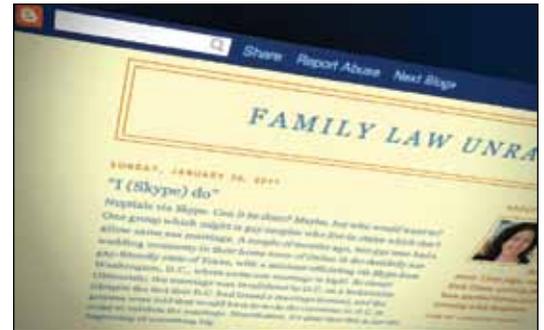


# Technology

## Family Law Unraveled

*One Lawyer's Dive into the Blogosphere for Fun and (Maybe) Profit*

BY MARGARET KLAW



**M**y New Year's resolution for 2010 was to start writing more. Not the kind of writing we all do every day; not more letters that refer to "the above-captioned matter" or pleadings populated by characters named "petitioner" and "respondent." My goal was to free up my writing and have some fun. I have always wanted to chronicle life as a family lawyer – the clients we get to know, the richness and complexity of the issues and problems we deal with, and the interaction of our work with our own families and personal lives – but I didn't know how or where to begin. So I scheduled myself a day out of the office at the end of January, hopped on the web, and started reading family law blogs to see if that was a place I should start.

Four hours later, I emerged from cyberspace with a pretty good survey of the territory and a strong opinion about the kind of blog I did NOT want to write.

Many law firms have blogs as part of their websites that are essentially electronic versions of the traditional corporate newsletter. You know the type: informative, neutral, professional, e.g., "On May 12, 2010, new support guidelines went into effect in Pennsylvania..." This type of blog contains useful information for clients and makes the firm's website more timely and dynamic; it is an excellent marketing tool.

That was not at all what I had in mind. As much as I love my partners and colleagues and want to build our practice, my interest in blogging was way more personal than professional – I wanted to write an account of what I do on a daily basis because I think it's a fascinating world we family lawyers inhabit, and I hoped to both enlighten and entertain people. It will surprise no one that I'm not the first lawyer to undertake this type of blog about family law, but I can tell you that it was not easy to track them down. I did ultimately find some good models out there and, as far as I can tell, they're all from the UK. Our British brethren (and sistren) seemed to have the chatty, breezy first person tone I had in mind. (See, for example, [www.bloodyrelations.blogspot.com](http://www.bloodyrelations.blogspot.com), written by "jacquig" who describes herself as "UK family lawyer. North London very North London! Arsenal fan. Cinema enthusiast. Recently married lady. Cat lover. Shoe fanatic. Wild flower spotter. Cyclist.")

Inspired by the British bloggers' example, I wrote an introductory post called The New Year's Resolution (delayed a bit by working on everyone else's New Year's resolution to get divorced – we are deluged with new clients in January) and my first substantive post titled Client vs. Friend about the tricky but satisfying process of becoming friends with clients. I vetted the entries with two trusted advisors – the friend/former client I was writing

about and my very nonlawyer husband, both of whom gave me the thumbs up. I came up with the name family law unraveled because it seemed to describe what I planned to do, that is, deconstruct my professional life. Armed with the two posts and a name, I was ready to go, with one big exception: I knew absolutely nothing about actually setting up a blog.

Enter Fritz. Fritz is the guy at the IT firm we use who knows all things blog. Fritz and I spent an afternoon together where he set up a blog for me on Blogspot, Google's blogging program. We picked a template, color and font, I wrote my profile, he cropped and inserted a picture of me to accompany it (that alone would have taken me hours), he showed me how to draft, edit and post my blog entries, and he explained how comments could be posted. I posted my first entry that afternoon and immediately started checking it obsessively for comments. Not surprisingly, there weren't any, because I hadn't told anyone about the blog. Lesson one: tell people you have a blog. I started by publicizing it to co-workers and family, which generated the immediate but not-so-inspired comment from one of my sisters: "almost time for Blog number 2..."

Since last February, I have been posting at least once per month, covering topics ranging from the puzzling legal fiction of issuing new birth certificates to children who are adopted to our

summer office field trip to the Ritz one afternoon in July to see *The Kids Are All Right*, which we considered necessary viewing for a firm that represents so many LGBT clients in connection with family formation and dissolution. I've been having a blast. It's such a great respite from the formal structure of the pleading, brief or settlement agreement. It's also an outlet for me to articulate all that stuff that rattles around in my head, unformed.

In terms of my mental health it's been a huge success. But here's the surprising thing: it's turning out to be great marketing, too. More and more people are reading the blog. The aforementioned Fritz also set me up on Google Analytics, an amazing companion to your blog or website that gives you tons of data, in cool graphs, pie charts and maps, about your readers. For example, in the month of August, 83 visitors paid 129 visits to my blog and viewed 288 pages. Forty-nine percent of them came from referring sites (mostly from our website, which has a link to the blog), 44 percent went directly to the blog, and 9 percent used search

engines to find it. While the vast majority of readers come from the Philadelphia area, the rest are a far-flung group. In addition to the U.S., I had readers that month from the U.K., Canada, Brazil, Germany, Romania and the Netherlands. A total of 39 cities were represented, including Bucharest, London and Kansas City.

While it's kind of intriguing to know that someone is sitting in an apartment in Bucharest immersed in the musings of an American family lawyer, the really notable thing is that new clients coming into the office are routinely mentioning the blog and referring to issues I wrote about. The "Prince Charming" (page 44) has particularly resonated with a number of women we represent in divorce cases. Some of the blog entries are more personal, and clients and friends seem to enjoy those too. All in all, I consider this venture into the blogosphere (love that word) to be a resounding success. ■

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## Tech BRIEFS

### Is 2011 Year of the iPad?

Calling 2011 the "Year of the iPad," Apple CEO Steve Jobs introduced a faster, thinner and lighter iPad 2 in early March.

The new and improved iPad, which began shipping March 11, includes forward and rear facing video cameras. Apple's iMovie (a \$5 application) is available so users can edit their videos. You'll also be able to send your video to YouTube, Facebook, Vimeo, CNN iReport and iTunes thanks to the new "share" button. The iPad 2 is compatible with GarageBand (\$5), a music editing application. There is also a virtual drum kit and "smart instruments" for the less musically inclined.



The 1.3-pound tablet computer is available in black and white and has a 10-hour battery life. It is 9.5 inches high, 7.31 inches wide and just 0.34 inches thick.

The iPad 2 will come in the same 16GB, 32GB and 64 GB configurations, starting at \$499. It is available with both 3G and WiFi to both Verizon and AT&T networks.

Apple also introduced the \$39 iPad Smart Cover, which protects the unit, cleans the screen and acts as a stand.

Jobs said Apple controls the tablet computer market, with iPads accounting for 95 percent of the devices sold. Apple sold nearly 15 million iPads in 2010. ■

### Genesis Printer

Lexmark's new Genesis printer isn't your father's flatbed scanner. In fact, not a flatbed at all. It has a 10-megapixel digital camera with a fish-eye lens that produces images nearly instantly.



Here's how Lexmark's FlashScan system works. After you shut the scanner's bay, a preview image is generated on the 4.3-inch color touchscreen. Just 2.2 seconds later, you have a 300 dpi image.

You can scan directly to Evernote, Photobucket and box.net. Lexmark says it is working with Twitter and Facebook to allow users to directly upload to those sites. The Genesis costs around \$400. ■

## Blogging for Beginners

There are an estimated 400 million blogs worldwide, with another new one being created every half second. Interested in joining the blogosphere? It's a fairly simple process.

A number of sites (blogger.com, typepad.com, wordpress.com, tumblr.com and weebly.com, for example) offer free blog hosting. All you need to do is register for an account, choose a layout design and start writing. It really is that simple.

- Jeff Lyons



## PRINCE CHARMING

By Margaret Klaw - May 16, 2010

I am obsessed with the topic of women's economic self-sufficiency. When I was in my early 20s, I thought it was important, as an abstract principle, for women to be able to support themselves. But I didn't know the half of it. Being a divorce lawyer for 25 years has made me see up close and personal the devastating effect that total dependence on a husband can have.

I am not surprised by women older than me who embraced a traditional homemaker role at a time when other options weren't really on the table. But I continue to be surprised by the large number of women my age and younger – women who were raised with the expectation that they would have careers, women with college or graduate-school degrees – who never really entered the workforce and find themselves at age 40 or 50 with no ability to earn a living.

I completely understand how it happens. A couple meet in college or grad school, get married, work for a year or two, wife gets pregnant, stops working for a brief period, husband's career builds, wife doesn't return to work because husband is capable of supporting them both, wife becomes absorbed with the very considerable pleasures of full-time motherhood, wife has a second and maybe a third child. Fast-forward 15 years, children are all in school, wife's job is managing the family and household, husband's job is to earn all the money, and the marriage falls apart.

Unless they are really wealthy, it's a disaster. You just can't divide up one income stream and have it support two households without a significant drop in everyone's living standard. And how do you navigate the difficulties of an unhappy marriage when any thinking you try to do about what would really be best for you and your children is completely intertwined with a sickening fear of not being able to pay the bills, of going to work at Starbucks (if they'll even have you), because your 20-year-old B.A. in English is not going to qualify you to do anything that pays more than \$12 an hour? Women living this nightmare are desperate and terrified.

By contrast, women who can support themselves are able to think about divorce entirely differently. Are they still in love? Would it be better for the children, on balance, if they stay or go? They may be unhappy, but they feel they have choices. There is just no question that money is power and the power dynamic in marriages where one person is financially dependent on the other is dramatically different from marriages where either spouse could pay their own rent if they had to.

Fairy tales die hard. Our culture may still whisper into the ears of young women that Prince Charming will come, sweep you off your feet, and take care of you – which is fine if it happens, enjoy the ride – but make sure you have a Plan B, because you absolutely cannot count on happily ever after.

Comment from client posted May 19, 2010:

Oh you hit home with me. I gave up my job and chances of developing a long-lasting, sustaining career to raise our family. Never gave much thought to the fact that I might find myself in what has become a really nasty situation. My marriage has crumbled over many years. I thought I could stay. I was afraid to leave because I haven't worked in 16 years. Just wish now, in the position I am, that I had listened to my inner voice, saying do not give up your dreams. Your kids will see and learn from your example. Hindsight is always 20/20. I will get through this, but not without a fight that I dread waking up to each and every day!



Logitech Harmony 900

URC Digital R50

If you're anything like us, you have a bunch of old remote controls filling up drawers and littering coffee tables at home. The good folks at Logitech and URC want to do something about that clutter. These clever **universal remote controls** keep all of your electronics at bay with just one device. URC says its Digital R50 can control 18 devices at once while the Logitech Harmony 900 claims support for more than 5,000 brands and 225,000 devices.

FEATURES	LOGITECH HARMONY 900	URC DIGITAL R50
CONNECTIVITY TECHNOLOGY	INFRARED	INFRARED
SUPPORTED DEVICES	TV, CABLE OR SATELLITE SET-TOP BOX, DVD PLAYER, DVR, GAME SYSTEM, AUDIO, MEDIA PC, VCR	AUDIO, VIDEO, TV, DVD PLAYER, VCR, CABLE BOX, SATELLITE TV SYSTEM
MAXIMUM OPERATING DISTANCE	UP TO 100 FEET	49 FEET
DISPLAY	LCD TOUCH SCREEN	LCD
POWER	RECHARGEABLE LITHIUM ION BATTERY	4 AA BATTERIES
DIMENSIONS	2.3 X 1.3 X 8.75 INCHES	2.3 X 1.1 X 8.9 INCHES
WEIGHT	6 OUNCES	8.8 OUNCES
PRICE	\$399	\$149.99