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Introduction to Channeling Justice: Law on Television

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Lawyer shows have been a fixture on television since the 1960's. Every television season brings a new crop of shows about lawyers. The cultural impact of this torrent of legal television is enormous. Most people learn everything they know (or think they know) about the world of law from television. Yet the great bulk of scholarship and symposia about law and pop culture concerns movies rather than television, even though the public consumes vastly more television than movies.¹

On May 6, 2011, Stanford Law School and the Stanford Center on the Legal Profession sponsored a symposium about legal television called "Channeling Justice: Television and the Legal Profession."² Hopefully, "Channeling Justice" will be the first in an annual series of symposia on the general area of law and popular culture. These symposia will address both the creative and cultural aspects of law in the movies and television and other media of pop culture.

At the "Channeling Justice" symposium, some of the speakers concentrated on the creative side of producing legal television shows—creating the shows as well as acting, writing, and technical advising. Other speakers explored the cultural impact of legal television shows. Some papers zeroed in on specific

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1. Several recent books have focused attention on television lawyer shows. *See* LAWYERS IN YOUR LIVING ROOM! LAW ON TELEVISION (Michael Asimow ed., 2009); PRIME TIME LAW: FICTIONAL TELEVISION AS LEGAL NARRATIVE (Robert M. Jarvis & Paul R. Joseph eds., 1998).

2. The list of speakers at the "Channeling Justice" symposium can be found at <http://www.law.stanford.edu/calendar/details/5285/>. The presentations at the conference can be watched on YouTube. <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8D43B7B88B368B7B>. All credit to SLS Dean Larry Kramer who supported the program financially and moderated one of the sessions. Everyone who participated as a speaker or a spectator at the conference benefited from the hard work of SLS staff members Jodie Carian, Jackie Del Barrio, Trish Gertridge, and Amanda Packel.

shows of the past and present—both dramas and the daytime judge phenomenon. Still others explored such related and highly relevant subjects as lawyer advertising on television, use of television shows in law teaching, and legal ethics on television.

As one of the organizers of the conference, I promised the speakers that they would not have to publish their papers—which was the only way to get them to participate on short notice. Fortunately, however, many of the authors were willing to prepare published papers based on their presentations. The Berkeley Journal of Entertainment and Sports Law graciously agreed to publish these papers in its inaugural issue.

These articles consist of seven of the papers presented at the Channeling Justice symposium. Several of these papers are especially valuable because they present the first-hand viewpoint of the people who made the shows happen—creator David E. Kelley, writer Marshall Goldberg, and actress Camryn Manheim. These papers will be especially valuable to law and pop culture scholars because these busy people have seldom paused to capture their experiences in published work. The published papers also include pieces on *Rumpole of the Bailey* by Paul Bergman, *Judge Judy* by Lawrence Friedman, comparison of the legal profession on television and in reality by Deborah Rhode, and criminal defense lawyers on TV by Michael Asimow.

All of those who took part in the “Channeling Justice” symposium hope that readers will find these papers enjoyable and informative. More than that, we hope that the papers will open to readers a new window on the culturally vital world of legal television.