



# Read before burning!

## *Plaintiff's* new editor recalls the battle of the magazine pile

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When I began working as a new associate long ago, our office had a system for distributing legal periodicals to the attorneys. The magazines appeared in the attorneys' inboxes, and continued to stack up for weeks, waiting to be passed on to whoever was next in line. I would like to say my office was a clutter-free exception. (I would be dishonest if I did.) The problem was, in flipping through the magazines, I would routinely find useful articles, and read the most compelling ones on the spot. But others were too lengthy to read at that particular moment. So I kept the magazines piling up with the intention of reading them at some point in the future. Rarely did I ever return to the pile. And while this made me feel guilty, that guilt was outweighed by more pressing issues: mediation briefs, trial prep, discovery, meetings, phone calls and e-mails.

The system for circulating the periodicals was to review the material, and then initial the front covers before passing them on to the next attorney. This made it easy to see who was next in line for the pile. That pile would grow and grow, serving as a constant reminder of all the reading I had put off. Most attorneys like to think of themselves as being in control – able to do it all and still have room for more. Well, if there is an ever-expanding mountain of magazines accumulating on your desk, you start to lose that feeling of control.

The trick with those magazines was just to initial them all and then devise a

clever plan to pass them off. And so it was, at the end of the day when others had left the office, I would steal down the hall with piles of magazines under my arms to find the next unsuspecting victim.

In fairness, I did see some of the senior attorneys relaxing and reviewing the stacks of magazines on occasion, but only after reading the advance sheets and jury verdict reports. Taking time to pore through the long, dry and detailed articles in most of those magazines was not a priority. All of us were more inclined to spend time reading the most easily digestible and interesting material. After all, if the material was important enough it had already made its way to the plaintiff associations' listservs or was being discussed at industry social events.

I did notice that one of the attorneys in our office had fought this battle with the magazine pile and had won – his desk was immaculate. It turns out he would quickly scan through the denser magazines when they arrived, tabbing articles of particular relevance to his current caseload. He would have the select few articles digitally scanned for later reference. This was not only an efficient method of managing an unwieldy pile of material, but it also cut down on the time required to later find the article.

As I take over as the new editor of *Plaintiff*, I know your time is limited. I also know attorneys at all levels appreciate something a bit different from the typical legal magazine article, i.e., case write-ups adapted from legal briefs. That is why

I intend to continue with the magazine's tradition of focusing on shorter articles that you'll want to read. We will assist our readers by keeping articles to a manageable length and encouraging authors to use plenty of bullet points. We'll continue to address not just your life in the law, but your life outside the law and the art of balancing the two. And you don't need to worry about scanning our articles to find them later; they are all online at [www.plaintiffmagazine.com](http://www.plaintiffmagazine.com), fully searchable and easily printable as pdf documents.

My hope is that we'll continue to engage you, leaving you feeling that your time with *Plaintiff* is well spent because, in the end, I do not want *Plaintiff* added to the pile that secretly is shuffled around after hours.



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