Louisiana Judicial Map:
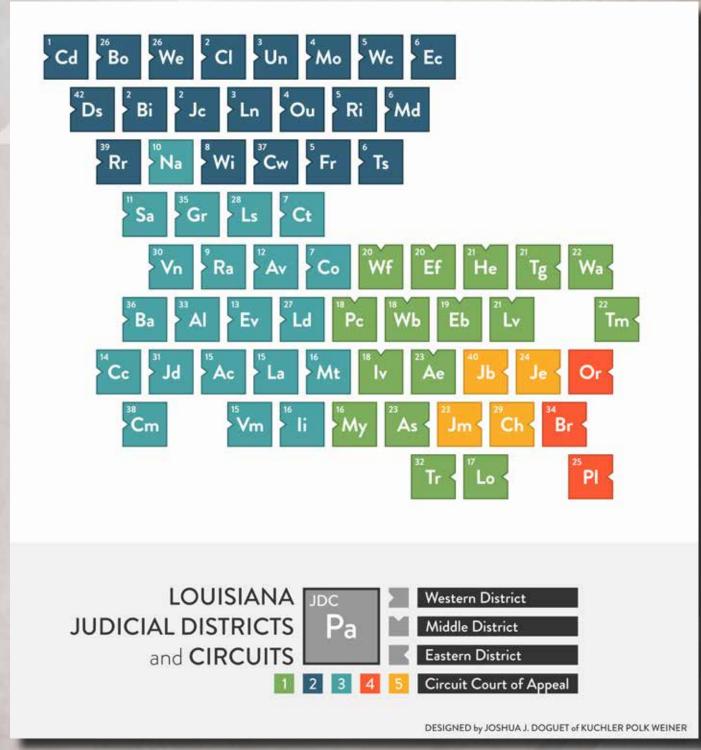
New Orleans Attorney's Creation Offers Useful Intersection of Law and Design

Interviewed by Tyler G. Storms

LOUISIANA JUDICIAL DISTRICTS and CIRCUITS

JDC **Pa**

Western District
Middle District
Eastern District

1 2 3 4 5 Circuit Court of Appeal

DESIGNED by JOSHUA J. DOGUET of KUCHLER POLK WEINER

Download a digital version of the map at: *www.lsba.org/goto/0218lbjmap* or *http://jjdoguet.com/files/la-map.png.*

Louisiana Judicial Map: Parish Legend

Parish	Abbreviation
Acadia Parish	Ac
Allen Parish	Al
Ascension Parish	Ae
Assumption Parish	As
Avoyelles Parish	Av
Beauregard Parish	Ba
Bienville Parish	Bi
Bossier Parish	Bo
Caddo Parish	Cd
Calcasieu Parish	Cc
Caldwell Parish	Cw
Cameron Parish	Cm
Catahoula Parish	Ct
Claiborne Parish	Cl
Concordia Parish	Co
DeSoto Parish	Ds
East Baton Rouge Parish	Eb
East Carroll Parish	Ec
East Feliciana Parish	Ef
Evangeline Parish	Ev
Franklin Parish	Fr
Grant Parish	Gr
Iberia Parish	Ii
Iberville Parish	Iv
Jackson Parish	Jc
Jefferson Parish	Je
Jefferson Davis Parish	Jd
Lafayette Parish	La
Lafourche Parish	Lo
LaSalle Parish	Ls
Lincoln Parish	Ln
Livingston Parish	Lv
Madison Parish	Md
Morehouse Parish	Mo
Natchitoches Parish	Na
Orleans Parish	Or
Ouachita Parish	Ou
Plaquemines Parish	Pl
Pointe Coupee Parish	Pc
Rapides Parish	Ra
Red River Parish	Rr
Richland Parish	Ri
Sabine Parish	Sa
St. Bernard Parish	Br
St. Charles Parish	Ch
St. Helena Parish	He
St. James Parish	Jm
St. John the Baptist Parish	Jb
St. Landry Parish	Ld
St. Martin Parish	Mt
St. Mary Parish	My
St. Tammany Parish	Tm
Tangipahoa Parish	Tg
Tensas Parish	Ts
Terrebonne Parish	Tr
Union Parish	Un
Vermilion Parish	Vm
Vernon Parish	Vn
Washington Parish	Wa
Webster Parish	We
West Baton Rouge Parish	Wb
West Carroll Parish	Wc
West Feliciana Parish	Wf
Winn Parish	Wi

Joshua J. Doguet, an associate in the New Orleans office of Kuchler Polk Weiner, L.L.C., has found a unique and useful way to integrate his love of law with his interest and experience in design. This Louisiana Judicial Map is one of his creations offering an intersection of the two disciplines. The *Louisiana Bar Journal* interviewed him about this project and other projects on the horizon.

Journal: Tell us about the map you created.

Doguet: The map illustrates the state judicial district, the state appellate circuit and the federal district of which each parish is a part. It does this via the number in the upper left-hand corner of each parish's square, its color and the location of its "notch." These graphical elements are intended to convey the corresponding jurisdictional data as quickly and as clearly as possible.

Journal: Why do you think the map is helpful?

Doguet: It provides a handy way of reminding yourself to which appellate circuit you would be appealing or to which federal district you would be removing. These things are fairly easy to remember for parishes we practice in regularly, but it can be easy to forget for parishes that we don't practice in regularly. The purpose of creating the map was to consolidate all of the information in one place — to save from having to search around for it.

Journal: Are there any particular goals that you set when designing something like this?

Doguet: The goal of any graphic design project is effective visual communication. As to the map specifically, once you have a grasp of how the jurisdictional information is conveyed, it should take only a cursory glance to find what you're looking for. A challenge you run into when creating something like this is navigating the trade-off between information and aesthetics. A pretty map which is confusing or that tells you nothing is useless, as is a cumbersome one that tries to tell you everything. So the real goal is to find the balance between the two.

Journal: Can you tell us about how you tried to strike that balance here?

Doguet: Well, the shape of each parish isn't important in this context, so that information can be discarded in favor of a form that is easier to organize. Parish-specific data, *i.e.* its abbreviation and JDC, has to be presented for each one, but more inclusive relationships like appellate circuit and federal district membership can be displayed in a broader graphical way that allows for "cursory glances." I opted for shorter parish abbreviations rather than longer ones, which permitted me to use a larger type size, thereby making the map legible from farther distances. Otherwise, I would have needed to use, *e.g.*, rectangular parishes, which would have distorted the overall shape of the state. I may be getting into the weeds here, but these are just a few of the considerations that I kept in mind.

Journal: How long did it take you to create the map?

Doguet: In one sense, just a weekend. In another, over a year. It's a mantra that "design is never done," and that's certainly the case here. This map is actually an overhauled version of an earlier effort. I made the first version a little more than a year ago, and using it for the past 12+ months has given me the opportunity to identify ways that it could be improved — primarily in terms of reducing complexity and ambiguity. And I think this revised version does that.

Journal: It seems to have familiar format, although I cannot discern why. There is a bit of a déjà vu about it. What is that?

Doguet: Holistically — color, shape, type composition and placement — I was leaning heavily on the visual language of the periodic table of elements. I wanted the map to feel familiar to everyone in an unconscious kind of way.

Journal: What inspired you to create the map?

Doguet: Aside from the practical reasons already outlined, I'd say that I'm keenly interested in exploring the ways that design can assist in the communication of legal concepts. I look at Stanford's Legal Design Lab as evidence that there's a growing movement in the academy to do that as well. We work in an information-dense profession. So I think we could see material benefits from integrating more design and design-based principles into our practice. That could mean more thoughtful and digestible demonstrative exhibits. It could also mean better reference tools like this map.

Journal: Is this map your first project that explores the intersection between law and design?

Doguet: No, my first project in this area was actually an online Civil Code reference that I put together during law school. Its purpose was to make preparing for class a lot less tedious. While the Code articles haven't been updated since then, it's still online as a proof of concept — at *http://code.jjdoguet.com*.

Journal: Do you have any other projects in the pipeline?

Doguet: My next one may be an info-graphic on "how to count days" for purposes of deadlines and prescriptive periods. I'd also love to tackle Louisiana's "Form of the Pleadings" rules, as I think legal typography still needs to come a long way. Just take a look at the formatting of U.S. Supreme Court briefing and opinions, and you'll get a good idea of the direction I think we should be headed.

Journal: Do you think that design can also help non-lawyers interface with the law?

Doguet: Sure. For example, during my clerkship, I realized how confusing verdict forms could be in complex civil cases, and how much jurors might appreciate having the possible outcomes presented to them as a flowchart. It would make their job less difficult, and, as a result, we could be more confident in the conclusions they reach. Jerry Fang, a Duke student, has actually written a law review comment on this topic within the last few years, so I'm certainly not the only one who's thinking about these things. And considering my background, I intend to keep thinking about them.

Journal: Tell us about your background in design.

Doguet: I'm actually one of those people who has wanted to be an attorney since they were a kid. So here I am. Design was just a distraction along the way. I began building websites early on in high school. I took my first programming class back then, and a few more of them after getting to college. Pretty soon, I started a side hustle with a classmate — developing websites and web applications for small businesses. We also tried our luck with a few startups of our own, which never really got anywhere (unfortunately). My business partner was a far more talented programmer than I ever aspired to be, so it wasn't long before he was handling that aspect of our operation, which forced me to hone my design chops. And I ended up loving it. From user interface design, I started to branch out into branding, print, etc. My entire education in design came from ebooks, blogs, YouTube — and with a lot less student-loan debt.

Journal: Has this background helped you in your practice?

Doguet: Yes and no. Is it ever going to make a difference in the outcome of a case? I seriously doubt it. Does it help me provide better legal services to our clients? Definitely. Whenever my firm is working on litigation graphics, I try to weigh-in with any "art direction" or constructive criticism that I may have. I also think that what I learned about information architecture during my web days has made me the "go-to guy" at my firm when it comes to structuring and organizing case data. Especially when dealing with the kind of mass tort cases that we're frequently involved in, you learn pretty quickly that developing a robust way to handle all of that information from the start will have saved everyone a lot of time and money by the time it's all over with. So there's certainly a practical benefit to this kind of skillset. From a principles perspective, I think the paradigmatic thinking you learn as a programmer and as a designer can often put you at odds with the approach that lawyers often take. And that's certainly not a bad thing. There's something of a tradition in our profession to overcomplicate, to overwrite, to copy by rote the work product of those who came before us. None of that appeals to me. I always try to keep my design style in mind, which is sort of a minimalist one — eliminating all non-substantive details and focusing on clarity over everything else. I try to think, "Would this practice ever be tolerated in a startup environment?" "What's the bottom-line value of what I'm doing?" "Can we automate or standardize this process to realize gains in efficiency without sacrificing efficacy?" Overall, I believe it's had a real impact on my philosophy of writing, and it's had an impact on how I think about — and how I might revise — the practices of the legal profession.

Journal: We at the *Bar Journal* appreciate your contribution and we believe it will be a benefit to us all. Any final thoughts?

Doguet: Obviously, I'm proud of the way the map turned out, and I hope people think it's great. But in the grand scheme of things, it's just a map. Really, what I see it as is one more bite of the elephant.

Editor's Note: A digital copy of the map can be downloaded at:

http://jjdoguet.com/files/la-map.png.

Joshua J. Doguet is an associate in the New Orleans office of Kuchler Polk Weiner, L.L.C. His practice includes toxic tort and appellate law. He received his BS degree in international trade and finance from Louisiana State University and his JD degree from LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center, where he served on the editorial board of the Louisiana Law Review.

Tyler G. Storms, an attorney in Ruston, serves on the Louisiana Bar Journal's *Editorial Board, in the Louisiana State Bar Association's House of Delegates and on committees of the Louisiana State Law Institute. He is a graduate of Tulane University and its Law School (BA and JD). (tstorms@storms-law.com; 941 N. Trenton St., Ruston, LA 71270-3327)*