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ASSOCIATION

SUMMER

2020

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ad infinitum

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## President's Message

I think if there is one thing we can all agree on right now, it's that we've had enough change this year to last us for a while. Like, a long while. Amirite? Some of it hasn't been so bad – for us freelancers, one definite perk of Zoom depositions is only professionally dressing up from the waist up. My lounge pants have been worth their weight in gold. I even catch myself right now, more relaxed and casual in writing this, with slang and abbreviation. I'll do my best not to turn this article into a Zoom conference analogized. You deserve my words dressed to the nines.

The changes do just keep rolling in and rolling out. And with change comes the challenges. With Zoom and Webex depositions becoming more common, I've encountered some obstacles I've never dealt with before: thunderstorms that set off car alarms outside my window; honking horns on the street; barking dogs, barking neighbors, loud children. Distractions of epic proportions that I never imagined.

And I have to wonder if, for some of you, that change has come as a polar opposite to the noise. Is there a new silence where once there was a bustle in the hallways and in the courtrooms? Has your workload



lightened? Or are we all back into it, full force, with barely enough hours in the day to get it all done?

Somedays, it may feel like we can handle it all. We feel strong enough, good enough, resilient enough. Other times, it may feel like a war we're waging against time, against demand, against ourselves. Do you ever have one of those days where you feel like one of your kids could be writing just as well as you? I had a job earlier this month where my fingers could not find the keys and I was mistyping at a fascinating rate. Even the words that did translate were wrong. And I thought to myself, I've been at this for thirteen years now. How am I having a day like today?

If you think about it, we've been fighting for success since all of us began this journey in court reporting school. Initially, it was a fight for speed. I have said since I got out and started working; school and

*continued on page 4*



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kimcottrell@icloud.com

### VICE PRESIDENT

Mary Ann Casale  
mac@casalereporting.com

### SECRETARY

Pamela Taylor  
Ptaylor054@aol.com

### TREASURER

Nancy McClarty  
nlmcclarty@gmail.com

### REGION ONE REPRESENTATIVE

(Official)  
Etta Jones  
ettarjonescsr@aol.com

### REGION ONE REPRESENTATIVE

(Freelance)  
Brenda Tannehill  
brenda.tannehill@comcast.net

### REGION TWO REPRESENTATIVE

Samantha Brown  
sbrown@peoriacounty.org

### EDUCATION LIAISON

Bernice Radavich  
bercaptions@sbcglobal.net

### LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE

Isaiah Roberts  
Isaiahpaul94@gmail.com

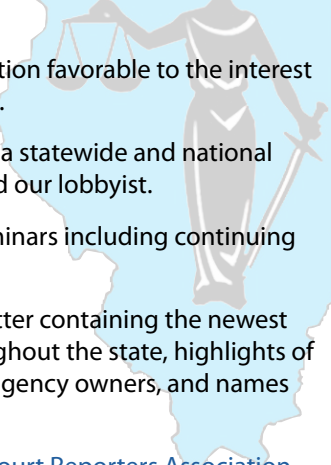
### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Kathryn Thomas  
Stenoray1@gmail.com

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dave Wenhold, CAE, PLC  
703-927-1453; Ashburn, VA  
contact@ilcra.org

## 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*

speed building was the most challenging part of this whole job for me. And we all have that one facet that really made us work for it. Whatever that was, it was a fight for success.

I hope you were fortunate like me and the actual process of getting hired was the easiest part of being a court reporter. With the shortage that has existed long before I entered the workforce, finding a vacancy in a place I could live turned out to be the least of my worries.

Even still, securing a job didn't mean job security. I remember being barely out of high school and my mother writing her president's message, a call to rally the troops to protect court reporters and their livelihoods, their place in the courtroom, and making the verbatim record. At one point while I was in court reporting school, there was a hiring freeze. She reassured me that by the time I was ready to work, that would be over.

We have been at war with almost everyone outside of our community, fighting to express the relevance of the certified court reporter, for at least the last 20 years. When I pause to think about it like that for a second – that undercurrent of frustration, that quiet thought in the back of my mind that whispers how all of this could be taken away from me any day, that constant and pursuing insecurity is a challenge that all of us are aware of and none of us can face alone.

The threat of voice recognition and this digital audio recording fad has loomed like a dark cumulonimbus for decades, just off in the distance. Some are already affected by the storm. Others feel like it will never reach them. However you perceive the impendence of voice recognition, it's a technology that is here, that is being developed, and someday will be closer to perfected.

So my question becomes, how do we learn to embrace even more change (*especially* when we really don't want to! No more, pls...), *especially* in a way that is radically uncomfortable and in a lot of ways, appears to hold the key to our demise? For my colleagues that graduated from the School of Hard Knocks,

coming up on onion paper and actual carbon copy when they talked about copies of transcripts; peeling through steno notes and using things like libraries and telephones for spellings, it can almost seem unfair how easy "it" all comes to us in the 2020s. A quick Google search delivers "about 46,500,000 results in 0.59 seconds." Are you serious? What do you even do with all that? And the more the times change, the easier the information comes to us, and the faster we want everything delivered.

So what if... what if we made the perceived enemy our friend? Could you imagine an almost-instantaneous production of transcripts with the assistance of AI software that could detect, correct, and fill in your untranslates and drops?

I attended the 2019 NCRA conference in Denver, and there was abundant talk about what it would mean to incorporate AI and voice recognition into our daily working lives. I sat in a seminar with a Stenograph representative who spoke of the integration and how, someday, their hope was to essentially turn voice recognition and the court reporter into the ultimate transcript dream team. Max Curry even spoke about embracing the future and where it was headed by being a part of the flow, not trying to stop the current.

My takeaway from that convention was technology has the potential to turn each and every court reporter into a real-time competent reporter. One of our biggest hurdles as a profession is the fear of writing realtime for our end users and clients. It is one thing that sets us miles apart from digital audio recording, and the very thing many of us fear the most.

Call me naïve, call me too hopeful; but I choose to see a future where the integration of technology continues to serve the court reporter and the court reporting community in a way that allows us to deliver verbatim records in no-time flat, which will keep us superiorly positioned above those trying to pass themselves off as just as good or as competent.

Welcoming the change of technology will keep us as golden as my lounge pants have been this year.

*~ Georgia Long*

# Positive Affirmations

**By Samantha Brown**  
**Region 2 Official Rep**

**“In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer.” – Albert Camus**

Being a parent is hard. Being a parent during COVID – eek. I have a six-year-old daughter and a four-year-old daughter. Things change daily, but as of the day I am writing this, our plan for school is to send them in-person with some remote learning built into that plan.

Preschool will look different. No decorations can hang from the ceiling or from the walls, no high-fives, no hugs, no toys, no sharing, no playing with friends. As one of my teacher friends said, “Everything we have been taught to do for years is now forbidden.” The classrooms will be sterile, similar to a doctor’s office. And that’s okay! Next school year should be more what we are used to; right? Okay. We can do this.

My girls are super excited to wear their Frozen and princess masks to school, and my 1st grader is excited to eat lunch in her classroom. They can’t wait to see their teachers and their friends, even if it is with guidelines in place. We have tried hard, like most I

know, to be as positive as possible around them while reinforcing good hygiene and respect for others.

Our school district has approximately 250 students in the building with grades pre-k through 8. Class sizes are small during a normal year. Even with that, I figure it’s probably for sure our school will become 100% remote learning at some or multiple points. And that’s okay too! My husband and I both work full time, so things are bound to be chaotic, but what do my kids care? They get to hang out in their pajamas all day, show off their cats to their friends on Zoom and eat all the food in the house (literally all the food).

If you’re a parent or guardian like me getting ready to send your kids back to school, starting remote learning or opting to homeschool, we can only do our best, and that WILL be enough. I hope we can all learn not to sweat the small stuff and laugh as much as possible. (If one good thing has come from 2020, it’s the memes; am I right?) Some of our goals as parents are to raise children who are happy, healthy and productive members of society. I think the future looks resilient.

**“The only way to get through life is to laugh your way through it. You either have to laugh or cry. I prefer to laugh. Crying gives me a headache.”**

– Marjorie Pay Hinckley

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# How Flexible Are You?

By Kim Cottrell

No, sorry, this isn't about yoga or exercising.

I have had some things happen recently that made me want to fly off the handle, lash out, say things that I might regret later, even (God forbid) quit my job. No joke there. I had reached my limit. I love my job, but I was pushed almost beyond my limits.

Those all would have been emotional responses, and I'm glad I did nothing at the time. I've been told that if you're really upset about something, sit on it for 24 hours. If it's still bothering you as much as it was the day before, then do something about it. I still have done nothing except now I'm writing this article. Many professional mental health experts say writing is good therapy. So y'all are witnesses to my therapy in progress.

In the wake of the things that happened that had me so upset and as I was trying to cool off, I reminded myself that I needed to remain flexible for my own sanity. I didn't need to do it for anyone else. I just needed to do it as my own selfish act in order to remain sane for myself. Is that so wrong? I don't really think so. Sometimes we need to stop giving and giving and have

a selfish moment or two for our own sanity.

But as I continued to reflect on trying to be flexible at work, with bosses, with coworkers, or even personally at home with family or my spouse, I was reminded of the need for flexibility in the world today, especially concerning things surrounding the pandemic. The whole world is upside down right now...for everybody.

Things are changing daily...for everybody. Everyone seems more stressed than usual. We all should try to be more flexible, patient, understanding, and non-critical of others. No one knows what tomorrow will bring, and no one ever has. Times are more uncertain than ever. We all need to come together and support and hold each other up. Even if you really don't feel like it.

I'm trying to be more flexible when it comes to how I deal with other people. I'm working at being more patient and trying to remember that others have things going I have no clue about, that they don't have the same agenda or perspective that I have on life. I would encourage everyone to use the same approach with the people around them. Maybe it would help to keep someone else from flying off the handle.

By the way, where does the saying "fly off the handle" come from anyway?

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# ILCRA 2020-2021 Official Slate for Board of Directors

**By Kathryn Thomas**  
**ILCRA Immediate Past President**  
**and Nominating Committee Chair**

The 2020 Nominating Committee consisted of Deborah Cohen-Rojas, Andrea Jent, Stephanie Battaglia, LeAnn Hibler, and chair Kathryn A. Thomas. The Nominating Committee has met and approved the following slate of nominees:

**Samantha Brown**, Region 2 Representative-Official, full two-year term.

**Carla Letellier**, Region 1 Representative-Freelance, one year, filling the vacancy of Brenda Tannenhill.

**Catherine Rajcan**, Legislative Representative, full two-year term.

**Isaiah Roberts**, Region 2 Representative-Freelance, full two-year term.

The requirements for each position are listed in the ILCRA Bylaws, found at <https://www.ilcra.org/bylaws>.



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# Gadgets and Tips for Reporting Virtually (Part I)

By Mary Ann Casale

It is probably safe to say that virtual proceedings are not going away anytime soon. In fact, in some situations, it may remain the preferred way to proceed. Whatever the future holds, you do not have to spend a lot of time and money reinventing the wheel and purchasing equipment that may not be needed down the road. Working with what you have and supplementing with some modifications will provide you with a solid working setup. For those who just want to get back to work and do their job, a turnkey solution is the best option. [Sound Professionals](#) and [Martel Electronics](#) both offer turnkey solutions.

Unfortunately, there are so many subtopics that fall under virtual reporting that could be covered (video, audio, digital exhibit programs, equipment setup), addressing them all in this article would be too much. This will be Part 1 of a multi-part series and will be limited to video and some of the things I have learned by spending too much time buying and returning equipment. Audio and miscellaneous issues created by reporting remotely will be discussed in a separate article. Full disclosure, as of this going to print, my experience in doing Zoom has been limited. That said, I hope my mistakes will help you decide what works best for you. I have also added a few suggestions gleaned from this year's NCRA virtual convention that I thought would be of interest no matter what setup you have.



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## Gadgets and Tips

Continued from page 8

First, your camera. It should be at eye level or slightly above. If you are using your laptop webcam, you can prop your laptop on a box or some books. If you have a laptop table and tripod that you take on jobs, you might be able to utilize that to get the camera higher. If your laptop does not have a camera, there are many choices online. [Logitech C 922](#) is what I use. It's plug and play and works great. The [AUKEY FHD Webcam](#) has positive reviews on Amazon and is about \$55. They both have microphones built in. One benefit to an external camera is you only need to move the camera, not your laptop, if you need to make any camera adjustments because of background issues.

When it comes to lighting, you want to face your light source, if possible. If you have a window in your room and can face the window, that might be all you need to do. Having a window in front of you is much better than behind you. If that is not an option, closing the blinds/ drapes will help. One tip I found is to walk around the room with your cell phone camera facing you to see where the best light is and work from there. It's simple and works!!

If you do want to add additional lighting to remove heavy shadows or just brighten your environment, you can put any light behind your monitor. If you are so inclined to do a full-on lighting setup, remember 10:00 and 2:00. That is where your additional lighting should be. You do not want to see the light reflecting in your eyes, so placement above eye level is important. While some of this might seem a bit much, we do want to maintain a clean and professional image while doing our job. Also, if a request is made to have the reporter with the witness and provide a Zoom setup of the witness for the attorneys, we want to make sure the video is clear and the witness doesn't look like someone out of a Boris Karloff movie.

As far as lighting, there are so many options. I have a few here, one that was mentioned at NCRA and two that I have tried myself. I ultimately decided on the [Lume Cube](#) shown on the right. It is small and attaches to the back of your monitor or a small tripod and has a diffuser so the light is not so offensive. It's bright, can run on USB, and doesn't take up space.



**Gadgets and Tips**  
Continued from page 9

The [Neewer Ring Light Kit](#) is extremely popular and has nearly 13,000 reviews and 4.5 stars on Amazon. There is also a less expensive O-light by [UBeesize](#). It has over 23,000 reviews and 4.5 stars. I did order this and returned it. It was overkill, at least for me.



One tip I adopted that I really like is changing my profile picture to something like below. When I go off the record for a break or when I am logged on to Zoom 20 to 30 minutes early, I will mute my mic and turn off my video. When folks enter Zoom or there is a break, the image below is displayed for my video.



## Gadgets and Tips

Continued from page 10

If turning off your video is not your thing, you can purchase a webcam cover instead. When there is a break, you can slip the cover over the lens. They have them for external cameras and built-in webcams.

The next article in *Ad Infinitum* will address hardwiring your audio to your realtime computer, your writer, and a backup digital recorder. While I have not had enough time on the record with virtual proceedings, I hope something here speaks to your situation and that you find it useful.



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ad infinitum

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**Editor:** Innovative AMC, 43150 Broadlands Center Plaza, 152-269, Ashburn, VA 20148.  
Ph: 703-729-4861, Email: [dwenhold@kmgnet.com](mailto:dwenhold@kmgnet.com).

#### Advertising information:

Illinois Court Reporters Association,  
43150 Broadlands Center Plaza, 152-269  
Ashburn, VA 20148  
Ph: 703-729-4861  
Fax: 703-935-2266  
Email: [contact@ilcra.org](mailto:contact@ilcra.org)

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