



## Faculty Lunches with the Dean (No. 7)

Author : Mike Smith

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On Monday I had the latest round of Faculty Lunches with the Dean. This time the group included Bob Joyce, Carl Stenberg, and Ann Anderson. The idea from our strategic foresight process was that faculty members would come together and share something about their work. I'm blogging about them so that everyone can learn more about the work of their colleagues. This post describes what Bob shared with the group.



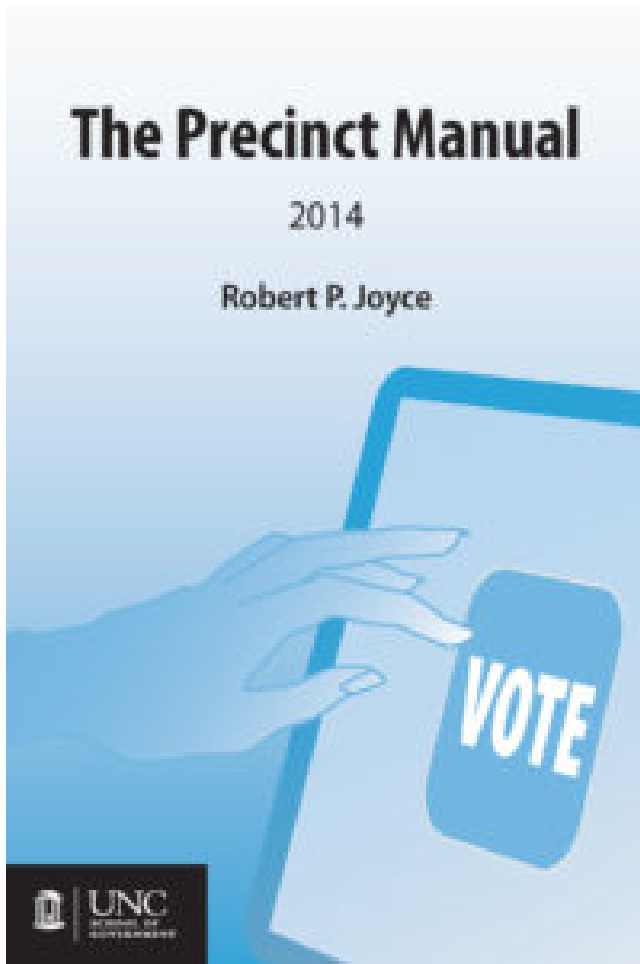
Bob Joyce



Bob Joyce. Bob talked about a manuscript he is writing on the law that governs the filling of vacancies in elective offices. It includes the scope of office-seeking and office-holding, starting with vacancies in the filing of notices of candidates, vacancies in nominations following primaries, vacancies after election but before taking office, and vacancies in office. The manuscript also includes the full scope of elected offices in North Carolina and the variations in statutory mechanisms for filling vacancies in the different offices.

The questions are more complicated than one might initially think. For example, how do you necessarily even determine that a vacancy has occurred? Assume that a city council member no longer meets the residency requirements for holding office because he or she is living outside the city limits. Do the other council members make that determination? It turns out that the county board of elections decides if a vacancy has occurred, though it might be brought to their attention by the other council members.

Bob focused most of our attention on exploring the best format for publishing this kind of information. It could be a small book, and one feature of the print format is that any expectation about the reliability of the information is tied to the time of publication. Bob raised the issue of whether an online publication comes with expectations that the information will be updated regularly to reflect changes in the law. In other words, is there an assumption that an online publication always is current? Ann Anderson suggested that one might manage those expectations for online publications by putting publications dates on different parts of an online book.



We also talked about other distinctions between publishing a book in a print or in an online format. There was a strong impression that we can get the information out much faster if it is online rather than printed. How much faster? An online publication can be put out in sections as they are available and it can be updated as needed without reprinting an entire book. There also were questions about the impact of online publications on our revenue model. I found myself wondering if it might be helpful to have a conversation with faculty members and the incoming Director of Publications about this set of issues.

It was interesting to think about other pluses that we have come to associate with paper publications. There is something about a published book that is just cool. For example, Bob talked about being introduced at a recent conference and having the person hold up a copy of his book on employment law in schools. We also talked about the positive value of having our publications located prominently on the bookshelves of public officials. These may be small things, but it is hard to make similar positive associations with an online book.