

# CCRA

## California Court Reporters Association

C C R A O N L I N E

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California Court Reporters Association



**MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the California Court Reporters Association is to advance the profession of verbatim shorthand reporting by promoting professional reporting excellence through education, research, and the use of state-of-the-art technology; establishing and maintaining professional standards of practice; and advocating before legislative and regulatory bodies on issues which impact the judicial system and others served by the court reporting profession of California.

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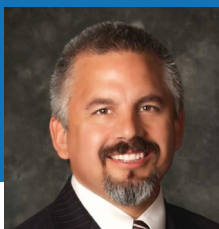
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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Carlos Martinez, CSR, RPR, CMRS  
President, CCRA

It's been a very busy two months for the legislative committee. Brooke Ryan has been to the State Capitol several times for subcommittee hearings. She has testified before these subcommittees very well and has helped to keep CCRA's proposed legislation moving forward. We have passed several deadlines with unanimous votes for two of our bills, the CEU bill and our bill requiring all deposition firms that operate within California will have to follow California law, while our third bill requiring reporters in family law has now been deemed a two-year bill and will not be taken up again until next year. So far, we are doing all right.

We have met stiff opposition from out-of-state firms that do not want to follow California law. Their argument to us has been, and I'm paraphrasing, *Following the law is good for firms in California, but we should not have to follow the law since we're not in California.* We have pushed back and argued that in any other industry, a company operating in California is required to operate within the confines of the law no matter where they are based. Our message has been heard, and the bill, SB 270 (Mendoza), is moving forward with unanimous support.

What else have we been doing this year? E-filing is moving forward also. The six-month pilot project in Fresno was successful, and so CCRA is now meeting with each county in California rolling out the E-filing project. Doreen Perkins is traveling all over the state talking and meeting with reporters, admin, district attorneys, public defenders, the defense bar, and the different appellate districts demonstrating how the E-filing system works, the benefits for the reporters and the courts, both monetarily and time saving, and answering questions brought up by different reporters and administrators. Look for a demonstration coming soon to a court near you.

Why are we excited about E-filing? There are so many benefits for reporters. Imagine sitting down on Saturday in front of your computer just having completed editing a 2,000 page appeal that is due on Monday. Your next step currently is to print up 6,000 pieces of paper, an 0+2, and then bind, stamp, and sign each of the 20 or so volumes that you've now created. What are some of your concerns before you begin printing? *Do I have enough binding fasteners? Do I have enough covers? Do I have enough toner? Do I have enough paper? Exactly how long will I be sitting here on my weekend printing and binding?* Exactly

why am I still printing transcripts anyway? This is the beauty of E-filing. You take that transcript, turn it into an ASCII, upload it into the transcript generator, check the necessary boxes, enter the right email addresses, and within five (5) or so minutes, you're now finished. No fuss, no muss. The weekend is yours to go out and enjoy.

We as a society are continuing to move forward technologically. No matter how much we want to fight it, it continues to evolve. Realtime is a great example of technology and its effect on the reporting profession. CCRA is helping the reporting profession to continue evolving with the ever-changing tide of that technology. Our project is simple: If you're a member of CCRA, for \$25 a month you get a transcript generator and you can begin uploading your transcripts electronically. If you're not a member, it's \$50 a month. You'll get 24/7 customer care, and you'll get hands-on training in how to make the E-filing software work.

We will be in your court soon. If you have any questions or would like to set up an appointment, contact me at [carlos.martinez@cal-ccra.org](mailto:carlos.martinez@cal-ccra.org). I will answer any questions that you have or get you in touch with the person that knows the answer.



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# BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS OF AMERICA CONFERENCE – MAY 2015

By Karly Greenshields

CCRA had an incredible opportunity to be an exhibitor at the Business Professionals of America's National Leadership Conference in Anaheim, California. We were there on May 6 and 7 as an exhibitor. This conference was flooded with students, counselors, educators, and parents from all over the United States. We had the opportunity to engage with some of the most brilliant kids with incredibly bright futures.

The BPA Conference is a national competition for each state's BPA Chapter champions. These students were there to compete for national recognition and titles within their categories. There were students there competing in spreadsheet making, engineering, grant writing, audio visual display, and the list goes on. These students were incredibly impressive. Many of them had never heard of our profession before, and if they had, they'd seen the social media coverage of our profession through March Madness or through a television show such as Law and Order.

My favorite part about career fairs is watching the magic that happens when somebody realizes everything they're saying is showing up on the computer right before their eyes. Amanda Scott, one of CCRA's board members, was doing realtime and showcasing her superior writing skills. This is the best way to demonstrate what we do in every aspect of our profession. An overwhelming amount of people we spoke to had no idea our profession still existed. Amanda proved through her writing why we exist and how incredibly important our job is. We were able to speak about all the different ways our field has grown and the different career opportunities one has within court reporting. The lobby of the hotel was streaming closed captioning, which provided a fun way for us to talk about that part of our profession. Many people were coming by telling us they were watching it and thinking about what we do. It was really nice to see that people were leaving with court reporting on their mind and excited to come back and talk to us again about what they saw.



Our goal at this conference was to reach the educators and the parents of these brilliant students. We were successful beyond measure. There were a number of professionals so excited by how our field has grown and changed that they couldn't wait to go and tell their students about it. So many of these counselors and parents revisited our booth with new students and other educators showing them "the amazing thing she's writing on." It was so fun to see how excited people got by our skill. Many of the people we spoke to about our profession were incredibly responsive. Many were more than ready to go back to their states and tell all their students and fellow educators about the job outlook, monetary opportunities, and careers available through our skill.

By attending events like this, not only do we better our profession, but we become better professionals. I know that every time I speak at a career fair, I go home with a renewed passion for my job. We are incredibly lucky to be in this profession. And I feel incredibly lucky that I get the chance to speak about it in so many different ways to ensure that it grows and doesn't go away. I am thankful for CCRA and all that it does to promote and protect our profession. As a member and advocate, I am proud.

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**REGISTRATION FEES:** LACCRA MEMBERS \$100 • NONMEMBERS \$120 • STUDENTS \$25

## ***Nuts and Bolts of Realtime – and Mock CRR*** with Cynthia Fallgren, CRI

**DATE:** Saturday, July 18, 2015

**TIME:** 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | 4 hours LASC mandatory credit; .4 NCRA CEUs

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Review of the fundamentals of realtime writing; improving realtime translation through dictionary optimization, building, and management; review of theories for similar sounding or spelled words in order to achieve optimal realtime translation. Mock CRR will be given at the conclusion of instruction.

## ***Office 365 and Beyond*** with Vanessa Payne, A+, Network +, MCSA, MOS Master 2010, MOS 2013

**DATE:** Saturday, July 25, 2015

**TIME:** 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | 4 hours LASC mandatory credit; .4 NCRA CEUs

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** An overview and instruction on Office 365 suite applications: Outlook, Excel, Word, PowerPoint; how to connect to other devices, how to download these applications onto your computer; how to use these applications and organize desktop world.

## ***English Professionals: Punctuation in an Abbreviated World*** with Margie Wakeman-Wells

**DATE:** Saturday, August 15, 2015

**TIME:** 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | 4 hours LASC mandatory credit; .4 NCRA CEUs

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Review of the best punctuation choice for the spoken-word transcripts; rules governing punctuation with commas, semicolons, colons, with an emphasis on sentence structure; and a review of social media and tech language abbreviations.

## ***CART in the Courtroom*** with Anastasia Swinkles

**DATE:** Saturday, August 29, 2015

**TIME:** 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | 4 hours LASC mandatory credit; .4 NCRA CEUs

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Review of ethics and professional responsibilities of being a CART provider; review of the American Disabilities Act compliance guidelines. Writing tips on identification of speakers, fine-tuning realtime translation on the fly; dictionary building; file/job organization.

## ***Part 1: Steno Briefs in Every Day Writing*** with Steve Kosmata

### ***Part 2: Bluetooth Realtime*** with Carlos Martinez, CSR, RPR

### ***Part 3: LiveNote Hookup Troubleshooting*** with Melanie Kahler, CSR, CRR

**DATE:** Saturday, September 12, 2015

**TIME:** Part 1: 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. | 1.5 hours LASC mandatory credit; .15 NCRA CEUs

Part 2: 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. | 1.5 hours LASC mandatory credit; .15 NCRA CEUs

Part 3: 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. | 1 hour LASC mandatory credit; .1 NCRA CEUs

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Part 1: Writing more efficiently by writing fewer strokes; utilizing our keyboard to squish words, using purposeful stacking for less overall strokes. This class will rewire our brains to think and work smarter, not harder. Part 2: Bluetooth hookups., realtime hookups. Part 3: A review of LiveNote software, how to hook up and troubleshoot in the courtroom.

## ***CART*** with Saba McKinley

**DATE:** Saturday, November 7, 2015

**TIME:** 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. | 4 hours LASC mandatory credit; .4 NCRA CEUs

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** Optimal realtime translation; dictionary building; identification of word boundaries; conflict identification; Identification of misspellings, wrong entries and file/job organization.



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# BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS OF AMERICA CONFERENCE



By Amanda Scott

Well, in case there was any doubt, the kids have spoken and court reporting is “cool.”

I had the opportunity recently to go represent CCRA, along with Karly, Steve and Saba, at the Business Professionals of America Leadership Convention, which was a national event being held in Anaheim. There were top high school students from each state attending to participate in classes and competitions. The NCRA had asked CCRA to attend this event since it was being held in California this year, and ensure that court reporting was represented, and we were of course happy to oblige.

The event was much larger than we expected, and the kids had long days of scheduled events, but all day they filtered through the exhibitor hall where we had a booth. First we baited them in with candy, then asked them a few benign questions, and then, “Behold! This court reporter is writing down everything we’re saying!” Okay, it wasn’t exactly like that, but it worked.

I got to be the “live” court reporter in action, writing on my machine and demonstrating realtime. We’d get crowds

gathered around and it was so fun to bombard them with information about who we are, what we do and how we do it, and then watch their reactions. Some were generally familiar with court reporting already, some were full of questions, while some just stared and listened, hesitant to talk but also hesitant to leave.

The real gold of this event for us was not the students, but the teachers and counselors that accompanied them. Since most of the students already knew what they wanted to do after high school, we needed to reach the teachers and counselors who could go back and reach other students who were still trying to decide. Most of the adults were surprised to hear that court reporting was not only still “hanging on,” but thriving. They didn’t realize all the ways that we can use our skills, from the courtroom setting, to freelancing, to CART and captioning.

By the end of the event, I think we had papered the place with our brochures and sparked a lot of interest in court reporting. It was a very rewarding event to get to be a part of, and when topped off with a quick excursion to Disneyland with Karly, what could be better!

## A BALL GAME FOR A GOOD CAUSE

This year, LACCRA’s Public Outreach Committee has put together its first-ever fundraiser to benefit court reporting students. On August 15, 2015, 150 baseball fans will come together to enjoy an evening of Dodgers baseball for a good cause. Proceeds from the fundraiser are being donated to the Reporting Association of Public Schools (RAPS) warm-up room for the November 2015 CSR testing candidates.

Participants of the fundraiser will be enjoying an evening of baseball, great company, fabulous ballpark snacks, and a movie on the DodgerVision big screen after the game.

We’ve seen a wonderful response to the ticket sales so far. However, there are still some tickets left! If you’d like to join us, you can purchase tickets before July 23, while supplies last, at [www.laccra.org](http://www.laccra.org).

We look forward to a fun night and a successful fundraiser. Hope to see you there!





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# CAMERAS IN MY COURTROOM

By Steven Kosmata  
Secretary/Treasurer, CCRA

I was quietly sitting in my office, some nondescript music playing through a phone app while proofreading closing arguments of a trial. With each page or two that I would proof, I would take a bite from my packed sack lunch sandwich and fruit, which was nearly gone as was the lunch hour drawing to an end. It was just another normal day at work until my concentration was broken by the phone ringing.

I glanced from my transcript to the display on my phone and noticed it was the clerk from the department I was going to be reporting in in approximately 10 minutes for the afternoon session. I thought to myself, "Why is she calling me now?" The clerk usually calls to tell me the judge is ready to take the bench.

The clerk, with an elevated and rushed tone, shares with me that I had better prepare myself, to make sure my tie is straight and appearance ready because we are going to be handling a high-profile arraignment. And, by the way, that's going to be happening in a few minutes because the judge wants to do it first.

She further disclosed in our brief talk that she had already received six television news camera requests to film and one print photographer.

"Okay," I kind of mumbled back through the phone receiver in disbelief.

"What arraignment?" I thought as my mind began to race, my heartbeat starting to elevate.

I hung up the phone and did a search for something "big" that had happened in our local area. Bingo! A high-speed chase just a couple of days earlier that resulted in the death of someone. That's got to be it.

Now what do I do with just minutes to spare before we go on the record? I looked down at my hands, pulled out my nail clippers and emery board, because they always want to photograph our fingers flying over the letterless keys in amazement of "how do they do that?" I sometimes believe my fingers are doing something strange in that no one ever looks you in the eye when you're working. They are always watching your hands, like a pianist playing a concerto. They stare at them as if they are going to do some magical trick.

After I was satisfied that my hands were groomed for their close-up, I had just enough time to spare and grabbed my toothbrush and dashed down the hallway to the men's room, brushing my teeth and giving myself a quick, panicked once-over in the men's room mirror – tie straight; collar buttoned; and most importantly, of course, zipper up.

I dashed back to my office, grabbed my computer and made my way to the courtroom that is now filling up with curious onlookers, family members, and, the one-eyed cameras that seem to stare at you with a blank, expressionless feeling.

With just seconds to spare and making sure my computer and steno machine are talking to each other, out of the corner of my eye the bailiffs are escorting a soon-to-be accused defendant into the courtroom. Hushed but excited whispers can be heard in the courtroom, fingers being raised and pointed in her direction, and the faint sound of soft sobbing from family members now takes over the atmosphere in the courtroom as we wait for the hearing to begin.

One minute later, the judge takes the bench, appearances are made, and I settle in for what could be a long arraignment as the attorneys want to make their speeches to the judge. The defendant is arraigned, and bail is set at \$1 million.

It's over. My hands stop writing. And in what feels like the blink of an eye, but in reality took about five minutes, it's over.

The judge takes a recess to allow the courtroom to clear so that microphones and cameras can be removed, cables cleared so we can continue with the rest of what I thought was going to be our "normal" calendar for the afternoon.

Upon reflection, everything seemed so hurried and fast-paced that I didn't have time to get nervous once the case was called on the record.

And after all of this buildup and excitement, here is how it was presented on our nightly news: <http://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/Darla-Jackson-Arraignment-305905601.html>

So if you find yourself in the midst of a high-profile case, take a deep breath, smile, do your nails just in case, and do what you've been trained to do and so effortlessly after all these years...report.



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# MOCK CSR

By Donna Eshnaur, Sage College Student

On June 13th, 2015, I made the two-hour drive from San Diego to Los Angeles so that I could participate in my first mock CSR examination. I am a student member of CCRA and had received an email about six weeks earlier notifying me of the mock CSR. Even though I'm currently only writing at 180 wpm, I thought it could still be a beneficial experience. Boy, was I right!

I arrived at the location of the test about 20 minutes early. My name was quickly checked off, and I was invited to choose a seat and help myself to some delicious refreshments. Shortly thereafter, as the room began to fill up, we were given instructions on how the tests – both written and dictated – would be administered and the time limits we would have. We were also introduced to the panel of professional reporters and teachers who would be reading the test to us.

The written knowledge exam was first. This was such a good opportunity to see the form of the questions and experience the level of difficulty. I certainly have a better idea of the areas in which I need more study time.

The dictated portion was next. We did two tests: one in the form of a deposition, the other as a trial. The readers were all excellent. The material, I thought, was very reasonable. Yes, it was a little fast for me, but I found that I could hang on and get something for everything. I am very encouraged.

Now, the best part of the mock CSR experience, for me, was the panel discussion. We had at least a half-hour period of questions and answers. The panel consisted of a broadcast captioner, an official reporter, a deposition reporter who

also owns a reporting agency, and a CART reporter. There were many good questions from the students in the room and a lot of great information and advice.

One of the panel members made a statement that I really appreciated. He said, "I know what you're all thinking. You're afraid that you may never get out of school. You



will. You're afraid that the day you pass your CSR exam, the whole system will move to voice recording. It won't. And you're afraid that after all this time and effort and expense, you'll start working and find you hate it. You won't. You will love it! It is a fabulous career, and you can do it!"

That one statement was well worth the two-hour drive. The mock CSR was a valuable learning tool and a great experience. I recommend it to anyone, no matter how long the drive.



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# WALK4HEARING

By Saba McKinley, Chair  
CCRA CART/Broadcast Captioners Committee

It's been one week since the Walk4Hearing, and I am still flying on cloud nine, as the idiom goes. If you have been receiving email blasts from CCRA over the past few weeks, you know what I am talking about. You witnessed the thermometer as it climbed toward our goal of reaching \$5,000. We, as a team, successfully raised \$4,850. A huge thank you to everyone involved. There were 11 team members who raised more than \$100 individually with three of us who raised more than \$500 individually. We could not have done it without each of you.

This is the first time I have taken on a role like this, being team captain for a fundraising event; and boy, I sure learned a lot.

The journey toward our goal began with a Kickoff Event held on May 17th. CCRA's CART/Broadcast Captioners Outreach Subcommittee organized a basketball game between the El Monte Police Department and the Deaf Ministry of New Hope Community Church in El Monte. We raised \$200.

The game was quite entertaining because these two teams had a rivalry going. We used the game as an opportunity to inform those in attendance about who we, CCRA, and HLAA (the Hearing Loss Association of America) are and

about the importance of why CCRA had formed an alliance with HLAA to participate in the Walk4Hearing. I have added some photos to give you a flavor of the day's events.

We are now seen as a resource for people in the hearing loss community as well as to others who serve them. These are the nexus of people we are working with, and this alliance has helped us to raise awareness and open doors to communication so that we can continue to provide the most effective job to those whom we serve.

This link is a two-and-a-half minute video interview with the minister from the church describing what this event means to him: <https://youtu.be/NDGewAXWSvk>

The subcommittee also designed T-shirts for the Walk, which allowed our CART Attack! to stand out quite well at the Walk. It allowed for friendly and easy access for people at the Walk to come up and ask us who we were and what captioning is and information about how to access information regarding captioning on CCRA's website. Our team consisted of approximately 40 people, including captioners, court reporters, consumers, families and friends.

Walk4Hearing is a FABULOUS cause. CCRA received many accolades. I look forward to what next year will bring, but for now, I will just keep smiling about all the fun memories and connections that were made during the Walk4Hearing.



# CAPTION IT FORWARD

## 30 TIPS TO SURVIVING COURT REPORTING SCHOOL AND BEYOND

By Regina DeMerville, CSR

Whether you are just starting theory, trying to maintain your sanity through speed classes, or already out in the working world, I will give you 30 tips to help you survive the difficult journey through school and the professional fast-paced life of a court reporter. Grab a pen and paper, write down these tips, and read over them when you are feeling overwhelmed.

**Tip 1:** Create a schedule. Create a practice/study schedule from the beginning and try to stick to it. Remember that you can change it as you go. Holding yourself accountable is the key. Even as a working reporter, we need structure. So remember to adjust your schedule as you see fit, but have a plan.

**Tip 2:** Study style. Whether you are practicing for a speed test, studying for academics, or preparing for the state exam, find a study style that works for you. Some people make flashcards and some people study from books. Whatever works for you, stick to it through your schooling. Try new study habits as well. Try putting study material into a song or using pictures as a reference. Talk to your friends and see what works for them. Maybe it will work for you too!

**Tip 3:** Remember to make time for YOU. We all have busy lives outside of court reporting school/work. A lot of us put everyone/everything before ourselves. Remember to take a time out from that busy life and enjoy alone time. Go get a massage, enjoy a nice long walk on the beach, or read a great book. We always hear how important it is to exercise and eat right, and it's true. Speaking for myself, I definitely need to follow this tip more often than I do! Court reporting is a sedentary profession, so it's important to get up and move!

**Tip 4:** Make priorities a priority. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in what we are doing, we lose sight of the real reason we're in this field to begin with. In my eyes, family comes first. But sometimes you have to make court reporting school a high priority for your family. A lot of students have kids. We want to set a good example for the kids and show them that schooling is extremely important! You are investing lots of time and money into this. So

instead of skipping your trail speed every day or going to Starbucks every morning instead of spending that extra hour practicing, remember why you started in the first place. Keep your eye on the prize!

**Tip 5:** Decompress. Whether you think you do or not, we ALL need days to recuperate. So don't feel guilty for taking a day off, leaving dishes in the sink for a day, or having a heaping pile of laundry. We all need that time to refresh our brains, get 12 hours of sleep without interruption, and not have to worry about that alarm clock. So remember to step outside, take a deep breath, and just sit and do absolutely nothing! Your body and mind will thank you!

**Tip 6:** Practice environment. When you're practicing for school, for the state exam, or even proofing a transcript, find a nice quiet environment where you can really focus. Try to make an office somewhere in your house (or even a corner in your house if you don't have an extra room) where your family knows not to bother you when you're in this area. Your family can be your biggest cheerleader, but they also don't understand what it's like to go through what you're going through. They may not realize it really hinders you when they have the TV on or they're talking loudly while you're trying to practice in the next room. Find your quiet place!

**Tip 7:** Commit to pass. We all know that court reporting school has a high drop-out rate. If you are one of the ones who stuck through theory, first, give yourself a big pat on the back! That is a huge accomplishment right there. Second, commit to making it to the end. You have accomplished a great feat no matter what level you're in at the moment. Promise yourself to stick through school (or being the best reporter you can be in the field), and know it will be worth it in the end!

**Tip 8:** Stay positive. Trust me, I am the first one to know how HARD this is! After failing over and over in court reporting school, this is not easy! What I do is I remember the feeling I had when I finally did pass (any test at any speed level and also the state exam). You may not think so at the moment, but those fails are preparing you for the pass. The fails are

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**CAPTION IT FORWARD**  
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preparing you for the real world. Learn to appreciate the fails! Positive attitude is huge in this field.

**Tip 9:** Don't compete. It's hard to sit in a room and watch students receive passing grades on tests over and over while all you're receiving are fails. It can be depressing as well as hurt your confidence. But the only person you are competing with should be yourself. You already know this is a self-paced program. So why do you put so much pressure on yourself to keep up with the Kardashians (haha)? Remind yourself that you are in this for YOU. You will always be your own worst critic, but you should also be your biggest cheerleader!

**Tip 10:** Face the task. I saw a quote the other day that I feel is so powerful: "We can face a task in one of two ways: either as something we have to do...or something we GET to do." ~Unknown. Think of how many people don't finish theory or how many people don't even make it to the state exam. Think of how many people burned out and dropped out. You are the elite. You do not HAVE to take the CSR... you GET to take the CSR exam! It's an opportunity so make the most of it!

**Tip 11:** Keep practicing. A lot of students ask what the secret is to getting out of court reporting school. The secret is really no secret at all: Practice. You have to work hard and practice, practice, practice! It's cliché, but practice really does make perfect!

**Tip 12:** Ask for help. As a student, you will feel intimidated by instructors or working reporters. That's normal. But when you are in need of help, the worst thing you can do for yourself is stay quiet. In school, ask a professor for help. If you are too shy, ask another student. They are going through this with you and will be happy to help in any way they can. As a working reporter, find your voice! Transcripts can be very intimidating at first. Ask your agency for help or call a friend. We are all in this together! Please help each other. Kindness goes a long way!

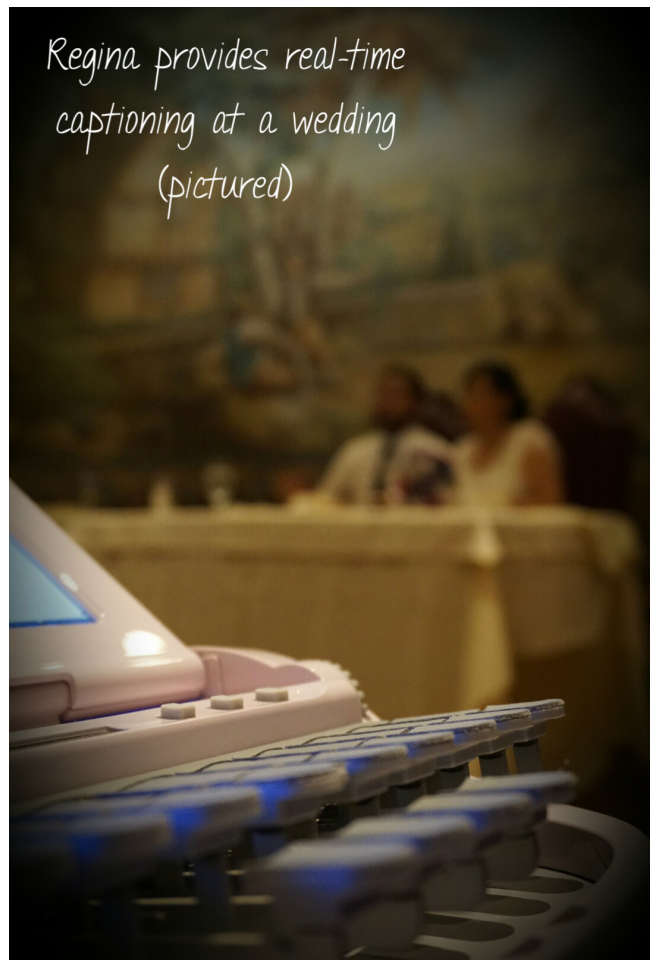
**Tip 13:** Take many tests. In school, I had my days where I would only go to school for the test, and if I thought I didn't pass, I wouldn't waste my time typing. I'd just leave. That really hurts yourself in the end. It's easy to be hard on yourself and give up easily. But remember I said that every fail helps you? This is where you have to make these tests a priority. Pass or fail, it's a step towards the ultimate goal. Take and type EVERY test!

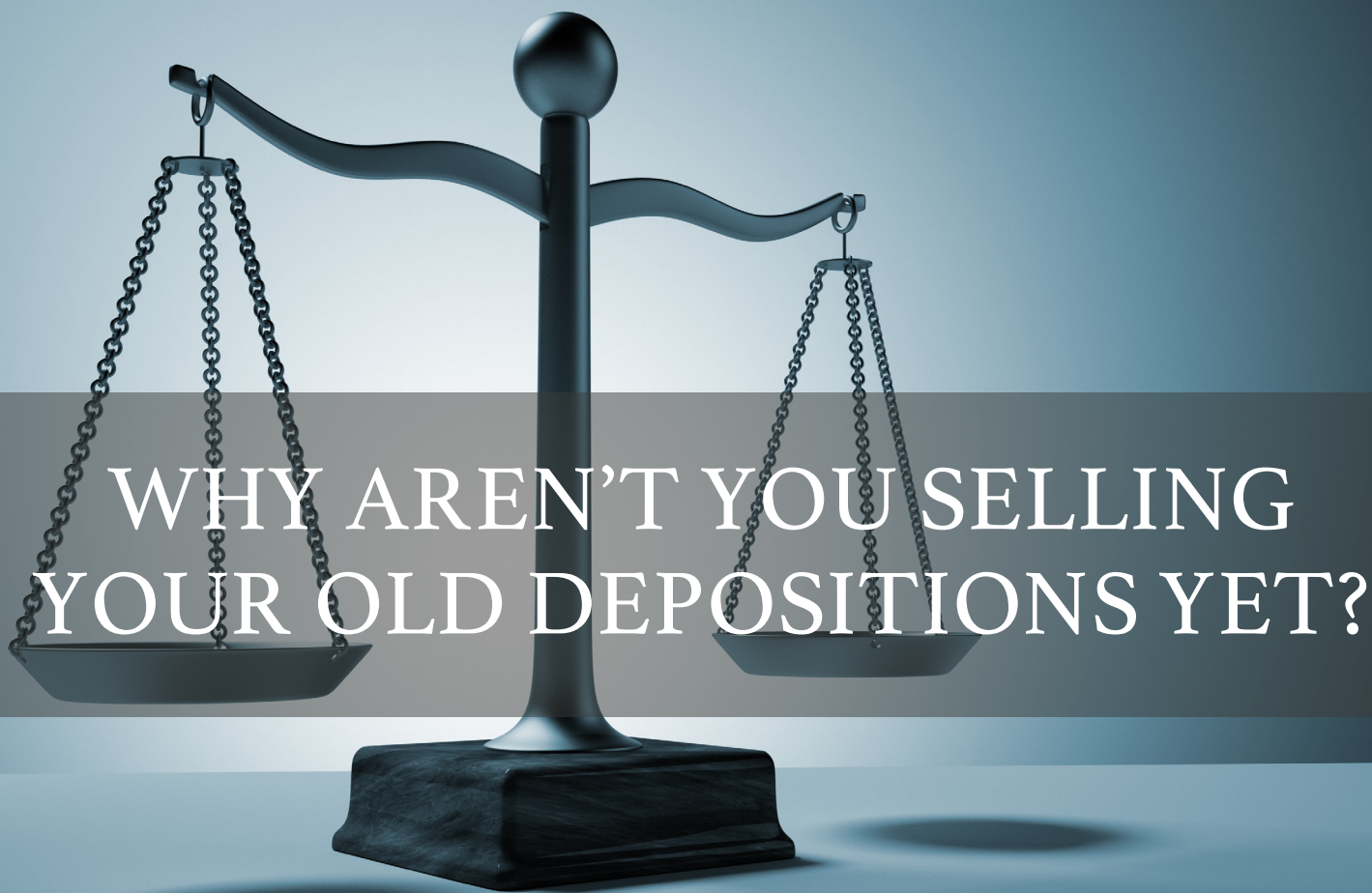
**Tip 14:** Determine strengths and weaknesses. One thing I used to do in school is practice what I was good at and put to the side what I wasn't good at. So when I made flashcards for the CSR exam, I would study the vocab words

I knew and put aside the ones that just wouldn't stick in my head. We need to be studying what we don't know. This is how we learn. You can't learn something you already know. So if this study routine sounds familiar, take that pile of "don't knows" and turn it into the "do knows"! If you hate Q&A but love literary, then learn to love Q&A too! Keep your "friends" (whatever you like) close and your "enemies" (whatever you don't like) closer!

**Tip 15:** Memorization. The key to taking practice exams is to help you memorize the key strokes on the machine for every sound you hear. Memory is important in this field. We have to listen, retain the information in our brain, and feed it out through our fingers. Mental health is just as important as physical health. Take the time to do word games, puzzles, or meditation. And remember I mentioned about going outside, taking a deep breath, and doing absolutely nothing? Your brain works hard every day and needs its rest too!

Stay tuned to the August issue to see the next 15 tips! Happy start of summer!





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# ASK MR. MODEM

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## Create Foreign Language Characters

**Q: My keyboard has several diacritic marks, including the tilde and circumflex accent. How does one place such a mark over a letter?**

A: Diacritic marks? Circumflex accents? Pulleeeze! Around here we refer to those as doohickies and squiggly things, so kindly refrain from using such high-falootin' technical jargon in the future. I do have a reputation to protect, you know.

Turning to the squiggly thing that is also known as a tilde, on the keyboard it's a single character. But since you cannot press two keys at the same time -- and Lord knows I've tried -- you cannot force the keyboard tilde to appear above another letter by brute strength.

ALT Codes are required to create special characters such as ¿ © « ¤, which may not display on all systems. ALT Codes are deployed by using the ALT key in concert with the numeric keypad located on the right side of most keyboards -- not the numbers at the top of your keyboard. Make sure the NUM LOCK is toggled on in order to use ALT Codes. To view a list of most ALT Codes and the special characters they create, take a look at Washington State University's list of Doohickies and Squiggly Things at [tinyurl.com/9ylga](http://tinyurl.com/9ylga).

**Q: How can I convert a bookmark into a Desktop icon for faster access? Thanks, Mr. M.**

A: The easiest thing to do is go to the Web site that you want to create a shortcut to, then drag it to the Windows Desktop. To do that, place your cursor on the little icon to the left of its address as it appears in your browser and drag that to the Desktop. It will instantly create a shortcut to the site. Press F2 to rename the shortcut, if you wish. Depending on the browser you're using, you might be able to drag it from the list of bookmarks itself. Then again, you might not.

As an alternative, if you don't mind a little hard work, you can roll up your sleeves and create it manually: First, note the address of the Web page so you have that at hand or in mind, whichever is the most reliable. Let's use Google as an example. Its address is [www.google.com](http://www.google.com).

Right-click anywhere on the Desktop and select New > Shortcut. In the Location field type Google's address, then click Next and

give the shortcut a name -- something clever like "Google" will work -- then click Finish. That's all there is to it.

**Q: The sound system in my new car will allow me to plug in a USB drive and play songs. I have quite a few, so how large of a drive should I buy to copy my songs to?**

A: Assuming your songs are in MP3 format and each song is approximately three minutes in length, every 2GB can accommodate approximately 500 songs. So a 4GB drive can hold 1000 songs, a 32GB drive 8000 songs and a 64GB drive a whopping 16,000 songs.

Converting all those tunes into listening time breaks down as follows: 500 songs, without allowing for time between songs, will play for 25 hours; 1000 songs will play for 50 hours (more than two days of 24/7 tunes); 8000 songs, 5.5 days; 16,000 songs, more than 11 24-hour days. Yikes!

## Mr. Modem's DME (Don't Miss 'Em) Sites of the Month

**Episode Guides** -- Here you will find lists and links containing episode titles and air dates for more than 6,900 TV shows. Type in the name of a show, old or new, use the "Current Shows" link or the alphabetical listing. Also included are links to TV-related retailers, schedules and UK-based radio shows. [epguides.com](http://epguides.com)

**The Body Explained** -- Hosted by Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, this portion of the "Bio Ed" site uses original video clips to answer common questions about the functioning of the human body. Browse the site's list of delightfully light-hearted yet informative video explanations. Make your selections, then sit back, watch and discover the answers to such life-altering questions as, "What causes an ice cream headache?" and "Why do our ears pop?" [tinyurl.com/o57gltg](http://tinyurl.com/o57gltg)

**Where's George?** -- This entertaining and quasi-informative site tracks where your U.S. dollars go -- not in a budgeting sense, but geographically. Enter the serial number(s) of your bills and leave a comment explaining where you obtained them, what condition each bill is in, or if you made any special markings on any bills (which you're not supposed to do). As other individuals check their serial numbers, if someone receives one of your bills, they will presumably note the same information so you can track the meanderings of your dollars. Registration (first name and email address) is required to check the whereabouts of any bills you enter. The same service, called Where's Willy ([whereswilly.com](http://whereswilly.com)) is available for tracking Canadian currency. [wheresgeorge.com](http://wheresgeorge.com)

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# SAVE THE DATE!

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# RELEASING STRESS AND BUILT-UP ENERGY



By Carolyn Dasher

Spring is lovely in Southern California. As the first light comes over the horizon, the sky begins to change from a dark blue/black into a deep blue. Many different birds begin to sing their songs (yes, even the rooster!). I begin my yoga stretches as the birds are singing happily that a new day has begun.

It is so important that we find our own personal way to deal with the challenges of our job and our lives. Court Reporting is very demanding physically, not to mention the everyday challenges that we work through daily. If we are holding our stress and not releasing it in some way, we will have physical ailments.

It could be our low back screaming out to us, it could be our shoulder. Sometimes we get that kink in our neck. Perhaps you've sat in the same position for two hours and the expert terminology is challenging. Your neck starts to ache. Your shoulder is hunched up to your ears. The energy is not flowing properly and is stuck in a body part.

How do you release that energy? Perhaps you get regular massages. Some people use Tai Chi to get the energy flowing, others work out with weights. Another way to relieve the stress and release the built-up energy is taking long walks or hiking.

Perhaps it's time to look at how you release your stress. Everyone uses the method best for them. The most important thing is that you be proactive to keep yourself as stress-free and physically fit as you can.

I find morning yoga stretching works for me. I find peace in the quiet of the morning. If I am overloaded with transcripts or I oversleep, I modify my routine and walk or do yoga stretches after work.

I will be teaching two yoga classes at the CCRA convention October 10th and 11th in Newport Beach. You will learn simple stretching that can be done on the floor or in a chair. I hope to see you there!

# VOICE RECOGNITION, YOU CAN'T BE "SIRIOUS"

By Jan Ballman – RPR,  
with additional content from Brian Clune CLVS.

Siri in the iPhone is voice recognition technology we all use and is valuable as a personal tool to provide hands free calling, texting and now controlling devices. This wellknown voice recognition assistant was the inspiration for the 2014 movie character in the film "HER".

These advances are both impressive and appreciated, even by Court Reporters and Captioners who make their living in the voicetotext arena, for certain conveniences they provide. Now this same technology is working its way into home appliances.

For example, the Amazon Echo. This device is always on and listening for your voice, awaiting your commands and can control additional "connected devices" in your home. Samsung announced the launch of its new line of "Smart TVs," which listens for your commands (but will admittedly record a user's personal conversations before transmitting them to third parties). And even the most mundane of home appliances, including dishwashers, ovens, light bulbs and refrigerators, are now being equipped with WiFi and voice recognition capabilities.

I guess it's no surprise that since their emergence reporters are often asked: "Why haven't Court Reporters and Captioners been replaced by voice recognition?" "Aren't you worried about your future?" Good questions, for sure. But if we don't look worried, it's because we're really not. And that's because we are confident that Siri, or similar technology, is not, and likely never will be, good enough to be a Court Reporter or Captioner, because Siri lacks a critical component absolutely vital to doing our job. Siri, like Scarecrow from the Wizard of Oz, needs a brain to be a Court Reporter.

The following answer, taken from the deposition of a neurologist, perhaps says it best:

A. *"Our brains are a miracle. Look at the Court Reporter here as an example, okay? This is a miracle in progress, happening right before your eyes. Let me explain what's happening here. I am speaking, so the information needs to come in through her ears, go through her temporal lobe, and then it has to go log itself into the language center. She has to be able to comprehend what I'm saying, then it gets rerouted to the prefrontal cortex where she has to hold the information, because I'm talking faster than she is typing, okay? Then she has to analyze it, integrate it, and synthesize it. Then it has to go back to the cerebellum to be converted into those little symbols. Have you ever seen them? She is converting what*

*I'm saying into a different language. And the white matter tracts allow her to reroute all of this information accurately and simultaneously, seemingly without effort. Seamlessly. Okay? That is why I believe Court Reporters will never be replaced. Because no technical – no technology could ever replace the beauty and the miracle of that human brain."*

Today's voice recognition, predictive text and word association technologies are based on statistical guesses. According to James Kendrick, a Speech Recognition Specialist trained by IBM, who has been studying speech recognition technology for over ten years, we haven't been able to advance much further than 90 percent accuracy, and that's a bestcase scenario environments: No background noise, only one person speaking, and utilizing highquality microphones and noisecancelling equipment.

Ninety percent will never cut it in our business.

Court Reporters execute at accuracy levels between 98 and 100 percent. The difference in translating at 80–90 percent accuracy and 98 to 100 percent is huge when it comes to output, and it can be attributed to the human brain's ability to comprehend versus simply hearing. Comprehension facilitates determining what was said versus guessing, "Is this what you meant?"

Let's delve a little deeper into how that human brain creates a superiority gap between Court Reporters and voice recognition technology. When Court Reporters listen, be it to a mumblor or a babblor, to a foreign witness or a forensic pathologist, to a brain surgeon or a rocket scientist, we may have difficulty "hearing" whether the witness said "a" or "the", "pan" or "can", "Tim" or "Jim", "Mary" or "Carrie," let alone "marry," "carry," "ankylosing spondylitis" or "apophysitis calcaneus," but our brains help us make the final determination, almost instantaneously, using comprehension derived from context, knowledge, and prior life experience.

And those times, when we simply did not hear nor comprehend what was said, we will interrupt and obtain immediate clarification, helping to ensure seamless accuracy. As well, a lot of words sound alike but mean different things. We need to know whether to write whether or weather, abhorrent or aberrant, epitaph or epithet, martial or marshal...

Accents, ambulance sirens, coughing and sneezing,

**VOICE RECOGNITION**  
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## VOICE RECOGNITION CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

papers shuffling, glassware clanking, extemporaneous conversations, rapidfire arguments, three people talking at once—these are everyday (more like every minute), real-life challenges Court Reporters face on every job. But thanks to the amazing capacity of the human brain, we can filter noise, read lips, and even listen to one person talking while writing what another just finished saying at accuracy levels that still do and always will make Siri blush in a competence comparison.

Said another way, when it's important and it has to be right, technology alone is still not good enough. A text message? No big deal. A court transcript in a murder trial or a multimillion dollar lawsuit? Way bigger deal. And this holds true before we even begin to touch on other obvious problems with technology... like the fact it doesn't know when (and therefore doesn't tell us) it's failing. A Court Reporter will arrive early, have backup equipment at the ready, and will see and know immediately if his/her equipment is not working properly or begins to fail midjob, and will take appropriate steps to immediately protect the record by proactively stopping the proceedings to making the necessary adjustments to ensure every word is captured and preserved.

So, Siri, we'll concede your reign in certain arenas—places where typos and misfires are just not that big of a deal (raise your hand now if you've never found your car dialing Dale when you wanted to call Gail). But when it comes to the important work Court Reporters do, you're not even in the same arena, let alone league.

Say "Good Night," Siri...

## GADGET OF THE MONTH: USB CHARGER

One of my life-saving tech gadgets is a portable USB charger. Keep one in your laptop bag, purse or backpack to charge cell phones, tablets and any other USB device. They're cheap, and range in size from the size of a pack of Lifesavers (appropriately) up to a pack of cards. Naturally, the bigger the battery, the more it can charge. And the better batteries won't get burned out by repeated charging, so you can keep them plugged in until you need them. You can even charge your devices while you're charging your battery!



# EXHIBIT PRINTING EXPECTATIONS

More and more law firms are passing off the printing of exhibits to their court reporting firms, especially in cases which include a large volume of electronic documents.

To make sure that we understand client expectations – and make sure we meet them – it is critical that we approach these projects with a high degree of detail. Going into each project, we can ask some key questions about their expectations for how their exhibits will be handled.

To the right is a form filled in with sample data. While each client is different, this is a helpful start for the fact gathering. Once you have this information, you can communicate it easily with the company handling the printing, delivery and subsequent production.

The same form can be helpful for raising awareness of your new services such as document linking, online hosting, video synchronization, etc. Even if clients don't want a service on a particular case, they can keep it in mind for upcoming matters.

Exhibit Printing Form (Sample)

<b>Case name:</b>	XYZ vs ABC
<b>Deliver to:</b>	John Smith, Law Offices of John Smith, 123 Main Street, Anywhere CA 94321
<b>Copies:</b>	3 copies
<b>Deliver by:</b>	1/1/14 – End of day
<b>Color:</b>	Documents: B&W. Photographs and color documents: Color
<b>Size:</b>	8 ½ x 11" pages
<b>Sides:</b>	Print in double sided mode. Different documents shouldn't be on the same sheet of paper.
<b>Binding:</b>	Three-hole punch the pages, and put them in a three-ring binder.
<b>Tabs:</b>	Put tabbed dividers between each document under the appropriate tab number (e.g. exhibit 1 should be behind tab 1, exhibit 2 behind tab 2, etc.).
<b>Cover:</b>	On the cover of the binder, please list the name of the case.
<b>Marking:</b>	Mark all documents in advance based on the numbers in their file name.
<b>Admittance:</b>	Enter these exhibits in advance (as opposed to just when they're used).
<b>Future exhibits:</b>	Add subsequent exhibits to this binder in the same fashion.
<b>Post-deposition handling:</b>	After the deposition is complete, deliver the binder to the next deposition in the case. Append new exhibits to the end of each binder.
<b>Linking:</b>	Link these exhibits into the final transcript in a PDF file.



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