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Top 10 Law School Home Pages of 2009

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Roger V. Skalbeck, Top 10 Law School Home Pages of 2009, in GREEN BAG ALMANAC AND READER 2010 (Ross E. Davies, ed., forthcoming).

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in

GREEN BAG ALMANAC AND READER 2010

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TOP 10 LAW SCHOOL HOME PAGES OF 2009

Roger V. Skalbeck[†]

Editor's note: It was a simultaneously pleasing and painful moment when Roger Skalbeck's study of law school home pages arrived at Green Bag World Headquarters. The study itself is pleasingly useful and interesting. But the position of the George Mason University School of Law at the top of Skalbeck's 2009 list might be especially interesting to readers who know that the editor of this Almanac works at that law school. All I can say is that I (a) had no hand in Skalbeck's work (other than soliciting it in the first place, after seeing his book, "Law School Website Design Study 2009"); (b) gave no thought to how he might treat my employer; and (c) have every reason to believe that he conducted his work in a thorough and thoroughly impartial way. Of course, it would be a lie to say that I am not proud of my colleagues whose good work Skalbeck recognizes below. Similarly, it would be a shame if the Green Bag were to adopt a practice of twisting its publication standards to squelch work that might be embarassing to someone associated with the Bag. And so we will not, which means you get to enjoy Skalbeck's work. Please do.

The website home page represents the virtual front door for any law school. It's the place many prospective students start in the application process. Enrolled students, law school faculty and other employees often start with the home page to find classes, curricula and compensation plans. Home page content changes constantly. Deciding which home pages are good is often very subjective. Creating a ranking system for "good taste" is perhaps impossible.

This brief ranking report attempts to identify the best law school home pages based entirely on objective criteria. The goal was to include elements that make websites easier to use for sighted as well as visually-impaired users. Most elements require no special design skills, sophisticated technology or significant expenses.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Sites included in this report include 195 United States law schools accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA), as shown in the accompanying chart. Humans performed the more than 2700 data evaluation tasks, completed in late November and early December 2009. All screen shots for the top 10 sites were taken on December 11, 2009.

Thankfully technology tools can make an otherwise tedious analysis a bit easier. The primary tools used to assist in evaluating sites include four add-on programs for the Firefox browser:

[†] Associate Law Librarian for Electronic Resources & Services, Georgetown Law Library. Copyright © Roger V. Skalbeck, 2009.

Web Developer Toolbar

(https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/60)

Operator for finding Microformats

(https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/4106)

Dublin Core Viewer

(https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/528)

Wave Toolbar

(https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/6720)

All remaining analysis was done manually by humans with pretty good eyesight.

In scoring each of the websites, fourteen elements were selected for the evaluation. The goal was to select meaningful criteria that could be objectively evaluated. As some elements are more important than others, elements were prioritized by importance. Once prioritized, point values were assigned to add up to 100 for a perfect score. With two exceptions, analysis is essentially a binary task. For instance, a site either lists a physical address or it doesn't. Those sites containing selected elements receive full credit. Those lacking it get nothing. For two elements, half credit is possible

Here is an overview of the elements and their respective weighted values.

Element	Weighted Value
Address [a]	10
Search Box [b]	10
Cascading Stylesheet (CSS)* [c]	10
News Headlines [d]	6
News Headlines with Images [e]	7
Embedded Media [f]	5
Favicon [g]	7
Smiles [h]	5
Social Network Link [i]	6
Content Carousel [j]	6
RSS Meta Information [k]	8
Microformats [1]	6
Dublin Core [m]	4
Hierarchal Organization* [n]	10
Perfect Score	100

^{*} For [c] and [n] several sites partially implemented these elements. For instance, with Cascading Stylesheets, one site may have used a single HTML table to format content, or another may have used HTML headers out of order.

A physical address for the law school is included in text. Post office boxes count, but there's no credit if an address is in a graphical image. Whether you're a prospective student using Google Earth or attending a guest lecture on campus, finding a physical address quickly is important.

The site has a search box that users can type terms into without leaving the page. A link to a separate search page gets no points.

A good practice in web design is to use a Cascading Stylesheet (CSS) to control the site design, including layout, colors and typography. HTML is for content and CSS is for presentation. Sites that include very limited use of HTML tables receive half the point total.

The site has headlines about news or events relating to the law school.

An effective way to improve text-based news headlines is to add graphics or images next to the news links. For this element, a site needs to have a news headline accompanied by a small image relating to that story or event.

One effective way to make online media engaging is to make it playable directly from the home page. Points are awarded if a site has audio or video that can be played directly without leaving the site.

Favicon
$$[g] - 7$$
 points

A favorites icon (or "favicon") is a small graphic associated with a website, which appears in places such as the browser location bar or in your bookmarks or favorites file. The favicon is probably the most important tiny graphic any site can have, and it is a simple way to help identify a law school brand or image.

Somebody is smiling in at least one picture on the site.

If you are on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or iTunes, having this information on the home page helps. If you're on Friendster, MySpace, Orkut, Hi5 or Kadoo, it's probably not worth the screen real estate to tell people. Points awarded for any social network link or icon.

Carousel Content [j] – 6 points

Multiple types of the same content can be viewed in a single space on the home page. This can be a slideshow, a series of stories about the school or a profile gallery of people important to the law school. To qualify for points here, the carousel needs to have content users can control, so it doesn't count to have galleries that automatically refresh or content that is randomly displayed when the page loads.

RSS Meta Information [k] - 8 points

If you distribute news through an RSS (Rich Site Summary) feed such as blog content or news stories, you should let people as well as computers know about it, to maximize the exposure. A single line of code in a document's header achieves this result. If a site has an RSS feed structured for automatic discovery, all points are awarded. If Firefox can't recognize the feed, the site gets no points.

Microformats [*l*] – 6 points

If you include the school address, contact details or event information on your site, using microformats (www.microformats.org) ensures that computers can recognize this. This is one aspect of the Semantic Web.

Dublin Core [n] – 4 points

Content in a website header is invisible in the browser, but it can be used to convey descriptive information such as key words and version information. Sites that want to display structured and deliberate descriptive information (typically called metadata) may want to use a format called Dublin Core (www.dublincore.org). There is debate as to whether Dublin Core is the best metadata standard, so this is the lowest-ranked element in the evaluation.

Hierarchal Structure [n] – 10 points

Header tags such as <h1> and <h2> should have meaning and relationships between site content. Having proper headings helps computers understand a website's logical organization, and many tools for visually impaired users can use header tags for navigation and to recognize site content.

. . . .

TOP 10 HOME PAGES



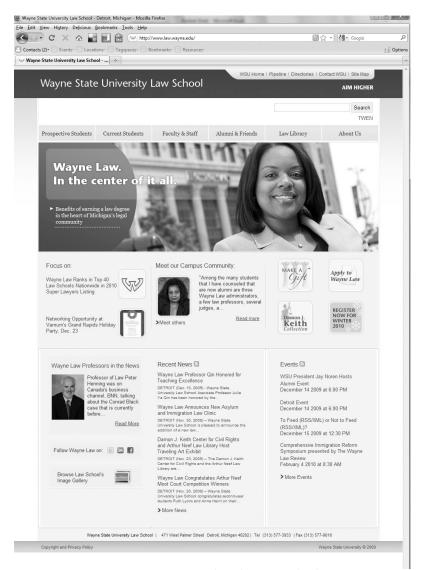
#1: George Mason University School of Law

www.law.gmu.edu Score: 85 Elements: [a] [b] [c] [d] [e] [g] [h] [i] [j] [k]



#2: University of Virginia School of Law

www.law.virginia.edu Score: 80 Elements: [a] [b] [c] [d] [e] [f] [g] [h] [i] [j] [k]



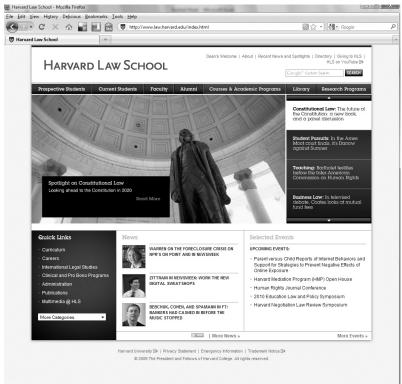
#3: Wayne State University Law School

www.law.wayne.edu Score: 78 Elements: [a] [b] [c] [d] [g] [h] [i] [k] [l] [n]



#4: University of Washington School of Law

www.law.washington.edu Score: 77 Elements: [a] [b] [c] [d] [e] [g] [h] [i] [j] [n]



#5: Harvard Law School

www.law.harvard.edu

Score: 75
Elements: [b] [c] [d] [e] [g] [h] [i] [j] [k] [n]



#5: Regent University School of Law

www.regent.edu/acad/schlaw Score: 75 Elements: [b] [c] [d] [e] [g] [h] [i] [j] [k] [n]



#7: Loyola University of Chicago School of Law

www.luc.edu/law
Score: 74
Elements: [a] [b] [c] [d] [e] [g] [h] [j] [k] [n*]
* Partially implemented



#7 University of Notre Dame Law School

http://law.nd.edu Score: 74 Elements: [a] [b] [c] [d] [e] [g] [h] [j] [k] [n*] * Partially implemented



#9: University of Illinois College of Law

www.law.illinois.edu Score: 73 Elements: [a] [b] [c] [d] [g] [h] [i] [j] [k] [n*] * Partially implemented



#9: Washburn University School of Law

www.washburnlaw.edu Score: 73 Elements: [a] [b] [c] [d] [e] [g] [h] [k] [n]

ALL 195 HOME PAGES

Key:

R = RankS = Score

g = Favicon h = Smiles i = Social network link j = Content carousel a = Address b = Search box b = Search box c = Cascading stylesheet (CSS) d = News headlines e = News headlines with images f = Embedded media k = RSS meta information

l = Microformats m = Dublin core

n = Hierarchal organization

R	S	Law School Name	Law School URL	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	1	m	n
1	85	George Mason University	www.law.gmu.edu/	x	х	х	х	х		х	х	х	х	х			х
2	80	University of Virginia	www.law.virginia.edu	x	х	х	х	х	х	х	х	х	х	х			Г
3	78	Wayne State University	www.law.wayne.edu/	х	х	х	х			х	х	х		х	х		х
4	77	University of Washington	www.law.washington.edu/	x	х	х	х	х		х	х	х	х				х
5	75	Harvard Law School	www.law.harvard.edu/		х	х	х	х		х	х	х	х	х	П		х
5	75	Regent University	www.regent.edu/acad/schlaw/		х	х	х	х		х	х	х	х	х	П		х
7	74	Loyola University-Chicago	www.luc.edu/law	x	х	х	х	х		х	х	T	х	х	П		1/2
7	74	University of Notre Dame	law.nd.edu/	x	х	х	х	х		х	х	T	х	х	П		1/2
9	73	University of Illinois	www.law.illinois.edu	х	х	х	х			х	х	х	х	х	П		1/2
9	73	Washburn University	www.washburnlaw.edu/	x	х	х	х	х		х	х			х			х
11	72	University of Chicago	www.law.uchicago.edu/	x	х	х	х			х	х	х		х			х
11	72	University of Utah	www.law.utah.edu/	x	х	х	х			х	х	х	T	х	П		х
11	72	Florida Coastal School of Law	www.fcsl.edu/	x	х	х	х			х	х	х	T	х	П		х
11	72	Pepperdine University	law.pepperdine.edu/	x	х	1/2	х	х		х	х	х	х	T	П		х
15	71	University of New Mexico	lawschool.unm.edu/	x	х	х	х	х		х	х	х	T	T	П		х
16	70	University of Akron	www.uakron.edu/law/	x	х	х	х			х	х	х	х	T	П		х
16	70	University of South Dakota	www.usd.edu/law/	х	х	х	х			х	х	T	х	T	х		х
16	70	University of Tennessee	www.law.utk.edu/	х	х	х	х			х	х	х	х	Ħ			х
16	70	Univ. of California at Davis	www.law.ucdavis.edu/	х	х	1/2	х	х		х	х	х	х	х			H
16	70	Yale University	www.law.yale.edu/	x	х	х	х	х	х	х	х	H	Т	H	П		х
21	69	University of North Carolina	www.law.unc.edu/	х	х	х	х	х		х	х	х	Т	х			H
21	69	Catholic Univ. of America	www.law.edu/	х	х	1/2	х	х		Г	х	х	Т	Ħ	х	х	х
23	68	Wake Forest University	law.wfu.edu/	х	х	х	х		х	Г	х	х	х	Ħ			х
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29	65	West Virginia University	law.wvu.edu/	x	х	х	х	х		х	х	T	T	T	П		х
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37	64	Univ. of California-Hastings	www.uchastings.edu/	x	х	х	х			х	х	T	х	T	П		х
37	64	Brooklyn Law School	www.brooklaw.edu/	x	х	х	х			х	х	T	х	T	П		х
37	64	New York University	www.law.nyu.edu	x	х	х	х			х	х	T	х	T	П		х
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41	63	Willamette University	www.willamette.edu/wucl/	х	х	х	х		х	х	х	T	Ī	T	П	Г	х
42	61	William Mitchell Coll. of Law	www.wmitchell.edu/	х	х	х	х	Т	Т	х	Т	t	Т	х	П	Т	х
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42	61	Ohio State University	moritzlaw.osu.edu	x	х	1/2	х	Г		х	х	T	T	х	П		х
42	61	Vermont Law School	www.vermontlaw.edu/	х	х	1/2	х	х	H		х	H	H	х	H	H	х
46	60	Rutgers University-Newark	www.law.newark.rutgers.edu/	х	х	1/2	х	H	H	х		H	H	х	H	х	х
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94 48 University of Connecticut www.law.uconn.edu/ x <td></td> <td>49</td> <td>McGeorge School of Law</td> <td>www.mcgeorge.edu/</td> <td></td> <td>х</td> <td>х</td> <td>х</td> <td>х</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>х</td> <td></td> <td>х</td> <td>T</td> <td>T</td> <td>П</td> <td>1/2</td>		49	McGeorge School of Law	www.mcgeorge.edu/		х	х	х	х			х		х	T	T	П	1/2
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	45	Indiana UnivBloomington	www.law.indiana.edu/	L	х	L	х	х	L	х	х	Ц	Щ	Ц	_	_	х
	45	Loyola UnivNew Orleans	law.loyno.edu/	х	х	х			_		x			Ш	4	4	Х
	45	Western New England Coll.	www1.law.wnec.edu/	Ļ	х	х	х	х	_	х	х			Ш	4	4	
	45	University of Nebraska	law.unl.edu/home		х		х	х		х	х						х
	45	Fordham University	law.fordham.edu/	х	х		х	х		х	x						
112	45	Mississippi College	www.mc.edu/law/	х	х		х	х		х	х						
	45	Roger Williams University	law.rwu.edu/	х	х		х	х		х	х						
119	44	Georgetown University	www.law.georgetown.edu/	х	х		х			х	х	х					
119	44	Boston University	web.bu.edu/law/	х	х		х			х	x	х					
119	44	University of Michigan	www.law.umich.edu	х	х		х			х	x	х					
119	44	State Univ. of N.Y. at Buffalo	www.law.buffalo.edu/	х	х		х			х	х	х			Ī	T	
119	44	Ohio Northern University	www.law.onu.edu/	х			х			х	х	х				Ī	х
119	44	Texas Tech University	www.law.ttu.edu/	х	х		х			х	х	х			T	T	_
119	44	North Carolina Central Univ.	web.nccu.edu/law/	х	х		х	х		Н	х	х		T	1	1	_
126	43	University of Miami	www.law.miami.edu/	х	х	1/2	х			х	х	П			1	1	_
126	43	Creighton University	culaw2.creighton.edu/	х	х	х	х		_	х		Н		Н	7	7	_
126	43	Cornell University	www.lawschool.cornell.edu/	t	х	1/2	х		_	х	х	Н		Н	7	7	х
126	43	University of Memphis	www.memphis.edu/law/index.php	х	х	Н	х	Н	Н	х		х	Н	H	+	x	_
	43	University of La Verne	law.ulv.edu/	x	x	1/2	x	H	H	x	x	H	H	H	+	+	-
	43	Washington & Lee University	law.wlu.edu/	f	Ë	F	x	x	H	x	х	H	H	х	+	+	x
	43	Charleston School of Law	www.charlestonlaw.org/	╁	x	1/2	x	x	\vdash	Ĥ	x	H	H	H	\dashv	+	x
	42	Yeshiva University	www.cardozo.yu.edu/	╁	x	72 X	X	Ê	х	Н	X	Н	х	Н	+	+	_
	41	Widener University	law.widener.edu/	x	X	X	Ĺ,	⊢	Ĥ	Н	x	Н	Ĥ	Н	+	+	_
	41	Gonzaga University	www.law.gonzaga.edu/	X	X	^	۸.	_	_		X			\vdash	+	+	
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	39	Univ. of MoKansas City UCLA	www.law.umkc.edu/	-	х	_	х	х	_		х	х			4	4	1/2
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	38	Loyola Marymount UnivLA	www.lls.edu/	Х	х		х		_	х	х				_	4	
	38	University of Idaho	www.law.uidaho.edu		х	х	х		_	x	х				_	4	_
	38	Northwestern University	www.law.northwestern.edu/	х	х		х			х	х	Ш		Ш	4	_	_
	38	Syracuse University	www.law.syr.edu/		х	х	х			х	х						
	38	St. Thomas University	www.stu.edu/law	х	х		х			х	x						
	38	Arizona State University	www.law.asu.edu/	х	х		х	х			х						
	38	Florida State University	www.law.fsu.edu/	х	х		х	х			x						
100	38	Dwayne O. Andreas School	www.barry.edu/law/default.aspx	х	х		х	х									1/2
147	37	Samford University	cumberland.samford.edu/	х	х	х				х							
147	37	Stanford University	www.law.stanford.edu/		х	1/2				x	x						x
147	37	Hamline University	law.hamline.edu/		х		х			х	х				Ī	х	1/2
147	37	University of Toledo	www.law.utoledo.edu/	х		х	х				х	х				Ī	
151	36	S. Ill. UnivCarbondale	www.law.siu.edu/	х		1/2	х				х				T	T	х
151	36	Tulane University	www.law.tulane.edu/	х	х	1/2	х			П	х	П			T	1	_
153	35	University of Arizona	www.law.arizona.edu/	х	T	х				х		Н		х	1	1	_
153	35	Mercer University	www.law.mercer.edu/	х	T		х	х		х	х	П			1	1	
153	35	University of Montana	www.umt.edu/law/	х	t		х	х		х	х	Н			1	7	_
156	34	Ave Maria Univ. Sch. of Law	www.avemarialaw.edu/	х	t	Т	х	Т	Т	х	x	Н	х	H	7	7	-
	33	Golden Gate University	www.ggu.edu/school_of_law/	t	х	х	х	H	Н	x		H	H	H	Ħ	1	_
157	33	Suffolk University	www.law.suffolk.edu/	х	х	H	х	H	Н	x		H	H	H	Ħ	1	_
157	33	Hofstra University	law.hofstra.edu	t	х	1/2	х	-	-	х	х	H	Н	H	+	+	_
	33	University of Dayton	www.law.udayton.edu/	х	x	-	x	-	-	x		H		Н	+	+	-
	33	Pontifical Catholic Univ. P.R.	www.pucpr.edu/	x	x	H	x	H	H	x	Н	H	H	H	+	+	-
	33	Campbell University	law.campbell.edu/	x	Ê	H	x	H	x	x	х	H	H	H	\dashv	+	_
	32	Thomas M. Cooley Law Sch.	www.cooley.edu/	x	х	⊢	Ĥ	⊢	Ĥ	X	x	Н	Н	Н	+	+	_
	32	South Texas College of Law	www.stcl.edu/	x	X	⊢	⊢	⊢	H	X	x	Н	Н	Н	+	4	_
	32	John Marshall Law School		x	×	<u> </u>	Y	<u> </u>	H	Á	x	Ļ	Н	Н	4	4	1/-
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	31	University of Wyoming	uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/law/	1	L	72	_	L	<u> </u>	Н	X	×	Ш	Ц	4	4	X
10,	0.	University of San Francisco	www.law.usfca.edu/	1	X	L	х	L	L	Ц	X	Ц	Ц	Ц	4	4	х
	31	Santa Clara University	law.scu.edu/	1	х	х	х	L	<u> </u>	Щ	х	Щ	Ш	Ц	4	_	_
10,	31	George Washington Univ.	www.law.gwu.edu/Pages/Default.aspx	х	L	х	х	L	L	Ц	х	Ц	Ш	Ц	_	_	_
	31	Stetson University	www.law.stetson.edu/	L	х	х	х	L	L	Ш	х	Ш	Ш	Ц		_	
10,	31	Nova Southeastern Univ.	www.nsulaw.nova.edu/	х	х	L	х	L	L	Ш		Ш					1/2
	31	Louisiana State University	www.law.lsu.edu/	х	х		х			Ш	x						
167	31	Temple University Inter American Univ. of P.R.	www.law.temple.edu www.derecho.inter.edu/	х	х		х	L	L		х						_

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167	31	Pace University	www.law.pace.edu/	х	х		х				х					П	Τ
167	31	District of Columbia	www.law.udc.edu/	х		х	х				х					П	
167	31	Florida A&M School of Law	law.famu.edu/			х	х				х				П	П	x
167	31	John Marshall Law SchAtl.	www.johnmarshall.edu/	Ī			х	х		х	х		х			П	
179	30	Baylor University	law.baylor.edu/	х						х	х			х		П	
180	28	Drake University	www.law.drake.edu/	х			х			х	х				П	П	
180	28	Texas Wesleyan University	www.law.txwes.edu/	х			х			х	х				П	П	
180	28	Southern University	www.sulc.edu	х			х	х			х					П	
183	27	Univ. of Ark., Fayetteville	law.uark.edu/	х	х					х					П	П	
184	26	Texas Southern University	www.tsulaw.edu/	х	х		х								П	П	
185	22	University of Pittsburgh	www.law.pitt.edu/	Ī		х				х	х					П	
186	21	Cal. Western Sch. of Law	www.cwsl.edu/main/home.asp		х		х				x					П	
186	21	University of Mississippi	www.olemiss.edu/depts/law_school/	х			х				х				П	П	
186	21	Case Western Reserve Univ.	law.cwru.edu/	Ī	х		х				х					П	
186	21	Duquesne University	www.law.duq.edu/				х				x					П	x
186	21	William S. Boyd Sch. of Law	www.law.unlv.edu/	х			х				х				П	П	
191	17	University of Alabama	www.law.ua.edu/		х					х					П	П	
191	17	Appalachian School of Law	www.asl.edu/	х						х					П	П	
193	13	Whittier College	www.law.whittier.edu/				х			х						П	Τ
193	13	Touro College	www.tourolaw.edu/				х			х						П	Τ
195	6	University of Puerto Rico	ww.law.upr.edu				х								П	П	



I went to State Teachers' College at Ada for three years, although I didn't really intend to be a teacher. Maybe for a little while, but not forever. What I wanted to be was a lawyer, and I figured sooner or later I'd go to law school. Eventually I was going to go to Harvard Law School, I reckon. That was my ambition anyway.

But all at once baseball came up, and that changed everything all around.

Paul Waner (ca. 1961)