

**IL****CRA****SUMMER****2026**www.ilcra.org**ad infinitum****ILLINOIS
COURT
REPORTERS
ASSOCIATION****In this issue**

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President's Message

Welcoming Summer with a Sneak Peek at Fall

Hello, ILCRA. And hello, summer. There is a certain rejuvenation to the soul that comes with summer and the warm greeting it brings as she settles in for the season. Summer is a time when many of us take much-needed vacations, explore new hobbies, and spend quality time with loved ones. I hope you find time for these moments while balancing your professional commitments, and I say "professional commitments" instead of saying workload or deposition schedule to recognize the hard work each member of the ILCRA board has contributed to perfect their professional commitment to the ILCRA members. I'm so proud of the work each of them contributes.

This past weekend, ILCRA completed its second CSR prep course. We had four CSR-ready students attend from four different training programs; and guiding the ship of students was, of course, ILCRA's Education Liaison, Laurie Kornmuller. We had multiple board members on hand to answer questions and assist



to help prepare our students for their final sprint to the finish line, but these students knew their stuff. In addition to four different court reporting programs, we had three different software programs, and four different machines; but the words on the screen were all the same. It's all so fascinating to watch. At our break midway through the morning, phone numbers were exchanged, and a practice group was born. Let's be sure to wish them all well this August.

In the last issue, I told you September's convention planning started months ago, and ILCRA's Steno in the Spotlight convention (September 10th – 12th) has truly aligned to leave all attendees with that wow factor. Former Illinois reporters Tamara Sefranek, CRR, RMR, CRC, CSR (Illinois) and Marlene Kerr, FCRR, CRR, RMR, CSR (Illinois) will be

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What ILCRA Does for Illinois Reporters

- 
- **Works** to maintain your right to be certified.
 - **Monitors, promotes, and lobbies** to pass legislation favorable to the interest of court reporters, captioners and CART providers.
 - **Monitors** legislation affecting our professions on a statewide and national basis through both our Legislative Committee and our lobbyist.
 - **Sponsors** an annual conference and one-day seminars including continuing education and the latest in reporting technology.
 - **Publishes** *Ad Infinitum*, a quarterly online newsletter containing the newest up-to-the-minute reporting developments throughout the state, highlights of board meetings, advertisements of vendors and agency owners, and names and telephone numbers of ILCRA officers.
 - **Serves** as an affiliated state unit of the [National Court Reporters Association](#).
 - **Offers** members significantly reduced rates for the conventions and seminars.
 - **Awards** Student Scholarships, a Distinguished Service Award, an Award of Excellence for an Outstanding Educator, and conducts [speed contests](#) each year.
 - **Provides** resources on the ILCRA website, including the CSR Act, Court Reporters' Act, Rules and Regulations of the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, Transcript Act, and ILCRA Bylaws. It also includes officers' names and contact information as well as Committees and Committee Members. ILCRA Member Information is included on the website under "Find a Reporter."
 - **Offers** an Online Student Mentor Program.
 - **Promotes** student recruitment.
 - **Organizes** letter-writing campaigns on issues affecting our professions.
 - **Sends** representative members to legislative boot camps, leadership conferences, and the national convention for training and education.
 - **Provides** reporters for demonstrations on request and attends career days throughout the state.
 - **Provides** free CART brochures to its members.
 - **Provides** a court reporters network through Constant Contact which allows ILCRA to immediately be in touch with members via email.
 - **Serves** the membership with the phone number 703-729-4861 and a [website](#).
 - **Provides** an association management company to assist members.

ILCRA MISSION STATEMENT

To maintain standards of excellence in verbatim shorthand reporting, to provide continuing educational opportunities and advocate technological advancements, and to promote a spirit of mutual assistance between the profession of verbatim shorthand reporting and its consumers.

President's Message

continued from front page

discussing reporting at the United States House of Representatives to lead us off, and Don and Lisa Shake will take us through cybersecurity and financial strategies respectively to keep the energy going right into the President's reception, the Golden Keys Gala. You're going to want to look your best for this photo-worthy event. Details are still being worked on here, so stay tuned for more information.

On Saturday morning, Stacy Drohosky, RDR, CRR, FCRR, CRI will be joining us from Indiana to talk about the importance of state association membership. Greg Weiland, CSR, RDR, CRR and Joann Losoya, CSR, RPR, CRR will be sharing their Realtime Hacks from the Veterans; Dave Wenhold will be covering artificial intelligence; and so much more. Be sure

to stay until the end on Saturday though. Our final speaker will be coming to us all the way from Los Angeles to send Steno in the Spotlight out with a bang. Whitney Kumar, CSR, from Judy Justice will be presenting Opening Doors: Building Relationships, Reputation, and Opportunity in Court Reporting.

I know, for me, just as much fun went into preparing the lineup of speakers for ILCRA as work it took to secure them. I'm really looking forward to hearing the content, seeing all of you, and celebrating being in the court reporting industry.

See you in September,

Lorie

Illinois Court Reporters Association

WE RISE BY LIFTING OTHERS

BE A MENTOR

JOIN ILCRA'S LIST OF
MENTORS FOR OUR ONLINE
MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

- Many mentors report high levels of job satisfaction and a sense of purpose from "paying it forward."
- Mentors often learn about new technologies and fresh perspectives from their mentees.
- Mentoring ensures that critical knowledge is passed on, allowing senior reporters to leave a lasting impact on the field.
- Send a quick note to the address below about your interest in participating as a mentor, include your contact info, whether you are a freelancer, official, or CART captioner, and we'll be in touch soon.

CONTACT@ILCRA.ORG



A message from
Kathryn Dittmeier Dorsey
for Illinois court
reporters:



GET INVOLVED IN RECRUITING THE NEXT GENERATION OF STENOGRAPHERS IN OCTOBER!

Court reporting schools need your help to recruit students! There is a wonderful opportunity to help at the annual CareerSpark event at the Peoria Civic Center on October 28 and 29. We need reporters to demonstrate writing on the machine while 3,000 (Yes! 3,000!) 8th graders parade through our area during the two-day event. There are morning and afternoon shifts for each day. If you are interested in helping, please reach out to me at kathryn.stenoteacher@gmail.com.



Protecting Your Record and Your Future: Two Essential Sessions Every Court Reporter Should Attend at Steno in the Spotlight

By **Andrea James Jent, CSR**

Sometimes the best speakers feel like family. One of my favorite parts of planning an ILCRA convention is finding speakers who don't just know their subject matter, but those that can connect with our members in a meaningful way. This year, two of those speakers are literally my family.

My cousin, Lisa, grew up in Schaumburg while I was growing up 326 miles away in West Frankfort. Every summer, she and her brother would come spend a week with my family at my grandparents' little cabin on West Frankfort Lake. We spent our days swimming, exploring the woods, making friends, catching whatever creatures we could find, and coming back covered in enough lake mud to make my grandmother question her choice to supervise our little summer adventures.

Like many Lithuanian families, we're blessed with stubborn independence (our husbands might say extreme stubborn independence), attention to detail, resilience, and a love of spreadsheets. Those traits have served us well over the years, although they took us in very different professional directions.

While I found my career in court reporting, Lisa became a Certified Public Accountant, earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees in taxation from the University of Illinois, and built an impressive career advising clients on financial planning, taxes, retirement, trusts, and wealth management. Somewhere along the way, she married Don, who just happens to share my husband's lifelong love of Star Wars. In fact, Don's office proudly houses life-size Stormtrooper and Chewbacca figures, which immediately earned him extra points with my husband.

While preparing for this year's Steno in the Spotlight convention, I looked back at surveys from past seminars to see what topics attendees were asking for, and two topics

emerged on every single survey time and time again: financials and cybersecurity.

When I began thinking about financial education that would truly benefit court reporters, Lisa was one of the first people who came to mind. She understands that officials and freelancers face very different financial realities, and she has the experience to offer practical advice that members can actually use.

I also realized that Don's expertise in cybersecurity would be just as valuable to our profession. As artificial intelligence, cloud storage, phishing attacks, and ransomware become part of everyday conversations, court reporters need to understand how to protect themselves, their clients, and the confidential records entrusted to them.

I'm especially excited that we get to welcome both Lisa and Don to Steno in the Spotlight. Together they'll be tackling two topics that affect every one of us: protecting our information and protecting our financial future.

Behind the Screen: Cybersecurity for Court Reporters, presented by Donald G. Shake, Jr.

Court reporters handle some of the most sensitive information in the legal system. From transcripts and exhibits to confidential client communications and remote proceedings, the profession has become increasingly dependent on technology, and with that dependence comes new risks.

Donald G. Shake, Jr., Strategic Partner Director at Expel, has spent his career helping organizations strengthen their cybersecurity posture and defend against today's rapidly evolving threats. With leadership experience at Expel, AppOmni, SecurityScorecard, and CloudGenix, Donald brings a practical understanding of the real-world security challenges facing professionals who rely on cloud technology every day.

Rather than focusing on abstract cybersecurity concepts, Donald's presentation follows "A Day in the Life of a Court

Reporter," showing how routine tasks can unknowingly create security vulnerabilities.

Topics will include:

- The risks of using AI tools with confidential legal documents
- How ransomware and phishing attacks target professionals
- Best practices for secure remote work
- Protecting files stored in cloud services
- Simple habits that dramatically improve digital security

Whether you work in a courthouse, caption from home, or spend your days traveling between depositions, you'll leave this session with practical steps you can implement immediately to better protect yourself, your clients, and the integrity of the legal record.

Lights! Action! YOUR MONEY: Financial Planning Essentials for Court Reporters

Presented by Lisa Shake, CPA, CDFA™

No two court reporting careers look exactly alike and neither should their financial plans.

Employed reporters often face very different financial questions than independent contractor reporters. From taxes and retirement planning to insurance, budgeting, and managing irregular income, making informed financial decisions today can have a lasting impact on your future.

Lisa Shake brings decades of experience helping individuals and families navigate complex financial decisions. As Senior Vice President and Senior Wealth Strategist with William Blair's Private Wealth Management Group, Lisa has advised clients on investment strategies, retirement planning, tax planning, estate planning, charitable giving, trust administration, and wealth preservation. Before joining William Blair, she served in senior planning and advisory roles at Fifth Third Private Bank and Credit Suisse, following a career in public accounting with Deloitte and RSM McGladrey.

Designed specifically for the court reporting profession, this session will address the unique financial needs of both employees and independent contractors.

Participants will learn how to:

- Understand the different financial planning needs of

official and freelance reporters

- Navigate tax responsibilities and avoid costly surprises
- Compare retirement savings options available for employees and freelancers
- Build financial protection through emergency funds and insurance
- Plan effectively through every stage of a reporting career
- Successfully manage a freelance reporting practice as a business

The program also explores practical topics including quarterly estimated taxes, deductible business expenses, pension planning, SEP-IRAs, Solo 401(k)s, Roth versus traditional retirement accounts, disability insurance, and strategies for handling fluctuating freelance income.

Whether you're just beginning your career, approaching retirement, or anywhere in between, you'll leave with practical tools and strategies that can help strengthen your financial future.

Knowledge That Protects Your Career: Court reporting demands precision, professionalism, and constant adaptation. These two sessions complement one another by addressing two of the profession's most important realities: protecting your digital information and protecting your financial future. One session helps safeguard the confidential record you create every day. The other helps safeguard the career you've worked so hard to build.

Don't miss this opportunity to learn from two accomplished professionals whose expertise extends far beyond the courtroom and whose insights are tailored specifically to the unique challenges faced by today's court reporters. ■

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You're Invited!



**By Georgia
Northway,
RPR, CSR-IL,
CCR-MO**

Well, friends, I don't know how we got to be only two months away from September, but here we are. And this will be the last time I carry the title "In Training" along with this Executive Director designation. I

know I have learned a lot in these last several months, and I have thanked a countless many of you for your patience with me while I figure out what it is I need to do from day to day. There's still so much more to learn, but I'm ready and willing to live up to the responsibilities that will fall squarely on my shoulders very soon.

Part of my motivation to stay on with ILCRA has been this current executive board. We have an all-star roster of dedicated, intelligent, and highly motivated people sitting at the helm of ILCRA as we speak, who all work together towards the same vision – promote, protect, educate, and support all things court reporting in Illinois.

I am so fortunate to work with a group of respectful, kind, compassionate, and hard-working reporters. To use the parlance of our times, it's become a "safe space" to share ideas and work in furtherance of ILCRA's mission.

If you've ever thought about being an ILCRA board member but have hesitated for any and all the reasons we hesitate in life, I invite you to set that hesitation aside and let this be the time and place where you join a committee and get acquainted with us! We welcome your participation with open arms. Each individual on the board brings with them their unique character and strength, which makes us well rounded and functional for everything that comes our way.

So, what are your strengths? They're probably the things you don't even think about because they come so naturally to you. Maybe someone has pointed out to you your diplomacy, your go-getter attitude, your ability to work with

people; maybe it's your interest in legislation, politics, or your ability to fundraise. Perhaps you just want to be part of something to which you can devote some of your extra free time (I know, I'm laughing too).

Regardless of your motivation, if you're feeling called to take a step towards service, consider this your virtual engraved invitation to reach out to us! We'd love a chance to talk with you, get to know you, and find out where your interests and strengths already exist in order to make service feel easy as you provide a benefit to ILCRA, and reporters statewide.

And if you want to see what we're all about instead of taking my word it – meet is Rosemont this September 10th through the 12th for our annual convention! It'll be an event you don't want to miss! ■



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A Night to Remember

**By Brad Benjamin,
CSR, RPR, PE**

ILCRA was proud to partner with Steno in the City to kick off the summer soirée season in Chicago with many esteemed colleagues at Steno in the City's 2nd Annual Summer Social!

The event was held again at the Metropolitan Club on the 67th floor of the Sears—ahem—Willis Tower in the heart of downtown. With its breathtaking 360-degree views of the city, the venue provided the perfect backdrop for an evening of networking, laughter, and reconnecting with friends and colleagues.

I even brought my wife to prove to her that I do have friends and don't just sit and stare at a laptop all day!

A heartfelt thank-you to Shaunise Day for hosting another outstanding event. It was a fantastic evening and a wonderful way to welcome the summer season. Here's to making this an annual tradition! ■



From left to right Brad Benjamin, Kirstie Anderson, Dene'e Vadell, Shaunise Day

Kathryn Thomas and Brad Benjamin



Everett Stone and Brad Benjamin



Left to right: Amy Doman, Megan Granda, Kathryn Thomas, Kelly Linkowski, Sandy Narup, Melanie Humphrey-Sonntag



Left to right: Shaunise Day, Jeanette Rutz, Ann Biermann, Brad Benjamin



Left to right Denee' Vadell, Shaunise Day, Kerry Murphy, Jessica Cabello, Kelly Lawton



Shaunise Day, Kirstie Anderson, LeAnn Hibler



Left to right: JoAnn Losoya, Brad Benjamin, Laurie Kornmuller, Kirstie Anderson

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Lessons from Indiana: One of the Most Important Conversations at Steno in the Spotlight

By **Andrea James Jent, CSR**

Sometimes the best convention speakers aren't the ones you find by searching a list of topics, but instead, they're the people you meet while working alongside them.

Earlier this spring, I had the opportunity to attend NCRA's Leadership & Legislative Boot Camp in Washington, D.C. Stacy Drohosky, ILCRA Legislative Representative Kirstie Anderson, and I were assigned to the same lobbying team, meeting with both Illinois and Indiana legislators to advocate for the court reporting profession. Between visits to congressional offices, we had plenty of time to talk about our state associations and the challenges they face.

During one of those conversations, Stacy shared the story of the Indiana Court Reporters Association.

After years of declining membership and volunteer involvement, the association officially dissolved in late 2022. Around the same time, the Indiana Supreme Court proposed amendments to Trial Rule 74 that initially would have prohibited stenographic reporting in Indiana state courts. Without a state association to advocate on behalf of its members, the future suddenly looked uncertain. Fortunately, the National Court Reporters Association stepped in to advocate for the profession, and in March 2023, the Indiana Supreme Court clarified that stenographic reporting would continue to be permitted in Indiana courtrooms.

Listening to Stacy tell that story really made me stop and think.

It's easy to wonder whether belonging to a professional association is worth it. Many people join for continuing education, networking, or convention discounts. But when you hear firsthand what can happen when an association no longer exists, you begin to appreciate that membership is about something much bigger. It's about having a unified voice, protecting our profession, and ensuring that someone is at the table when important decisions are being made.

I knew immediately that Stacy's perspective was one our ILCRA members needed to hear.

Keeping Steno in the Spotlight: Why State Associations Matter

Presented by Stacy L. Drohosky

Stacy Drohosky knows firsthand what it means to serve the profession.

An official reporter for the Northern District of Indiana, Hammond Division, Stacy has spent more than three decades as a court reporter. A graduate of the College of Court Reporting, she has earned some of the profession's highest credentials, including RDR, CRR, FCRR, and CRI. Her commitment to advancing court reporting extends well beyond the courtroom. She is a past president of the Indiana Court Reporters Association, currently serves on the NCRA Contest Committee and the NCSA Leadership Committee, and is a founding board member of StenoStrides, a nonprofit organization dedicated to introducing middle and high school students to careers in court reporting.

During this session, Stacy will challenge attendees to think differently about what their association does and what it can become. Participants will discover:

- How membership can positively impact every stage of a court reporting career
- Why professional associations remain essential in an evolving legal landscape
- The role associations play in legislative advocacy and protecting the profession
- How associations support students, mentor new professionals, and cultivate future leaders
- The networking, educational, and leadership opportunities available through active involvement
- Practical ways every member can become more engaged and help strengthen the future of court reporting

Whether you've been an ILCRA member for decades or recently joined the profession, this session offers an opportunity to gain a deeper appreciation for the power of a professional community.

Strong associations don't happen by accident. They're built by members who volunteer, mentor, advocate, educate, and invest in one another.

Court reporting has always been about preserving the record. Organizations like ILCRA help preserve something just as important: the future of the profession itself.

If you've ever asked yourself, "What does my association really do for me?" you'll leave this session with the answer and perhaps an even better question: "What can I do for my association?" ■

The Importance of Our Mental Health

**By Sara M. Sapp,
RPR, CSR-IL, CCR-MO**

May was Mental Health Awareness Month. That's what sparked my thoughts on this topic. However, I think it's super important to take stock of our mental health frequently, no matter what month it is. A few years back, Kirstie gave a talk about mental health at our annual convention, and it was really impactful. I still think about it. Over the last month, I've been doing some reading about mental health resources, especially for court reporters, and I thought it might be helpful to share some takeaways. None of this is new or groundbreaking info, but it's nice to have a reminder every now and then.

Often, we forget how closely our mental health is tied to our physical health. When was the last time I stood up today? Have I stretched even once this week? We're busy people, but this is so important. We need to make sure we move. You don't have to do crazy workouts or be a fitness buff. Just take a walk. Have a stretch. Get a massage!

Don't forget to take breaks. I can be bad about this one. Step away from the computer for five minutes. Have a snacky-snack. Pet the cat. The work isn't going anywhere. You'll find that you're better able to refocus your attention when you come back to it.

Take a moment to reflect on your time management. So much of our stress comes from having chaos around us. We absolutely cannot control a lot of it,

but think about what you can control. I personally love a paper planner. I have a Google Calendar, but I really like taking time on Sunday to map out my week the old-fashioned way. Everyone has a different strategy, but figure out what works for you and how you can better organize yourself. There's often less stress when there's a plan and a goal.

Self-care! I know, it's such a buzzword lately. But it's necessary. Take a long shower. Have some ice cream. Buy yourself a new emotional support pineapple-shaped pool raft. Did I mention get a massage?

The final point I will highlight is the importance of a support network. That can be friends, family, animals, a therapist, all of the above. Sometimes speaking your thoughts out loud to someone you can trust makes you see things from new perspective. Even if you don't necessarily want to talk about exactly what's bothering you, getting together with fun people and having a laugh does so much good for your psyche. There are literal studies about it!

Take care of yourself, friends.

ethic of the second. They treat the program like any regular class, generally taking weeks off completely from practice at a time during scheduled semester breaks and then struggling to catch up after. These students often leave the program within the first year or so.

I fell somewhere between the second and third types. What ultimately helped me succeed was not just persistence, but immersion. For me, it was essential to not be isolated behind

a computer screen. I actively sought out real-world experiences.

Back in my day everything was conducted live. Frustrated by repeated failed speed tests while practicing alone, I made a deliberate shift. I surrounded myself with reporting in every way possible. I audited both higher-speed classes to challenge myself and lower-speed classes to refine accuracy. I worked as a scopist, focusing exclusively on proofreading professional reporters' work. I shadowed reporters, writing alongside them whenever possible. One instructor even offered extra practice sessions on evenings and weekends; I attended every one.

While some students succeed in fully online programs, I'm not sure I would have. I feel most students would benefit greatly from in-person experience. I've seen talented students struggle in real-world scenarios despite excelling in the classroom. Situations involving attorneys, judges, deadlines, and the pressures of in-person proceedings can be difficult to navigate without prior exposure.

My experience with in-person learning prepared me for these challenges. I practiced readbacks in front of classmates, tested alongside peers in conditions similar to the CSR exam, and gradually built the resilience needed to succeed. These are experiences I hope future reporters will also have, as they are essential for long-term success.

To support that goal, ILCRA is taking steps to better prepare students. We plan to continue offering CSR preparation sessions and strongly

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The Videographer is Your BFF

By JoAnn Losoya,
CSR, RPR, CRR

By now you all know about my wannabe filmmaker daughter. She's had a bit of success with her short films BUT until she "makes it" she needs an income to survive. We hit on becoming a legal videographer. It was the perfect segue for her. I asked a few of my favorite videographers if they would let her shadow them to learn the trade and they all said an enthusiastic YES! She trained for a week and then went back to Philadelphia to start her videographer career. Of course, she tells every court reporter she works with that her mom is a court reporter in Chicago and that I've drilled into her how court reporters work in collaboration with videographers, that we present as a team, and how important it is to be the court reporter's friend. I've actually had a couple of court reporters from the east coast reach out to me to let me know what a great job she is doing and how much they enjoy working with her, that she really knows her stuff. A natural, naturally.

All this intro is leading to why I wanted to write about videographers and the role they can play in helping you produce the best transcript you can. I encourage everyone to work with their videographers and use the tools that they offer so you can make your job easier.

In an impromptu, not in any way scientific, poll I took recently of how many reporters avail themselves of

the videographer's audio feed syncing with their software and listening to the audio with headphones at a deposition, I was shocked to find out that a lot of us do not use the videographer's audio. SHOCKED. As Greg Weiland and I say, the audio addicting. I would connect to the videographer's feed before COVID but I could take it or leave it. During COVID, I used a Zoom kit to have that same audio on Zoom syncing with my transcript. And coming out of COVID, I felt like I just couldn't hear people as well, being so used to everyone's voices booming through the Zoom speakers all at the same level for the most part and being able to regulate the volume. I no longer could deal with soft spoken witnesses mumbling into their shirts sitting across the table from me or the attorney who whispered "objection" as if it was profanity that he couldn't say out loud. I NEEDED IT LOUD!

That's the biggest advantage of hooking up to the videographer's audio and having it sync to your software: having clear, crisp audio that even the softest speaking person comes in loud, clear, and undistorted. As I am getting older (GASP!) I love wearing earbuds and hearing the testimony coming in so there's no guesswork involved.

I've been told that it feels like cheating to use the audio. I say to that pish posh, or for those of you who know me, F*** that. LOL I write real-time all day every day and I need to use all the tools in my toolbox to put out the best product I can. Practice, prep, Brief-it in the case of CaseCatalyst, macros, briefing on the fly, and having earsplitting audio piping into my ears are all what makes my real-time shine. It is to the point

that I only want video depositions because I just don't want to deal with straining to hear people talk.

I started reporting in prehistoric times of manual machines, manual typewriters, carbon paper, erasable paper, Wite-Out, graduating to the IBM Selectric (the big time at the time), then this giant box computer with an attachment on the bottom of my machine with a 9-point serial cable. I come from the land before audio. Having audio absolutely does not diminish my skill level. The skill is there. It enhances it. In this age of technology moving at the speed of light, we have to use everything that is offered to us to stay in the game and relevant.

I hear it now, but, JoAnn, HOW do I connect to the videographer's audio? It is really pretty simple. You ask the videographer for an audio line. I use my microphone from my Zoom kit and connect to his line. I have male cables to go into his female port. (When the light bulb finally went off why they're called male and female ends, the laughing in my head was deafening!) You connect your microphone to your laptop the way that you usually do and then plug in your headphones in the other slot and away we go. We usually do a test and a videographer who is good will be able to monitor your feed separately from the rest of the participants. Sadly, not all videographers are created equal but all audio is good audio IMO. I work with one in particular that I love because he will troubleshoot the audio immediately if he hears even a crackle or the slightest buzz. He ensures that the audio feed I get is the best he can produce which in turns is less stress for

me and makes my job easier. Teamwork makes the dream work.

Here is a picture of the setup I use. I purchased my microphone set up from Martel Electronics. I use an audio cable to connect one end to the videographer's feed and the other end to my mic.

A friend of mine uses the Andrea sound card to hook up to the videographer's audio feed.

These are both USB connecting microphones.

In the pink slot on both of these devices is where one end of the male-to-male aux cord connects and the other end of the aux cable connects to the videographer's line. You can connect a Y splitter to connect your laptop and your machine to the vid's audio.



I like to use a separate microphone {pic} to connect to my machine for my audio backup. As much as I love the technology of hooking up to the vid's feed, sometimes technology fails us and it is good to have a separate autonomous backup.



Into the green hole go my headphones. I like to keep one ear bud in and one out, that's just my personal preference. I like to hear the sirens still competing with the testimony. Hahaha. I know others who wear a whole headset. Either way, your audio will be completely synced to your transcript. No downloading and associating audio needed. Ta-dah.



Ta-Dahhh!!!

Now I'm a visual learner. I'm even getting frustrated trying to write out these steps to follow. If you're



screaming at this article, GAH, it makes no sense and you want to see these setups live, not Memorex (Geez, I am old), you can contact me and I can walk you through it (jlosoyacsr@gmail.com) OR better yet, COME TO THE ILCRA CONVENTION IN ROSEMONT IN SEPTEMBER. Greg and I will be giving a seminar on RT connections and other tips and tricks we use daily in our court reporting lives. We can walk you through it then too.

You can get the Andrea soundcard and cables from Sound Professionals or Martel Electronics. I recommend those two for the best quality equipment. The same stuff is sold on Amazon, Best Buy, and even Target. But as always, buyer beware.

Try it, you'll like it!

SPOTLIGHT



KATHRYN DITTMEIER DORSEY

By Greg Weiland,
CSR-IL, RDR, CRR

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT – KATHRYN DITTMEIER DORSEY

Kathryn Dittmeier Dorsey is a longtime member and friend of ILCRA and a strong advocate for the court reporting profession. Within minutes of my becoming ILCRA president in the fall of 2023, she walked up to me and offered me her help in any projects in which ILCRA was involved. Her offer of help was a welcomed gesture for a green and nervous new president, a kindness I have never forgotten. She has been involved in court reporter education since the early 1990s. I thought it would be interesting to hear from Kathryn's side of our profession,

and she agreed to participate in the Member Spotlight.

GW: Where did you grow up, and how long have you been a member of ILCRA? Do you belong to other associations?

KDD: I am from Mackinaw, Illinois. I was a member for several years in the early '90s and have been a member again since about 2015. I am also a member of New York State Court Reporters Association (NYSCRA).

GW: What initially got you interested in court reporter education?

KDD: I started court reporting school in Indiana in 1988 and transferred to Midstate College in Peoria in 1989. While at the school in Indiana, I experienced realtime for the first time (thank you, Sue Terry!) and knew this was the future of our profession. With the help of my dad, I purchased a PC in 1990, along with realtime software

and a paperless writer. I typed for court reporters and transcribed videos for Caterpillar to support myself and my children while finishing court reporting school. I took my setup to school for "show and tell" a couple of times. That led to a job offer to teach CAT and realtime medical transcription at Midstate and eventually a full-time teaching job. I discovered I love teaching!

GW: How long have you been teaching court reporting?

KDD: Off and on since 1991. In 1993 I was hired by Stenograph as an Education Program Manager and had the privilege to meet many, many experienced educators and learn from them. In 1994, I married and moved to Long Island, New York, where I worked as a Stenograph Certified Training Agent for 14 years. During that time, I helped develop online programs for teaching court reporting, consulted with schools on curriculum, taught online for St. Louis Community College and Brown College of Court Reporting, and helped start Realtime Center for Learning on Long Island, NY. Since my return to Central Illinois in 2008, I have worked as the program coordinator for Midstate College, as an adjunct teacher for Black Hawk College, a substitute teacher for Realtime Center for Learning, and am currently a full-time employee of Plaza College in Forest Hills, NY.

GW: Do you instruct students in any other areas of study?

KDD: My teaching experience includes theory, speedbuilding, court procedures, English for court reporters,



internship, medical terminology, and legal terminology.

GW: Over the years, have you noticed any differences in the types of students that are attracted to court reporting school?

KDD: Many students like the idea of a steady workweek, income, and benefits, and are drawn in because of the jobs available in court. In my experience, these days fewer are drawn to the idea of running their own business as a freelancer. We do seem to attract people with perfectionistic tendencies!

GW: Do your students attend classes live and on-site or virtually? Have you noticed any differences in success rates for students based on whether they attend school in person or virtually?

KDD: The students at Plaza College are all attending class virtually. When Midstate was open, it was live class in a campus classroom. I think the success rate is tied more closely to available practice time, a “can do” attitude, and taking responsibility for your progress by becoming a self-directed learner. Student-teacher interaction, whether in person or virtual, can also be a key component in success rates.

GW: What percentage of your students participated in the AtoZ program or a similar introductory steno program? What is the impact of these introductory programs related to enrollment in CR schools?

KDD: At Plaza College, all students must complete an A to Z program prior to enrollment. Programs like that help prospective students get

a feel for the work it is going to take to enter the profession. As we all know, court reporting school can be one of the toughest things you ever tackle! These introductory courses can help people self-assess whether they are willing to put in the time and effort prior to enrollment. This helps schools immensely because having a high drop-out rate can cause some problems with financial aid and accreditation.

GW: What theory are you teaching in your program?

KDD: Plaza College teaches EV360 Theory. Black Hawk College teaches StenEd. Realtime Center for Learning, Inc., the school I helped found, teaches Phoenix Theory.

GW: Do you think some of the more complicated modern theories have slowed speed-building efforts for students?

KDD: I learned a “pre-realtime” theory that had long and short vowels but nothing else. My theory was full of strokes such as TKET for death, debt, detective, and did he tell; SR- for have and of. Anytime you add mental and physical elements, such as homonym distinction; writing prefixes differently than root words, word parts, or suffixes; and distinguishing one-word/two-word translations, it is going to slow down the process compared to a time when we didn’t think about those things.

We are now almost three to four decades into our “modern” theories. The changes are necessary and here to stay. I would love to see discussions and research turn to questions such as,

“Is there modern brain research and instructional ideas that will help the average student learn faster and retain what they have learned better?”

GW: What is the fastest you have seen a student get through the program? What individual characteristics helped the student progress so quickly through the program?

KDD: I recently had a student come through my 60/80 wpm class who completed the program in a year. The student was obsessed with practice, practice, practice. And he did a good job of accepting his theory instructions at face value rather than questioning everything and running down rabbit holes of translation options.

He came into my class after two semesters of theory and a three-week break over the holidays. During the break, he logged over 100 hours of practice in the EV360 software. He treated his practice like a job, and it worked for him.

GW: Are there transferable skills that you have observed that help students speed-build faster?

I know there have been speculations about whether playing a musical instrument or being able to keyboard quickly is a transferable skill, but I have not seen a study or evidence of that to be able to say one way or the other. The skill most needed is a mental skill of fortitude and stick-to-it-iveness. That, and practicing with intention. Everything you practice should have a purpose and, if possible, be measurable so you can see if your



practice is working.

GW: For students who are not successful, do you encourage them to try voice writing?

KDD: I have counseled a couple of students into voice writing programs, and that was a successful move for them.

GW: On average, at what speed do students commonly hit a plateau in speed-building?

KDD: A plateau, if it occurs, can happen at any speed. There is, though, a place around 140 to 160 wpm where you have to have enough practice under your belt so you are not thinking about the outlines for every single word. It is a transition to a place where the majority of what you are hearing is processed so quickly and efficiently that it feels like it goes into your ears and out your fingers almost automatically.

GW: The journey from 60 words per minute to the 225+ wpm exit speed requires immense endurance. What are some motivational methods you use to help students through speed-building plateaus?

KDD: I like grading their entire test every time and giving it a percentage score. When the student feels discouraged, we can look back over the past several weeks, and usually there is a trend of increasing scores.

I am also a huge fan of “measurable progress.” Using our EV360 Ultimate practice software, the student can write a new take, do a rough edit, and have it graded by the computer. This gives a starting point. Now the student can break it down into smaller

chunks for practice and evaluate those smaller chunks. The scores should be measurably greater, and the final score over the whole piece will give evidence that the practice session brought positive results in the score. This is fact-based motivation that encourages the student to continue in their practice and practice methodology. If the scores do not improve much, then we go back in and analyze how the practice is being done and figure out how can we change it up to get better results.

GW: Beyond machine shorthand, how much time is spent training students on CAT software?

KDD: Plaza College has two CAT classes: one in the third semester that coincides with their beginning speedbuilding class, and the other at about 160 wpm. Advanced topics such as auto-indexing, page layouts, auto-includes and more are included in the second class.

GW: How do you structure your lesson plans to accommodate a classroom of students who may be learning at drastically different speeds?

KDD: Our classes are divided into 40 wpm increments. We have a 60/80 class, 100/120 class, 140/160 class, and 180/200/225 class. For my classes, the guideline is this: If the material is too fast, focus on getting every Q and A bank and the first words after it; for literary and jury charge material, focus on getting the first words of every sentence and the end-of-sentence punctuation with as much in the middle as you can. If the material feels slow, focus on clean outlines and

stroking punctuation where applicable.

GW: How do you prepare students to bridge the gap between the classroom and real-world realities?

KDD: Our advanced CAT class, court procedures class, and internship class/experience are all designed to accomplish this.

GW: Approximately how many students have you personally sent into the court reporting industry?

KDD: Unknown! But many. :)

GW: With the rise of digital reporting and AI transcription, how do you teach students about the value-add of human stenographers and real-time captioning?

KDD: I love to collect mistranslations from Siri and AI to share. And I try to keep up on developments with AI so I can explain how AI obtains, processes, and regurgitates information. It is only as smart as the weakest link in its dataset. I really appreciate seminar sessions at state and national conventions that teach us more about AI.

We talk about the transcription process many digital reporters use and issues with chain of custody, speaker identification, and inaudible areas of the recording. Almost everyone is aware of the ability to manipulate digital sound recordings, videos, photographs, and written documents, so we talk about the impact that could have on our industry if evidence comes to light that manipulations are happening. With a human stenographer, the buck stops here if something is amiss with the record. I



think the time is coming when most of the world will distrust things that are generated with AI or they will have suspicions about whether digital artifacts have been altered.

GW: Your webinar *The History of Early American Shorthand Machines* is currently available on NCRA's website. Tell us how your interest developed surrounding the history of steno machines, and tell us a little about your personal steno machine collection.

KDD: When I worked for Stenograph, their Mt. Prospect office lobby had a fabulous vintage and foreign steno machine collection. I loved looking at those! And then I found eBay. After a friend purchased my first 1911 Ireland Stenotype as a thank you for work on a project for her, I started researching the history of it. I just fell in love with looking at patents, finding old articles,

and eventually amassed a collection of machines, magazines, accessories, and ephemera.

At the present time I have about 30 machines that I display in my office. Some of my favorite things in my collection are a Universal Stenotype Company stock certificate signed by Ward Stone Ireland (inventor of our present keyboard layout), a World War I war workers ID for someone who worked at the Stenotype Company, and a felt Stenotype banner from the 1911 Stenotype Company. ■

Mental Health

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encourage mid- to high-speed students to attend. We have also worked with the Illinois CSR Board to have Continental Testing reinstate the exam on a triannual basis after a period of inconsistent offerings. Additionally, many board members serve as mentors, and we are actively seeking more professionals to guide emerging reporters.

The time of learning only in isolation has passed. Success in completing the program and thriving in this field requires engagement, collaboration, and real-world practice. Let's show up, not just for ourselves, but for each other. ■

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ad infinitum

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