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Impressions of the 2022 AAERT Annual Conference

By Sandra Tuizer, CET

As soon as the venue for the next in-person annual conference was announced my heart skipped a beat from excitement. Milwaukee, Wisconsin! This year I am definitely attending the 2022 AAERT Annual Conference in person. My first thought was of the courthouse. What a beautiful edifice it must be, and what I would learn on the tour. The halls filled with history will capture my imagination. The presence of IT specialists who support the court reporter in capturing the record will impress me. Mind racing, I also thought about the AAERT members I would meet, the professionals, the ones who run their own businesses, as well as fellow certified electronic transcribers like me. Then my next thought was about the hotel and the fine getaway experience awaiting all in-person attendees.



I have never been to Milwaukee, but I understood from the description in posts leading up to the conference that, actually, Milwaukee is a gem of a city, and I wanted more than anything to go there.

Being a member of a professional association is like being part of a family whose interests, at least professionally, are in line with yours. And these past few years, I have been all about legal transcription. Through AAERT online events and CEU courses, I have learned about a wide range of topics that expand the mind, including an understanding of the judicial system, electronic equipment, document formatting, tips on producing a great transcript, and the supreme subject of grammar



and punctuation, as well as the fun topic on ways to improve self-care.

Behind all these subjects are the people I learned them from. On a low-key level, they are my heroes, mentors, and friends all in one. Here is my chance to meet them in person and to have a chance to propel me to another level just by having conversations with them. And I hoped that I wouldn't let on just how much they mean to me. Just keep it down to earth and continue to learn from them.

Two and a half months prior to the event I made the hard decision to not attend the Annual Conference in person in order to care for a family member here at home. It took the wind out of my sails for a moment. Of all my first thoughts about attending in person, I was saddened not to be able to go on the tour of the Milwaukee County Courthouse.

It didn't take long to shift gears. I had already attended an AAERT event virtually in October 2021, the Digital Reporter and Transcriber Day. Two other events – the 2021 AAERT Annual Conference in June and the AAERT 2021 Executive Forum in March were held on the Whova event app, a comprehensive platform for virtual participation in live events as well as messaging, and an opportunity to network online. It was tops! I learned so much at these events, and to this day I have the notes I studiously took down when I went back to listen to the replays. And, yes, I got the coveted CEUs for passing the exams.

So with a positive mindset, I now became totally excited all over again. I knew the lineup of speakers and topics would be informative, and interesting, and expand my horizons. I also appreciated the Whova app, with its design and functionality, for making the event come to life.

At the heart of these events are the speakers and the topics they covered.

I'll be frank, I like to be wowed and to learn something about the art of legal transcription and also about court reporting and the capturing of the record as well as facts about the judicial system. And the 2022 AAERT Annual Conference did just that.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch State Court Administrator, Mr. Jeff Shorba, delivered a fascinating presentation about the Minnesota Judicial Branch entitled The Future is Now: How the lessons of the pandemic are shaping our courts and how we maintain the court record. His was the closing keynote that was, for me, the perfect ending to a conference because while it is a success story of adapting and embracing technology, it mirrors the experience of all of us and how we, at the micro and macro level, have adapted too. Even more than that, I learned firsthand about how this court is run and it seemed to me that I always knew this, but I never had it presented to me in such detail and with such fun statistical information.



I did try to attend all the sessions live, virtually. There were a total of six conference sessions that were live streamed for virtual attendees and available for CEU credits. Happily, once the conference was over, videos of 11 sessions from the conference became available on the Whova app. I am still catching up and have not seen all the videos yet. I think it would be too ambitious a project to give a summary here or my impressions of each session and the speakers.

The idea of this writing is to share the overall experience of a member of this association and how it enriched my mind and how it was super interesting and engaging. Perhaps you will find similarities to your own experience or it will inspire you to attend future AAERT conferences and events.

What delighted me so much was the Opening Keynote by Mr. William Snowden entitled Promoting Excellence--Insights from Implicit Bias & Racial Anxiety. His presentation was great and addressed the issues of our times, not just yesteryear, but today. I noted two references that he mentioned as well as accessed his downloadable document. Watch his session and read about him in the May 2022 issue of the AAERT Soundbytes newsletter.

You may find that your own involvement in legal transcription or electronic court reporting or digital is similar to my own involvement.

Legal transcription is my second career, and I started by taking a tremendous online legal transcription course with TranscribeAnywhere.com (AAERT approved online school), becoming an AAERT member, and diving into as many courses available on the LMS as I could, and began to transcribe as an independent contractor. The more I learn, the more I understand how much more I need to learn.



In her discussion, Judge Christa M. Daily of Minnesota mentioned how she wanted to work with an electronic reporter because of the rich background and skills an electronic court reporter brings with them, including, for example, her own electronic reporter majored in English, a supremely useful skill. Rightfully so! I continuously ask myself how rich is my own background and skillsets and work on myself to get better at what I do in all matters relating to legal transcription. And I do have some fabulous skills, but I strive for even better.

The professionals and speakers at the AAERT events set a high bar for me to strive for. And I like that I can have access to their presentations and learn from them.

The part about learning, that's true. I am occupied by this day and night, and I set aside time to study. I question myself all the time. Should I stick with this newfound profession of legal transcription and continue my deep dive into improving my transcription skills? Is there a future for me, and can I hope to earn good money as a legal transcriber?

Being a member of AAERT keeps me well informed. That is how I learned about the job opportunities available to legal transcribers. And I, personally, found LT work as an independent contractor with a great digital court reporting business.

On the topic of the business owners and reporting and transcription agencies, their drive and devotion to running these businesses and offering employment opportunities to court reporters and legal transcriptionists need to be applauded. It is monumental!

AAERT is offering a new certification called the Certified Deposition Reporter. And like some of you who have read about this, I, too, am asking myself whether this is the next logical step for me. I am also asking myself whether a digital court reporter is the same as a deposition reporter. I plan to find out and, hopefully, you will too. But one thing I do know is that there is a great need for digital court reporters, and that's great — actually, awesome! Two sponsor companies in this year's Annual Conference offer training and an incentive to obtain the AAERT CDR certification. Clearly, there is a need.

One of the panelists in the Industry Advocacy Panel Presentation touched upon the need to have a way to acquire a skill and certification more swiftly, that there is no enthusiasm for screen-culture youngsters today to be attracted to the art of stenography because it takes too long to achieve the skill, and they don't have the patience to devote 2 years to learn a skill.

I, too, want to be able to acquire new skills using technology and to have a shorter path to complete training and certification that would, in turn, lead to well-paying work. For days I continued to think about technology and what I need to do and what direction to acquire the skills to propel me forward professionally. I really had no rest from all the thinking. After the Annual Conference, I messaged one of the panelists via the Whova app asking for some direction professionally, especially with tech. To my delight, this led to a very friendly and informative exchange that answered my one question, and I received a recommendation on specific software that I should look into. How cool is that? How amazing!

And I do recall that I received the same warm and immediate response from other speakers I reached out to in previous events. There is a sense of a genuine desire to help.

And here comes my segue, but not the finale. The Association, in turn, relies on the involvement of its members, too, to get involved and volunteer in the committees —

Advocacy, Certification, Communications, Membership, and Professional Development. In return, the American Association of Electronic Reporters and Transcribers provides great networking opportunities with a focus on certification and education.

Hopefully, something here resonates with you and opens a door to the opportunities an AAERT membership avails its members, or, on the flip side, even affirm that your volunteer work and presentations are valued by members like me.

Finally, I think what I am trying to say is that being a member of and acquiring certification from AAERT has helped me and enriched my working and learning experiences and I believe that it is right for you, too.

The Keynote Speaker at the March 31, 2021, AAERT Executive Forum, Doug Keeley, Master Story Teller talked about how we are in the early stages of the Fourth Revolution – digital and cyber-physical – the most powerful of the industrial revolutions.

I reference this presentation to show that AAERT has its collective finger on the pulse of our industry and how other industries fuse in with ours. And while I weaved in and out with the points of discussion in this article, my overall drift is that I turn my eyes to AAERT to keep me informed, inspired, and sometimes working hard for the CEUs, and current. For you and me, legal transcriber, court reporter, and DCR, there is also the excitement of attending the next AAERT conference. Keep up the good work.



THERE'S NOTHING AS MUCH FUN – OR EDUCATIONAL – AS A FIELD TRIP!

By Jen Kreuger and Kelly Moranz

Throughout their school years, children are often fortunate enough to enjoy a field

trip. Teachers plan an outing, make all sorts of behind-the-scenes arrangements, distribute and then collect permission slips. On the appointed day, boys and girls of all ages are ushered into buses, counted off to be sure no one is left behind, and off they go on a fun and exciting adventure that often is considered a highlight of a school year.

An absolute highlight of AAERT's Annual Conference in Milwaukee was a field trip to the Milwaukee County Courthouse. Just as children have to sign up ahead of time to attend, so did more than 60 people who lined up outside the Westin Milwaukee hotel at the appointed hour, were checked in by Elyssa Ciressi, Program Manager from ADG, and ushered onto a comfy Badger Bus motor coach. A far cry from the yellow school buses and lumpy seats of our childhoods, air conditioning, and roomy cushioned seats awaited us. Everyone was eager to get started and as our bus driver navigated his way through the streets of Milwaukee, the anticipation was high



We pulled up to the curb in front of the majestic county courthouse. We were warmly greeted by Holly Szablewski, courthouse staff, and digital court reporters. We were escorted to the lobby of the building. Through the metal detectors we went and then we found ourselves on the hallowed marble floors of this beautiful courthouse. The courthouse, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is 91 years old. Our eyes were drawn to its high ceilings, marble hallways, and ornate trim. Sharing a deep respect for the judicial system and our role as current or court reporters, scopists, and transcribers, we all were struck by the grandeur of this important venue and what was contained behind every door.

Our hosts and colleagues, digital reporters who work at the courthouse, took care to direct us to the elevators and split us into two groups so that everyone could observe an actual proceeding. As we took our seats in the gallery of two smaller hearing rooms, the judges, attorneys, and clients took notice of additional people walking in but were not interrupted by our presence. When the proceedings concluded in the two separate rooms, we all gathered in one of the rooms and had the privilege to speak with the judges, the court administrator, other court reporters, and our hosts. Everyone was happy to share their time with us, and we discussed the manner in which the courtrooms' technology worked, how reporters were assigned to capture the record, and the addition of digital reporters to the existing pool of steno writers. The duties of the court reporters were explained, the record capturing software – FTR – was demonstrated, and storage of audio files and annotations was described. We also learned of the extensive process for hiring and training digital reporters new to the courthouse so they are fully prepared to accurately capture every word of the record. We were permitted to walk around the room and noticed the equipment used for litigation support such as television screens, microphone placement, wiring, et cetera. Our phones were out and many pictures were taken. Thanks to the open and friendly manner of the digital court reporters, we were able to speak at length as they fielded our many questions.

Regardless of our experience in the court reporting field, everyone was fully engaged in the discussion. As any courtroom across the country is different from

another, those of us who work as official reporters were interested in contrasting their familiarity with their own workplace to the design of the Milwaukee County Courthouse. Freelance reporters, familiar with depositions in attorneys' offices or via remote conference rooms, were fascinated by the technology being used, the interaction among judges, attorneys, and other courthouse staff, and particularly the IT support provided. Scopists and transcribers were pleased to see firsthand what is going on before they ever receive an audio file and a list of important terms. Students in attendance were getting a master's class in official digital reporting. In fact, a local student of our group living right in the area who participated has applied for a position upon return!



After spending about 30 minutes gathered together in that location, everyone was invited to a larger courtroom to see that particular setup. The courtroom was large and impressive, and we saw among other things, the clerk and bailiff's tables, the jury box, microphones of all sizes and various placement, the witness stand, the court reporter's station located just in front of the witness stand, and the judge's bench. Everyone was invited to see this reporter's station, her computer, and her annotations. Discussion about how reporters are assigned to court and when they create transcripts ensued. For a bit of fun, several members of AAERT participated in an off-the-cuff mock bit of testimony that the official reporter annotated, leaving everyone entertained and educated.

There is nothing like seeing something for yourself to understand how it works. Observing the multiple courtrooms, talking with the many people involved, and sharing our ideas and reflections on the ride back to the hotel led to the acquisition of knowledge, stronger connections among colleagues, and enthusiasm for our work associated with the digital reporting side of the judicial system was high. Motivated to go back to the conference and then back to our jobs was obvious among all of us as we boarded the bus back to the hotel.

This experience and the memories built during our Friday morning of the conference will remain with those who attended for a long time. This field trip was cited by many

as their favorite session of the conference – and with good reason! All of the sessions were fabulous, truly, but traveling together with the eager anticipation of school children, excited to see and do something so meaningful, smiling, laughing, and learning in this way enhanced the session in ways that only talking about the courthouse and its practices with our fellow reporters could not have done.



Certified Deposition Reporter

AAERT Introduces a New Certification

AAERT is introducing a professional credential, the Certified Deposition Reporter (CDR), that is designed specifically for the digital reporter who captures and preserves the verbatim record by digitally recording depositions and other out-of-court legal proceedings, including evidence under oath (EUOs), statements on the record, oral reply, and aids of execution.

About the Pilot Exam

AAERT has worked hard to ensure that the CDR exam provides a reasonable, realistic, and accurate measurement of how well a candidate possesses the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform as a digital deposition reporter. The Pilot Test exam has 166 questions to be completed within four (4) hours.

The Pilot Exam provides AAERT with useful information to evaluate the quality of the exam and its questions. A diverse group of candidates will be selected to participate in the Pilot Test to ensure a valid, reliable evaluation of the exam.

NOTE: AAERT Membership is NOT required to sit for the Pilot Exam, but you will need an

AAERT membership to receive your certification when you pass the Pilot Exam.

How to Participate

If you would like to be considered to sit for the exam, [clickhere](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CDR-Pilot) or copy and paste this link into your browser - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CDR-Pilot>.

Exam vouchers are being offered for the special Pilot Exam fee of \$70. The online proctored exam will be available for public registration beginning in October with an exam fee of \$275.

Exams must be completed no later than September 2, 2022.

Pass the Pilot Exam, Earn the Credential

If you pass the Pilot Exam you do not need to retake the exam in its final version. If you do not pass the Pilot Exam, you must wait until the exam goes live to retake it. The CDR Exam re-take fee will be \$175.

Preparing for a Pilot Exam with no prep materials

The Table of Specifications (Blueprint) for the Certified Depositions Reporter (CDR) Examination lists the knowledge that is assessed on the exam. You can view the blueprint [here](#). Although there are not any specific materials or courses required to sit for the CDR exam, having previous training and experience in digital deposition reporting is recommended.

Pilot Exam Scoring and Results

When you complete the Pilot Exam, you will not receive a score immediately because the scoring model for the exam is not yet finalized. You will receive your score about 30 days after the end of the Pilot Exam testing window to allow for the completion of a comprehensive process that includes statistically analyzing results and data, evaluating the performance of each question, and reading and evaluating all comments provided during the beta exam.

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Workplace Tension - Serenity Now!

James Salandro, CER

We sometimes find ourselves in a working environment fraught with both tension and overtones of impending physical violence. At least that's where I often found myself in the rough and tumble world of Washington, DC court reporting. But one can stoically and professionally manage the antisocial behavior of the unhinged by employing the Seven Rules of Life that I found written on the wall of a Chinese restaurant in Arlington, Virginia. It's ancient wisdom, so, it must be good. Let me share some vignettes. Here we go.



1) Smile - It always works out in the end

The old man was kicking and screaming about double booking me at a meeting with 40 prominent scientists AND at a city board meeting. We were both hoping the first meeting would end sooner than scheduled so that I would at least have ten minutes to set up and roll with our city client.

I told him that his overzealous scheduling wasn't my fault, but I would try my best to make the 7 PM meeting with bells on, enthusiasm, and smiling like Judy Garland in Meet Me in St. Louis. Rage ensued. I calmly said, "I'll explain to the client that the meeting was running longer than scheduled and that I would need to leave to accommodate another client." The old man huffed and puffed, there was a tiny belch, then I heard a dial tone. When I explained the circumstance to the client, they understood. The chair of the committee who was a cardiac surgeon sympathized with me and we exchanged info and later got a drink at a local bar. The client kept coming back for more. Keep a smile, act like a normal human, and it all works out. Simple lesson. And you'll keep the client.

2) Be Kind - You have the power to make people feel good

Notorious for reporters in the DC scene were the local housing authority meetings. This was mostly because of the technical challenge of setting up to capture good audio of the board members and public comments. But also, there was the emotional angle of interacting with folks and families desperate for dignified and affordable housing. Many times as an obvious outsider I was the direct target of abuse and insults while I was trying to capture the record. I maintained my cool, did the job, and soldiered on. Occasionally after meetings, I had the opportunity to engage with the frustrated attendees, some of whom apologized to me for their behavior. I said, "No sweat. Buy me a drink at Dubliner." Be patient and kind, and you'll make friends you never thought you could have. And maybe get a Guinness out of it.

3) Don't Give Up - If it doesn't work the first time, find another way

Obvious. Right? Maybe not. In one company I worked for, we had a quality control supervisor who insisted on chronically picking her nose and continuously eating donuts while doing pretty much no work. Management and I had to implement a Rube Goldberg-like incentive program to get her to perform basic work tasks while also rewarding her with subsidized treats. The system took weeks to develop and required several iterations, but eventually, lead to our keeping and winning additional government contracts. Once she was happy, her productivity level spiked! After much toil, we were able to find a balance between snacks and professional performance. Never give up. Use the human resources you have at your disposal and work with their idiosyncratic talent stacks.



4) Don't Compare - Everyone's on a different journey

I used to think that the tech girl who would be asleep with anime cartoons blasting on her laptop and with a half-eaten bowl of noodles on her desk was just slacking off - but no, I was wrong. Her actual work output was tremendous. She once singlehandedly saved the company from nefarious Nigerian hackers while on her lunch break. Our servers nearly melted! She was on a different path. One man's obvious repose is another man's intense effort. Sometimes falling asleep at work in a snoring mess of ramen noodle slop is just someone else's Einstein journey. Be able to embrace that diversity and appreciate how it dovetails into your reality. Let it flow.

5) Avoid Negativity - Avoid negative thoughts, situations, and people

Easier said than done!

One day, the under manager brought new desk chairs into the quality control unit for senior reporters to assemble. I thought, "Oh, what a novel opportunity to learn chair assembly." However, one of our more emotionally expressive reporters put his head in his hands and kept yelling, "This is beneath me!" Over the course of the next 15 minutes, Mr. Expressive screamed and threatened the lives of others. Chair components went flying. The ladies fled the room. A Shake Shack milkshake was spilled. Some of us legitimately feared that we wouldn't survive.

Instead of taking this opportunity to learn, the reporter pathetically failed as a human and melted down into an off-putting, screaming mass of stink putty. My more debonair colleague intervened and helped the berserker with the basic chair-putting-together instructions and eventually, all chairs were assembled without physical violence. Calmness, perspective, positivity, and empathy go a long way in dealing

with difficult situations. Don't be the yelling, chair-throwing guy at work. Instead, approach your colleagues in a spirit of mutual understanding and helpfulness. Stop. Think. Respect others.

6) Make Peace With Your Past - Focus on being present and creating a better future

The past is a scary place. Especially because we can't change it. One of the most terrifying things about the past is simmering resentment. A grudge can boil for years before a Vesuvius-style eruption occurs. I witnessed one such eruption that will forever be known as, "The Great Kicking of Shins." This Old Testament-style event occurred after the homeless man (former reporter - long story) who worked in our basement had a seizure on the front steps and management got angry with the bad appearance of an ambulance having to show up. The next day after the homeless man returned to the office, he had a showdown with the head honcho that started in the basement with pushing, shoving, and Seinfeld-tier insults. Eventually, the two combatants ended up in the big office upstairs with both grown men hollering and kicking each other's shins until a severely out-of-shape policeman arrived to restore order. Job couldn't have written it better.

Don't dwell on past slights and petty incidents. Success in life is about moving on and forgiveness. Don't be so quick to discard others. You are who you are now. The best friends I have were forged in the fire of needling wisecracks, intense disagreements, and difficult circumstances. Today, I would show up for these people at three in the morning if they called me needing help. Nobody really wants to be that shriveled weenie person thinking that he knows better and just ends up looking at his shoes and isolating himself in a personal hell of self-righteousness. The future is a future of the people and the relationships in your life. Try not to use and lose them cavalierly.

7) Take Care of Your Body and Mind - One struggles to survive without the other

This one starts sad but ends well. Let's ride the tiger.

After disappearing for several years, one of our more productive employees arrived seeking reinstatement. Unfortunately, he was tooted out of his mind, out of shape, talking like a parrot on Adderall, and wearing a conspicuously sweated-through shirt. I remember that the sweat pattern looked vaguely like the face of the Virgin Mary. I took that as an omen that something good was going to come from the situation. The under manager asked me for a meeting in the kitchen next to the garbage gnats so we couldn't be heard over the buzzing. He asked me if I thought we should propose to the big boys downstairs that this employee be rehired. I gave an emphatic thumbs up. Although his body and mind had gone in different directions, he could still be a great asset to the company, and hell, once people get back on their feet and have a mission in life they tend to shape up and nail it.



That's exactly what happened! After a rocky several weeks of getting back to doing what he did best - being the most creative person in the company, our once errant employee had his mind, body, and spirit moving in the same direction.

Heal your inner turmoil and you can project less tension into the world around you.

The end!

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Automatic Speech Recognition

By Zack Shoup, Remote Legal

ASR, or automatic speech recognition, has been around for decades. First pioneered in 1952 by Bell Labs with a computer system called “Audrey”, computing technology with the primary purpose of putting spoken word to text is nothing new. At its conception, Audrey could only understand numbers and simple words, and for decades this area of engineering remained at a similar level with slow bouts of progress. But in recent years, the technology’s scope and capability have skyrocketed. Some might view this as a simple technological convenience, as seen with Apple’s Siri and Google Voice Search, being able to send texts or search things on the internet with no more than an “okay, Google”. But for some industries such as court reporting and transcription, ASR is of great benefit to the field and has the potential to heavily impact transcription as a whole.



For example, shorthand transcription in the area of court reporting has two primary means of writing. When laymen think of a court reporter, they think of the tech-savvy individual sitting next to the judge, typing away on their tiny keyboard. But this perception overlooks voice-writing, the process by which a court reporter can speak into a stenomask or speech silencer containing a microphone to transcribe the testimony. For many years, this would involve simply recording the audio and putting it into typewritten form after the fact. But with the advancement of technology and the birth of ASR, they were able to cut out the middleman. Spoken word to the stenomask went straight to speech recognition software in the reporter’s computer, and text would be included automatically. Similar technological progress was made with the aforementioned “tiny keyboard”, the stenotype. Stenographic shorthand that once required a steno-experienced individual to read or transcribe out like the audio recording of a stenomask would now be written into a computer automatically via a USB port, and the reporter could edit from there. Both of these processes would require a certain amount of refinement and editing of the transcript, not to mention an experienced individual to put out in the first place, but this amount has decreased

as technology advances and will likely continue to do so as ASR develops even further. As tech improves, the work of individuals is made easier.

Outside of real-time transcription, the likes of which would use a stenotype or stenomask, transcription in general benefits equally from the continued progress of speech-to-text. Hours of audio that require being written by hand via a typical keyboard can now be put through an ASR software and put to text automatically just like steno or voice writing, now requiring more of an editing or proofreading process rather than typing from scratch. This not only saves time but also requires less actual effort on the part of the transcriptionist. This can be not only remarkably convenient but invaluable for reporters with joint trouble as a result of years or decades working in the field. And the better the automatic speech recognition, the less editing required, which means this process will only get easier and easier as time passes. And according to Moore's Law, it'll only get faster and faster as time passes. In 1975, Gordon Moore, co-founder of Intel, postulated that the progress of technology, as well as the lack of defects and small size of computer chips, increase exponentially, not linearly.

This upgrade of ASR will more than likely continue impacting individual life globally, as well. For example, just as cursive gets pushed to the wayside for typing classes in elementary school, there's a potential for the same shift to occur from typing to speech-to-text within our lifetime. And while people in their day-to-day can use smartphones to search or send texts while driving, there's a very good chance that these will advance to a point that it's the primary means of texting in general amongst the population. After all, talking is easier than typing, and it's already happening. Who hasn't seen someone using Siri to dictate a text in a public space like a train station or restaurant? Well, no development is without its downsides. And again, this has the potential to continue making life easier for those with difficulty or an inability to text, such as disabled individuals. The best type of progress is the kind that makes life easier in some way or another for everybody, and speech-to-text fills that role.

A concern, however, arises for court reporters when speech-to-text technology comes up. Many court reporters will know exactly what question I mean, referenced by extended family on every holiday: "couldn't any smartphone take your job?" They imagine a world in which ASR is so flawless that a court reporter is rendered fully obsolete, with speaker identification and word recognition both so advanced that a computer can produce a full transcript from hours of audio with no more than a once-over. The good news is, there's always going to be court reporters because there's always going to be cross-talk and especially people in the courtroom or depositions that sound similar. Further, no transcript will go out without editing or proofing, which in and of itself requires a court reporter. That's the future of automation, always made easier but never made obsolete. You could list the same concern about factory work or food service, but we're decades away from the tech that can fill that niche, if it could ever arrive at all. No one can accuse court reporters or transcriptionists of having an easy job. But as ASR's role in our lives and field grows, the best way to continue bringing our A-game as reporters is to keep up with the times. The most important thing for every individual in every field is to view tech as an ally, not an enemy. Because if we let ourselves grow with it, then think about how much we can get done.

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CONGRATULATIONS!



Tech Corner - Typing Over 90 Words Per Minute

By Benjamin Jaffe, CER

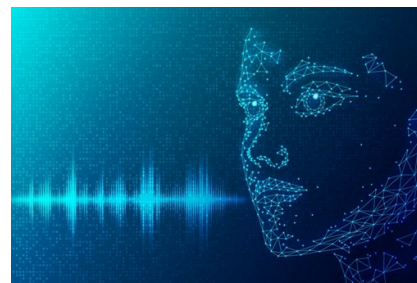
If you want to be a speed demon on the keyboard, there are a few unique ways to do it. You can practice diligently, purchase a new keyboard with a different layout, or let technology assist you by using a text expander. Text expanders allow court reporters and transcribers to access a library of shortcuts, similar to a stenographer's briefs, to type words, sentences, and whole pages of text with as little as a few keystrokes. These shortcuts can come preloaded from the software provider or be custom created by the user. An example of this is the standard court reporter read-on, "Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" This can be condensed to "ttr" or "ttrtruth" followed by the action key, usually, spacebar or tab; or your certification page can be added by typing "cert1" or any custom shortcode you wish.



Not all Text expanders are created equal, so below are a few features you may want to consider when looking at text expanders:

Application Specific vs Application Agnostic

Many transcription tools, CAT systems, and word processors already have a form of text expansion built into them. Designated shortcuts, briefs, keywords, macros, or abbreviations, allow these functions to be set up to work inside of a specific program. Microsoft Word for instance has two complimentary versions of this with AutoCorrect Replace Text As You Type and AutoText Macros which can be used to expand text and formatted pages. Some third-party text expanders can work across all applications on a particular operating system; therefore, the same shortcodes you use in your word processor can also be used in your email or in your court reporting software.



Formatted text vs Unformatted text

Depending on the text expander being used, when it adds the text, it may be

formatted or unformatted. The formatted text means that it will add formatting like Bold, Underline, Italics, tabs, spacing, and other formatting commands available to your computer. If it is unformatted, it will just add plain text. Depending on if you are planning to add in a cover page or just expand words on the fly, this might impact which text expander you choose.

Size of Inserted text

Text expanders usually have limits to the amount of text that they can place in your documents, based on the data field receiving the expansion. Some can insert as much as Windows will allow to be stored on the copy/paste clipboard, i.e. 9 pages of text per expansion, while others only allow for a few lines. Depending on your application, this might impact your choice and how you use the text expansion system.

Multiple Libraries

If you are a fan of separating work from the rest of your life, you may want a text expander that allows for multiple libraries, sometimes called dictionaries. This is also good if you work on multiple types of cases because you could have a medical dictionary for those medical malpractice cases and a financial dictionary for cases that have to do with bankruptcy. If the expanders allow you to choose more than one dictionary at a time whether through merging, linking, or copy/pasting entries through the clipboard, it is even better because then you could mix and match your designated keywords based on what you are working on that day.

Text Expander vs. Suggestive text

Text expanders and predictive (suggestive) text are not the same things. If you have used a webmail client, word processor, or even a search engine you have experienced predictive text where the software tries to guess what word or phrase you are wanting to add. Although these can be very helpful, they can be unpredictable, wasting keystrokes and time; therefore, disrupting your workflow if the wrong word or phrase is accidentally added.

What is right for you?

The specific text expander you choose is really a personal decision based on specification, workflow, support, cost, and learning curve. Like any new software, it will take time for you to learn the technique before you will see the benefits. But as many of your AAERT colleagues will tell you, once you incorporate it into your workflow you will see how your customized entries can benefit your keystroke saving, decrease your keyboarding time, and eliminate those repetitive typos, i.e. teh = the.

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Tips For A Successful Reporter

By Robin Clark, CER

To better serve our clients, it is important that reporters, transcriptionists, and production all work together as a team to create the best, most accurate transcript for our clients. Once the proceeding has

concluded, you may be thinking your portion is done. However, we should be spending time afterward researching and clarifying the spelling of proper names and nouns, as the transcriptionist and production staff won't have access to the same first-hand knowledge that reporters have.

Since oftentimes the depositions are moving so fast, we may not have time to get accurate spelling into our annotations. A helpful trick to help keep track of nouns that need spelling clarification is to put a mark, such as an (*) asterisk, on each annotation line to help you identify words that need clarification or research. When the deposition is on a break, and/or at the end, you can do a search for the symbol you used within your annotations so that you can review each line that needs clarification.

A good practice is to copy and paste those words that you need clarification into a separate document (such as Word or Google Docs) with bold typing to alert you that you need to get the spelling. When you have an opportunity, off the record, you can ask the clients for clarification on the spelling that you have bolded.

If there is no opportunity to ask, and they have already left, you can use other tools to research spelling, such as any exhibits that you have access to, searching social media such as LinkedIn or Facebook, and various search engines to find and confirm proper spellings.

While the clients are sharing exhibits, keep an eye out for spelling that you may need, such as names and locations, and jot them down if you can as they may and often come up later in the proceedings.

After getting the correct spelling, it is helpful to update the annotation and remove the symbol so that you can tab to the next symbol bookmark. It is also good practice to update your separate spelling list with the correct spelling, and remove the bold so that you know you have clarified that spelling.

While this may take some time after the proceedings have concluded, this should be a practice among all of us. It is our job to gather as much information so that our transcription and production teams can create an accurate transcript.

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Reliability Starts with the Building Your Court Reporting Kit

Submitted by Helene Vinson, Soniclear

“Know your software and hardware systems and be able to do simple troubleshooting.” AAERT’s Best Practice Guide.

The key to successful digital court reporting is having hardware and software that supports you while working under pressure. Reliability needs to be built in from the start, along with a design that makes troubleshooting easier when problems do arise.

At the center of every modern digital court reporting system is a Windows laptop computer, running software designed specifically for court reporting. A computer-based court reporting system enables you to perform tasks in the courtroom or deposition room just like traditional steno reporters, keeping your professional standards at the top level.



Since the computer is the most complex and critical component in your system, be sure to pick a laptop that is “Business Grade”. You can save money buying a cheaper laptop, but this type of computer is not designed for the mission-critical work of the court reporter. Help cut down on stress by knowing that your computer is going to support you in your daily work.

In connection with selecting a top-quality laptop, you need to be prepared to deal with any computer problems that may arise. Computers need to be updated and maintained. Computers can crash. There are many technical variables in our tech age. Unless you are a computer expert yourself, find an IT consultant or a computer dealer who will provide local technical support. If you are investing in court reporting software that includes a computer in the purchase, ask what IT help is included.

The audio components of the court reporting kit need to be tailored to your specific type of work. For example, working in a small deposition room is very different from a large courtroom or working remotely. Your software vendor is a great resource to help you select just the right mix of products to create the optimal solution for your work requirements and budget.

Even with the best equipment and maintenance procedures, computers and audio gear are not 100% reliable. That is why AAERT Best Practice's equipment checklist includes using a backup recorder for every session. In addition, you may want to have backup options for the other components in your kit. For example, your home laptop could be configured for use as a backup computer if your work laptop malfunctions. Audio components are also potential points of failure. Having spares can save the day, avoiding the need to reschedule a session due to equipment failure.



When selecting the digital court reporting software for your kit, you need to pick a package that you are comfortable using. Before selecting the software, make sure you see a demo of the software in action and try it yourself on your own computer. Look for a court reporting product that comes with onboarding training, installation assistance, and ongoing support.

With the right kit, training, and practice, you will be prepared for many years of reliable court reporting.

The Nature of Words

By Laurel Stoddard, CET



A river runs through it: Many cities and towns were founded on a riverbank and now straddle one or more waterways. In Texas, the Trinity River starts in north Texas and runs through Dallas; its waters ultimately end in the Gulf of Mexico. It is, incidentally, at 710 miles long, the longest river solely contained in a single state. The lower Colorado River begins in the Texas Panhandle. Tamed by dams in central Texas, it forms a chain of lakes which culminate in Lady Bird Lake that runs through Austin, and then continues mostly unhindered to empty into the Gulf of Mexico at Matagorda Bay.

Seldom do rivers follow straight courses. Though gravity plays a considerable part in the flow, so does the type of soil or rock through which the water courses, along with the volume of the flow and any impediments. The etymology of river is also somewhat convoluted, coming, according to Merriam-Webster, from Middle English *rivere*, river; from Old French *rivere*, *riviere*, riverbank, land along a river; from (assumed) Vulgar Latin *riparia*, from Latin feminine *riparian*, from *ripa*, bank, shore + *arius*. Flora and fauna that are riparian prefer the banks of a watercourse, a stream or river. The usage of "riparian" first arose at the beginning of the 17th century, while "river" came into usage in the 15th century. Another word related to a water's edge is *littoral*, referring to the shore of a seacoast, from the Latin *littoralis*, which came into usage in the middle of the 17th century.



Trinity River, Dallas, TX

From the roots of river also comes the word rive, which can mean to split, pierce, burst, wrench, related to the Latin ripa. Remove an E from the French rivere, and you have river, a completely different word, from which the Middle English rivette is derived to become rivet, which does the opposite of "rive," bringing two pieces together, usually metal, by means of a pin or bolt, which is hammered so that neither end will slip back through its hole.

A minute form of a river is the tiny streams of water running down a window on a rainy day, or a tear coursing its way down a cheek, a rivulet, derived from the Latin rivulus, a diminutive of brook or stream.

Water is on my mind because we have gone nearly two months without appreciable rainfall here in central Texas in a summer of historic heat. I'm aware as well of enormous water deficits in other parts of the country, especially in the West. But today we have dark, lowering clouds, and rain is falling, and we are incredibly grateful.

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