

Kluwer Arbitration Blog

Interviews with Our Editors: In Conversation with Gwen de Vries, Director, International Group Content & Market Development at Wolters Kluwer Legal & Regulatory, U.S.

Kiran Nasir Gore (Associate Editor) (The George Washington University Law School) and Gwen de Vries (Director Content and Market Development, Wolters Kluwer Legal & Regulatory, International Group) · Friday, January 22nd, 2021



Gwen de Vries is Director of International Group Content & Market Development at Wolters Kluwer Legal & Regulatory, U.S. ('Wolters Kluwer'). She has decades of experience and

*expertise in information services, focusing on the international legal market, including international arbitration. Among other projects, Gwen leads the team behind **Kluwer Arbitration**, Wolters Kluwer's development of content for **expert solutions and practical digital tools**. She oversees Wolters Kluwer's publication of the dozens of international arbitration-related **books and journals** in both digital and print format. In 2009, Gwen helped conceive and establish the **Kluwer Arbitration Blog** and was the author of its **first post**. As the Blog completes its 12th year and has more than 3,000 posts, Gwen shares her perspectives on the international arbitration field, growth of the Blog over the years, evolution of the information services industry, and how digital transformation is enhancing both international arbitration practice and the information services industry in unique ways.*

1. *Gwen, here at the Blog, we are indebted to you for the vision that inspired this platform's inception. Can you tell us more about the reasons you launched the Blog and why Wolters Kluwer invested in its development?*

In 2009, blogging had been around for several years, but it was still a relatively new medium for international lawyers. At Wolters Kluwer, we thought that a Blog platform could become a modernized way for the arbitration community to interact. Until then, there was no 'middle ground' and 'low threshold' platform to exchange views and information. On the one end of the spectrum, there were informal discussion email groups, and on the other end, academic and heavily footnoted journal articles. In the 'middle' we saw scope for publication of short articles with a substantive approach and analytical lens. We did not intend for the Blog to be a place for gossip but rather a platform where the community could share news and opinions. We also expressly wanted it to be freely accessible – something that anyone could contribute to and access. Perhaps it sounds idealistic, but at the time, we saw this as a way to give back to the arbitration community.

We conceived the Blog in partnership with Gary Born, Roger Alford, and Luke Peterson. Roger became its Managing Editor, and he continues today as its General Editor. We assembled a group of correspondents, intending to solicit prospective posts from their networks on hot topics. The goal was to attract both established and new voices.

2. *Can you briefly reflect on the past 12 years of the Blog and its achievements?*

Over the years, we have been impressed by the interest in the Blog and the community that it has garnered. Today, on a monthly basis, the Blog welcomes thousands of readers and contributors from every corner of the world. We are proud of its success. It has become **acknowledged** as a meeting place for the international arbitration community members to consider and debate important topics.¹⁾

The Blog is even respected as a source of commentary, having served as resource material in important cases. For example, it has been cited in party submissions in investment arbitrations (like *EDF International S.A. v Argentina*²⁾ and *Gabriel Resources Ltd. v. Romania*³⁾); in party submissions before several courts (such as U.S. Supreme Court proceedings concerning *Belize v. BCB Holdings*⁴⁾); and also by decisionmakers themselves (see the decisions of tribunals and

committees in *Renco v. Peru*,⁵⁾ *Pezold v. Zimbabwe*,⁶⁾ *Caratube v. Kazakhstan*,⁷⁾ and *Philip Morris v. Australia*⁸⁾). This is not to mention the Blog's citation in important commentaries, books, and journals – there are hundreds of such references on Kluwer Arbitration alone, including in Gary Born's recently published *International Commercial Arbitration (Third Edition)*.⁹⁾

3. *You have the unique vantage point of observing the international arbitration field's development as both an insider and outsider over a long period. How has the field evolved over the years?*

The first international arbitration-related conference that I attended was ICCA's Biennial Congress in Seoul in 1996. That conference saw about 200 attendees, who were mainly middle-aged men from Europe or the U.S. At the time, Albert Jan van den Berg and Jan Paulsson were among the community's younger and emerging voices. Wolters Kluwer was one of the few exhibitors and the only one displaying books (mostly ICCA publications, [a partnership we continue today](#)). Believe it or not, we distributed cigars as giveaways at the exhibition table!

Arbitration conferences look very different these days. Seeing 1,000+ participants and many exhibitors is common, and there are of course many women and individuals from different backgrounds joining. This reflects the significant growth of arbitration as a practice: today, there is more arbitration work available and it demands a greater diversity of people doing the work.

This emerging landscape makes a platform like the Blog even more important. It helps members of the community connect with each other. It also allows our contributors to build their profiles and stand out among the crowd. In some ways, I feel that the Blog itself has contributed to achieving increased diversity within the arbitration community, as it offers an accessible platform for anyone with a valuable perspective to share it.

4. *You've already previewed that, over the years, the Blog has changed and grown significantly. How does this evolution reflect on changes in the information services field?*

At its core, Wolters Kluwer, is on a mission to support arbitration specialists in their work. As the arbitration field has evolved to keep up with the changing market, Wolters Kluwer has done the same. We are in an era of information overload. With more arbitration cases, more individuals involved, and more to cover, it becomes difficult for anyone to keep up. We have addressed this challenge by evolving Kluwer Arbitration from a research service into a professional work flow tool. [Kluwer Arbitration Practice Plus](#), that launched end of 2019, includes a suite of practical and data-driven tools to provide guidance and answers that support the case strategy of arbitration lawyers.

While we continue to commission high-quality original publications, we focus on offering increasingly clever and useful search engines, filters, and tools that make the task of identifying relevant sources easier – because once those important sources are identified, an arbitration lawyer can truly focus on legal problems and innovative solutions.

Meanwhile, understanding the arbitration community is still crucial for our success. The Blog is a

mutually beneficial platform. Arbitration lawyers can easily share their perspectives, and we can connect with practitioners and academics who may later help us develop our content and solutions. In this way, we keep track of what is interesting and important to the community. In addition, it reinforces our brand as a market leader in arbitration, by allowing us to promote the work of our partners, including ICCA, CIArb, ITA, and others, while also highlighting our innovative content and tools. Most importantly, the Blog allows us to achieve our original vision of quickly highlighting important developments in the field with high-quality commentary in real-time.

5. *What are your thoughts on the need for a digital community as we continue through the COVID-19 pandemic era? Are there any related implications in the information industry?*

Perhaps unsurprisingly, I expect that a digital community will become even more important. Years ago, an arbitration lawyer would establish his or her brand by going to as many conferences as possible and networking extensively. COVID-19 has also widened how we think about connecting with each other. This carries several positive effects – only a small group of individuals had the resources (time and money) to travel to conferences. Meanwhile, establishing a digital presence in this community can be achieved simply by sharing your perspectives. For Wolters Kluwer, this is now also one of the ways we identify new prospective authors. In the past, we would have mainly relied upon networking at conferences to achieve this same goal!

Again, I can return to the important role of the Blog. It is an established platform that, in 2020 alone, saw more than 500,000 visitors. This, coupled with the fact that a blog post is easier to write than a journal article, creates a huge opportunity for prospective contributors to gain visibility. I encourage arbitration lawyers to add their voice to the Blog and consider [submitting a post](#) to the editorial board for consideration.

As our focus is on serving the community, I must say that none of this would be possible without the enthusiasm, dedication, and active contribution of the Blog's editorial team and contributors (past and present). We owe a big thanks to all of them and the current team, led by Dr Crina Baltag, who review contributions and guide prospective contributors to ensure that the Blog continues to be a place of thought leadership and innovation.

6. *Are there any latest initiatives at Wolters Kluwer that you'd like to highlight?*

We continue to explore new ways to bring useful digital content to our community, sometimes with partners. For example, we are currently offering a pick of 3 free arbitrator reports from our partner [Arbitrator Intelligence](#) to subscribers of Kluwer Arbitration Practice Plus. This offer is valid until the end of April. Recently we launched the [International Law Talk podcast series](#), which presents a new digital medium for us to share opinions and news with the community. Several episodes have focused on [arbitration](#) and we were privileged to host established and emerging voices from the community as both interviewees and interviewers. We will continue releasing new episodes periodically, I hope you will have a listen!

We look forward to supporting Wolters Kluwer in its future initiatives! In the meantime, on

behalf of our fellow editors and readers, we thank you for everything you do behind the scenes to support the arbitration community!

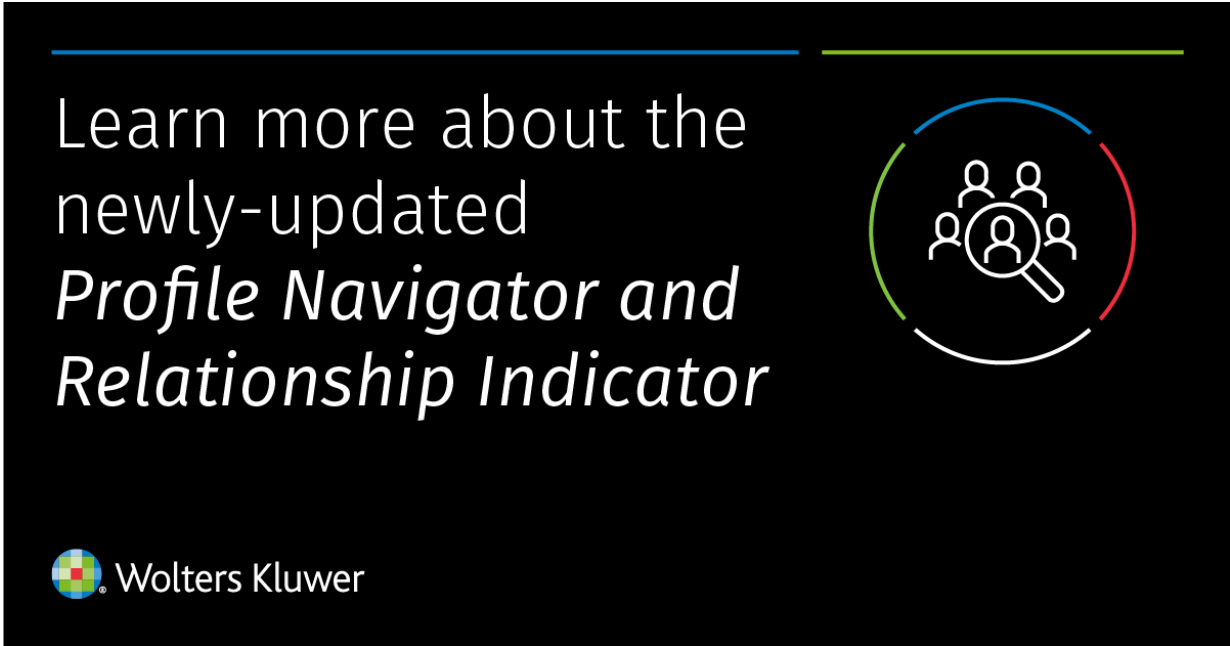
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- See e.g.*, n. 661 (citing Hassan Raza's April 24, 2018 blog post); n. 921 (citing Robert Landicho and Andrea Cohen's October 5, 2018 blog post). **?9**

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