

The Scrivener

A newsletter from Scribes—The American Society of Legal Writers



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Submissions

Please send items for upcoming issues of *The Scrivener* to scribeslegalwriters@gmail.com.

Scribes Celebrates Its 75th Anniversary

Scribes President Michele M. Jochner kicked off Scribes' diamond-anniversary celebration on July 31, 2026, by reminding all in attendance that "we gather not simply to mark the passage of time but to honor a remarkable tradition of 75 years devoted to excellence, clarity, integrity, and purpose in legal writing." In telling the story of the country's oldest organization dedicated to improving legal writing, Jochner described the vision that brought Scribes into existence in 1951, when Chief Justice Arthur T. Vanderbilt of the New Jersey Supreme Court invited a group of like-minded lawyers to join him in forming an organization that would promote and pay tribute to excellence in legal writing.

Jochner unpacked many interesting facts about Scribes' founding, history, development, and growth. She shared significant milestones in the life of the organization, including the establishment of numerous awards and honors to recognize writing achievements within the legal profession; the formation of the National Order of Scribes



Scribes Celebrates Its 75th Anniversary (continued)



to honor graduating law school students who demonstrate exceptional ability in legal writing; and the creation of various educational programs and resources,

including the Legal Writing Institute in 1975 and the National Conference for Law Review Editors in 2023, as well as countless CLE programs and webinars over the years. Jochner also celebrated the establishment and success of Scribes' various publications to promote excellence in legal writing, highlighting *The Scrivener*, a quarterly newsletter first published in 1974; *The Scribes Journal of Legal Writing*, created in 1990; *The Scribes Manual for Law Review Editors*, established in 2022; and the just-released *Gems from The Scribes Journal of*

Legal Writing: *Volumes 1–20*, an anthology of treasured essays, articles, and book reviews published in the *Journal's* first 20 issues, which were overseen by chief editors Bryan Garner (vols. 1–7), Professor Joseph Kimble (vols. 8–14), and Professor Mark Cooney (vols. 15–20).

Jochner concluded her remarks by recognizing the legal-writing challenges arising from artificial intelligence and rapid technological change. She emphasized that as the legal profession grapples with these challenges and responds to new opportunities, Scribes will continue to be a strong voice in championing excellence in legal writing. In closing, Jochner urged attendees to consider joining Scribes, either as a member or subscriber, as “we write the first chapter of our 75th year . . . and beyond.”

Jochner's full remarks are available for [viewiing on YouTube](#) and will be published in the next issue of *The Scribes Journal of Legal Writing*.

Celebrating 75 Years of Excellence in Legal Writing

We are proud to support our partner,
President Michele M. Jochner,
and an organization whose commitment to
clarity and professionalism reflects our own.

We See What Others Don't
Chicago • Lake Forest • Wheaton • Global

SCHILLER DUCANTO & FLECK

Highlights from Scribes' 75th-Anniversary Celebration

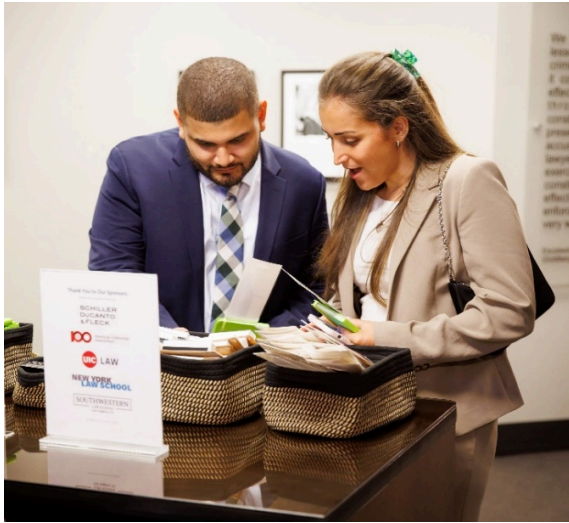


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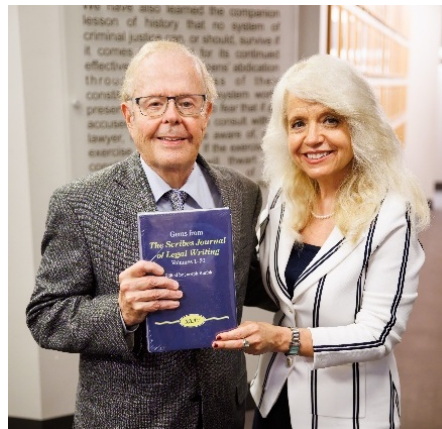
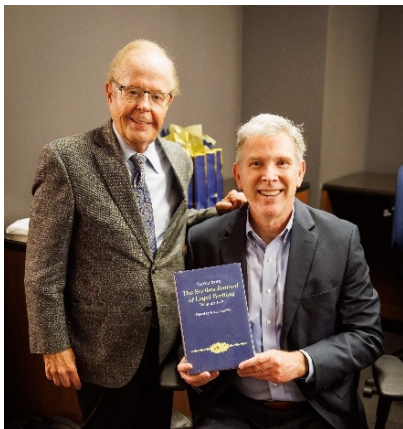
Highlights from Scribes' 75th-Anniversary Celebration (continued)



Highlights from Scribes' 75th-Anniversary Celebration (continued)



Highlights from Scribes' 75th-Anniversary Celebration (continued)



Scribes board of directors: (seated, left to right) Emily Janoski-Haehlen, Mark Cooney, Michele M. Jochner, Joseph Kimble, Darby Dickerson; (standing, left to right) Hon. Gina Benavides, Ivy Grey, John Snow, Mac R. McCoy, Hon. Kem Thompson Frost, Brooke J. Bowman

Becoming Skilled Skeptics in the Age of AI

At Scribes’ diamond-anniversary celebration in Chicago, we brought together leaders from the judiciary, private practice, ADR, and legal education for “The Future of Legal Writing: Balancing AI and Human Judgment.”

The conversation went well beyond hallucinated cases. Our panel explored professional judgment, confidentiality, client consent, judicial expectations, billing, law-school education, mentoring, and advocacy, as well as whether AI can ever reproduce the voice, empathy, and creativity of an exceptional legal writer.

One theme connected all the discussion: AI can be a powerful tool, but lawyers remain responsible for the judgment, accuracy, credibility, and craft of their work.

Professor Patrick Barry described the goal well: We need lawyers who are “skilled skeptics”—people who understand what AI tools can do while remaining capable of questioning and improving what these tools produce. That goal feels particularly fitting for Scribes at 75. Our tools will continue to change, but our commitment to clear, succinct, persuasive, and responsible legal writing will not.



Participants in “The Future of Legal Writing: Balancing AI and Human Judgment”: (left to right) Professor Kirsten K. Davis (moderator), Kelly Turner, Hon. Rena Van Tine, Todd C. Toral, Gretchen H. Sperry, and Professor Patrick Barry

Past President Reflects on Scribes at 75

As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of our organization, we reflect on the remarkable leaders whose vision, dedication, and service have shaped who we are today. Many of these leaders played important roles in our history, and we're deeply grateful for their contributions. To help commemorate this milestone and to honor our past, we have collected the reflections of past Scribes presidents and have been sharing their perspectives on our organization's journey throughout this anniversary year. In this special 75th-anniversary edition of *The Scrivener*, we spotlight the reflections of another past president.

Gary D. Spivey

Scribes President, 1999–2001



At the suggestion of former president Sidney Bernstein (1971–1972), the Scribes board in 2001 began planning to observe the 50th anniversary of Scribes at the 2003 annual meeting in San Francisco. (We chose 2003 as the

anniversary year since it was 50 years after the 1953 organizational meeting, though Scribes dates back to 1951.)

An enthusiastic supporter of the anniversary-observance idea was former president H. Sol

Clark (1979–1980), author of “The History of Scribes” (1980). Judge Clark recalled that former president James J. Brown (1974–1975) had celebrated the 25th anniversary of Scribes in his “A Quarter Century of Concern over Legal Writing: A History of Scribes, the American Society of Writers on Legal Subjects” (1979). In that history, Professor Brown lauded Scribes’ accomplishments during its first 25 years but presciently warned that “the future presents an even greater challenge.”

How Scribes responded to challenges in its second quarter century is described in “Scribes After More Than 50 Years—a History” (2008–2009) by former president Norman Otto Stockmeyer (2005–2007) and former executive director Thomas M. Steele (1988–1997).

Professors Stockmeyer and Steele reported that “the path was filled with a mixture of successes, missteps, and even failures” but Scribes continued to advance its central goal “to foster a clear, succinct, and forceful style in legal writing,” most notably through the introduction in 1990 of *The Scribes Journal of Legal Writing*. They noted, “The next 50 years will doubtless bring more changes as Scribes continues to explore ways to promote and pay tribute to excellence in legal writing.”

The fact that the current Scribes board launched the 75th-anniversary commemoration with a program on the effects of artificial intelligence technology on legal writing shows that Scribes remains prepared to deal with whatever challenges the future holds. Thank you for keeping Scribes engaged and relevant as it enters its next quarter century.

For the Chocolate-Loving Legal Writer . . . a Tasty CLE Opportunity

On October 28, National Chocolate Day, Scribes will offer a unique CLE program that blends substance with sensory experience. In “Crafted to Persuade: What Great Chocolate Reveals About Great Legal Writing,” we will pair a guided craft-chocolate tasting experience with practical legal-writing pointers.

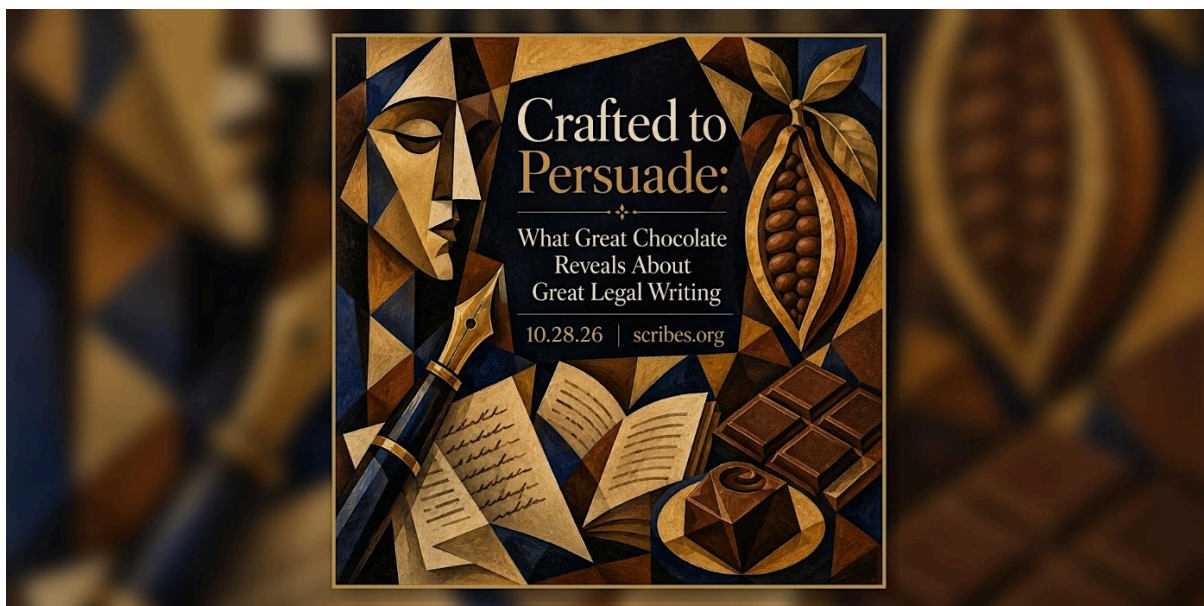
Using a multisensory format, the program will explore what great craft chocolate can teach lawyers about the craft of great legal writing. The panel will examine core principles of persuasive writing, including how to capture and hold a reader’s attention, the value of plain English and a conversational tone, the persuasive force of effective design, the role of organization in guiding a reader through complex material, and the importance of candor in presenting and reframing facts.

Designed for lawyers, judges, law professors, law students, and other legal professionals, the program will connect sensory perception, reader expectation, and rhetorical judgment in a fresh but serious way. The session will

highlight practical techniques participants can use in briefs, motions, opinions, client communications, and other legal documents. The program will conclude with an audience Q&A, giving attendees an opportunity to further explore how thoughtful choices in language, structure, and presentation can strengthen credibility and persuasion on the page.

Scribes is presenting the program in cooperation with [The Chocolate Dispensary](#). Program attendees who want to participate in the chocolate tasting must purchase a chocolate tasting box (a vegan option is available) when registering. The Chocolate Dispensary will mail the box of chocolate in time for the event. We will also give registered attendees a downloadable chocolate-tasting grid before the event. (Please note that we cannot issue a refund for the chocolate after we place an order with the vendor.) Additional details and answers to FAQs are available on the [event site](#).

Registration is open, and we hope you'll join us!



Now Available

The book cover is dark blue with a textured background. At the top, a red banner with white text reads 'Now Available'. Below the banner, the title 'Gems from The Scribes Journal of Legal Writing' is written in a serif font, with 'The Scribes Journal of Legal Writing' in a larger, bold font. Below the title, 'Volumes 1-20' is written in a smaller font. At the bottom, 'Edited by Joseph Kimble' is written. A yellow oval with the letters 'SJLW' is centered at the bottom.

Gems from
*The Scribes Journal
of Legal Writing*
Volumes 1-20

Edited by Joseph Kimble

SJLW

Edited by the renowned Joseph Kimble, *Gems from The Scribes Journal of Legal Writing: Volumes 1-20* points the way to achieving a clear, succinct, and persuasive style of legal writing. Readers will find gems of practical guidance from recognized masters of the craft, who share insights that illuminate both skills and process. Legal-writing buffs will delight in the tributes to plain language and relish the journeys into the legal lexicon by writers who educate, entertain, and inspire.

Both those who are new to the legal profession and those who are more seasoned members are sure to find plenty to treasure in *Gems from The Scribes Journal of Legal Writing: Volumes 1-20*.

[Look inside the book](#) to see the gems it contains.

Use the QR code to purchase your copy today!



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