

Summer 2026

The Scrivener

A newsletter from Scribes—The American Society of Legal Writers



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Scribes

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Submissions

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

At Scribes' 75th Anniversary Celebration, Legal Writing Meets the AI Moment

Scribes—The American Society of Legal Writers will mark its 75th anniversary by examining the future of legal writing. On Friday, July 31, 2026, Scribes will convene a 90-minute CLE program in Chicago titled “The Future of Legal Writing: Balancing AI and Human Judgment.” The program will be held at the University of Illinois Chicago School of Law’s Goldberg Courtroom, 300 South State Street, from 3:00 to 5:30 p.m.; the CLE panel will run from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. and will be followed by a reception.

Generative AI has evolved quickly from a curiosity to a work tool and to systems that can plan, draft, revise, summarize, check, and recommend. AI can help lawyers test structure, identify gaps, accelerate research, and produce a draft when the blank page refuses to cooperate. But the profession’s core duties have not been altered. Lawyers still owe clients competence, candor, supervision, confidentiality, and judgment. Those aspects cannot be outsourced to a chatbot.

The panel will explore myriad relevant questions: What happens to judicial writing when judges and law clerks have access to AI tools? Are courts beginning to read attorney submissions with greater skepticism? How should appellate advocates preserve voice, creativity, and credibility when technology can produce plausible but unreliable prose at remarkable speed?

At Scribes' 75th Anniversary Celebration (continued)

What policies, training models, and proprietary tools are law firms adopting to ensure that newer lawyers learn the fundamentals rather than simply learn the shortcuts? And what do clients expect from outside counsel in terms of disclosure, guardrails, cost, and accountability?

The panel's design reflects the fact that legal writing is an ecosystem. A judicial opinion, an appellate brief, a client memorandum, a motion, a contract provision, and a student assignment carry different audiences, constraints, risks, and norms. Yet all depend on the same foundation: a writer who understands the law, the facts, the purpose, the audience, and the consequences of being wrong.

Professor **Kirsten K. Davis** of Stetson University College of Law, a recognized expert in AI, legal education, and the legal profession, will moderate the panel, whose members come from the legal academy, appellate practice, litigation, corporate legal departments, alternative dispute resolution, and the judiciary. Specifically, participants will include Professor **Patrick Barry**, director of digital academic initiatives at the University of Michigan Law School; **Gretchen H. Sperry**, appellate chair at Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani; **Todd C. Toral**, cochair of Jenner & Block's financial litigation practice; **Kelly Turner**, general counsel and vice president of the American Arbitration Association; and the Honorable **Rena Van Tine** of the Illinois Appellate Court.

The program will close with a forward-looking discussion of agentic AI and emerging systems. That topic matters because the profession is

moving beyond tools that merely respond to a prompt. Newer systems increasingly appear capable of assessing assigned goals, selecting intermediate steps, and interacting with other tools. For legal writing, the question will not be whether AI can generate a better sentence but whether the lawyer can verify, explain, supervise, and stand behind the work product that emerges from a more complex technological chain.

For 75 years, Scribes has championed clear, precise, ethical legal writing. The AI era does not make that mission obsolete; instead, the AI era makes this mission urgent. The Scribes mission statement explains the following:

Scribes champions excellence in legal writing. Since 1951, we have promoted clear, succinct, and persuasive legal style and argument. We advance these goals through our publications, awards, outreach, and educational programs. As legal writing continues to evolve, we embrace innovation guided by human judgment and accountability.

Scribes is grateful that Schiller DuCanto & Fleck LLP is the organization's 75th-anniversary sponsor and that the American Arbitration Association, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, is a program sponsor.

We hope you will join us for this diamond anniversary celebration and spread the word.

Registration is now open: [Scribes 75th Anniversary CLE Tickets, Friday, July 31 • 3 PM – 5:30 PM | Eventbrite](#)

At Scribes' 75th Anniversary Celebration (continued)


SCRIBES

 The American Society of
Legal Writers

www.scribes.org

THE FUTURE OF LEGAL WRITING: BALANCING AI AND HUMAN JUDGMENT

Join Us for Our Diamond Anniversary!

CLE EVENT DETAILS

FRIDAY, JULY 31, 2026
EVENT BEGINS: 3:00–3:30 P.M. CENTRAL | CLE PROGRAM: 3:30–5:00 P.M. CENTRAL
RECEPTION: 5:00–5:30 P.M. CENTRAL
UIC LAW | GOLDBERG COURTROOM
300 S. STATE STREET, CHICAGO

Approved for 1.5 hours of Illinois MCLE credit, including 1.0 hour of Professional Responsibility - Legal Ethics credit; Texas credit pending.



OPENING REMARKS / 75TH ANNIVERSARY HISTORY OF SCRIBES:
MICHELE M. JOCHNER

Scribes President and Partner with Schiller DuCanto & Fleck LLP

Our Panelists



MODERATOR:
PROFESSOR
KIRSTEN K. DAVIS

*Stetson University College of Law |
Expert, AI & Legal Education*



PROFESSOR PATRICK BARRY

*Clinical Assistant Professor of Law and
Director of Digital Academic Initiatives,
University of Michigan Law School*



GRETCHEN H. SPERRY

*Appellate Practice Co-Chair,
Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani*



TODD C. TORAL

*Co-Chair, Financial Litigation
Practice, Jenner & Block*



KELLY TURNER

*Associate General Counsel,
American Arbitration Association*



HON. RENA M. VAN TINE

*Justice, Illinois Appellate Court,
First District*

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Legal Research as a Precursor to Effective Legal Writing

Justin Iverson, Scribes Board Member / Research Librarian and Assistant Professor, Boyd School of Law at University of Nevada, Las Vegas



Mark Twain is credited with the advice to “write what you know.” As legal writers, however, we often know little to nothing about matters we must address in writing. No lawyer can master all legal subjects

and their nuances. Even within a single specialty, niche issues pop up that defy standard expertise. A family law attorney, for example, might breeze through a standard custody motion but freeze when faced with a complex dispute over frozen embryos. To develop a strategy that best addresses the client’s needs, that attorney will first need to become conversant in the language of embryo disputes. And doing so will require research.

Legal research and legal writing are deeply intertwined; the writing process requires swapping between gathering knowledge (research) and deploying it effectively for a given purpose (writing). If your research is superficial, your writing will inevitably be shaky, unpersuasive, and structurally unsound. Conversely, when your research is exhaustive, your writing becomes confident, authoritative, and logical. Developing a clear view of the legal landscape—the governing statutes, binding

precedents, and persuasive authorities—allows you to guide the reader to an unavoidable conclusion in line with the best interests of your client. Thus, deep research not only changes what you write but how you write.

When you only understand a legal doctrine on the surface, your writing tends to hide behind dense blocks of legalese and lengthy, passive string cites. However, your goal as a legal writer is not to merely quote the law but to explain it authoritatively and persuasively. To do so, you must present coherent arguments, anticipate and address counterarguments, and provide convincing evidence in support of your position. That evidence is gathered from the factual records and from your legal research efforts.

Unfortunately, though legal research is crucial at the outset of a new project, many legal writers of every education and experience level struggle to know when to stop researching. There is no best response to this natural phenomenon, but a good rule of thumb is to research enough to outline your arguments and those of your opponent. Determine what major authorities support each position and whether the law is clear in one direction or another. By this point, you should have enough knowledge of the subject matter to write from a place of confidence. You’ll likely return to research throughout the project, and that’s a good process to embrace. However, at some point, you simply must write.

Scribes members are invited to submit short, pithy articles (~400 words) on legal-writing topics for potential publication in The Scrivener. Send submissions to scribeslegalwriters@gmail.com. Microsoft Word files are preferred.

Gems from The Scribes Journal of Legal Writing: Volumes 1–20

Now Available

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!



Congratulations to the 2026 National Order of Scribes Inductees



The National Order of Scribes is an honorary organization that recognizes graduating law students who excel in legal writing. Each year, any law school that's a current

institutional member of Scribes may nominate five students or up to 3 percent of its graduating class for the academic year, whichever is larger, to be inducted into the National Order of Scribes. Congratulations to this year's inductees!

Atlanta's John Marshall Law School

- Kendice Armstrong
- Jacob B. Moskowitz
- David H. Smith

California Western School of Law

- Aidan Winter
- Sarah Yee

Mercer University School of Law

- Intisar Choudhury
- Devin Joiner
- Talia Levine
- Seth Lewis
- Margaret Shehane

South Texas College of Law Houston

- Erica Lillian Gillespie
- Richard Neal Green III
- Brenton Kim
- Tevin J. Long
- Rhianna Wood

Southwestern Law School

- Gisell Del Carmen
- Jeremy Davison
- Olivia Dilas
- Nicole Milner
- Kristina Ramirez
- Andrew Ramos

Stetson University College of Law

- Dana Dallal
- Patricia Bishop Hamlin
- Megan Leiter
- Morgan Lewis

- Cheyanne Sharp
- Brooke Sheaf

Syracuse University College of Law

- Julia Copperwheat
- Dannah Henderson
- Bess Murad
- Claire E. Reynolds-Peterson
- Matthew Reimann

Texas A&M University School of Law

- Logan Scott Allen
- Austin Matthew Biehle
- Grace Fairchild Chapman
- Reagan Moser
- Claire Stagner

Texas Tech University School of Law

- Sophia E. Jenkins
- Hailey M. Kuykendall
- Hailey N. Lowrey
- Clarissa A. Valenciano

University of Houston Law Center

- Gianna Airola
- Catherine Cleary
- Stephanie Martinez
- Sophie McNamara
- Nicholas Mszar
- Romina Castaneda
- Wyley Sharp
- Alexandra Abu-Speitan

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, William S. Boyd School of Law

- Caren Abourjely
- Victoria Callier
- Harrison Epstein
- Blanca Joseline Peña Nevarez
- Elizabeth Swenson

University of Oklahoma

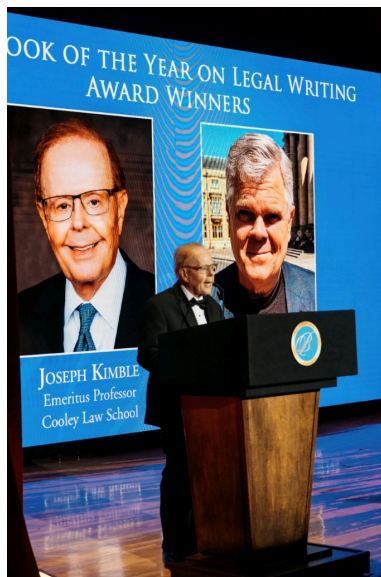
- Grace Griggs
- Aryn Kerr
- Lindsay M. Mayes
- Mahak H. Merchant
- Baylee M. Ogle

University of Richmond School of Law

- Madison Louise Bjork
- Isabel Mury Carvalho
- Caleb Michael Jennings
- Caroline Alden McBride
- Laurel Michaela Wilkerson

Member Highlights

In the Limelight



Joseph Kimble, a Cooley Law School professor emeritus and longtime Scribes board member, received the 2026 Burton Award for Book of the Year on Legal Writing for *Essentials for Drafting Clear Legal Rules*, which he

coauthored with Bryan A. Garner, a distinguished research professor at the Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law.

The awards ceremony was held at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, on June 1. The

occasion marked the third time that Kimble has received a prestigious Burton Award. He previously won Burton Awards for Reform in Law in 2007 and 2011 for his work in helping to completely redraft the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and the Federal Rules of Evidence.

The Burton Award for Book of the Year on Legal Writing recognizes outstanding contributions to the clarity, precision, and effectiveness of legal communication. *Essentials for Drafting Clear Legal Rules*, in the words of the presenter, “exemplifies the highest standards of legal writing and provides invaluable guidance to practitioners, judges, and scholars alike. This book has made a lasting impact on the way legal rules are crafted, promoting clarity, consistency, and accessibility across the profession. The authors’ work has helped shape modern legal drafting.”



On the Move



Susan Hanley Duncan recently became the executive director of the Kentucky Bar Foundation and the Kentucky Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts Fund.

Duncan has more than 30 years of leadership experience. Most recently, she was the dean of the University of Mississippi School of Law; she was the first female to work in that position in a permanent capacity. Additionally, she served as the president of Scribes from 2020 to 2022.

Member Highlights (continued)

Recently Published



The Honorable **John G. Browning**, Distinguished Jurist in Residence at the Thomas Goode Jones School of Law and a past president of Scribes, recently authored two articles: “Stealing Hearts

and Data: Legal Ramifications and Data Privacy Risks of AI Companions,” *The North Carolina Journal of Law and Technology*, volume 27, issue 3, and “Are You Your Expert’s Keeper? Assessing the Impact of Generative AI and Expert Testimony,” *Nova Law Review*, volume 50.



John G. Snow, the director of legal and trial training at the Los Angeles City Attorney’s Office and a Scribes board member, authored the book [Rules to Speak By: Present and Persuade like the Country’s Best](#)

[Lawyers](#). The book draws on cognitive psychology and the recommendations of top lawyers to present best practices on how to speak persuasively. The book also provides examples from well-known cases and lawyers.



At the Podium

The Honorable **John G. Browning**, Distinguished Jurist in Residence at Thomas Goode Jones School of Law, spoke on the legal risks of AI “companions” at the University of North Carolina Law School’s data privacy symposium and spoke at the Georgia State University Law School’s annual health law symposium. In April 2026, he shared his insights on AI and the legal profession at Nova Southeastern Law School’s symposium. In May, he discussed AI and legal malpractice risks in a CLE webcast for the State Bar of Texas, spoke on the ethical risks of AI misuse at the annual conference of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces, and spoke at the University of Texas at Austin School of Law’s annual Dawson Conference on Criminal Appeals. In June, he

presented “Forgotten Firsts: The Lives and Legacies of America’s First Black Lawyers” at the U.S. Virgin Islands Bar Association’s Midyear Meeting.



Jillian L. Schumacher, a partner at Daniels & Tredennick—Houston, recently copresented “The Rule 193.6 Surprise: Discovery Requirements and Exclusion” to various professional groups across Texas, including the Houston Bar Association, San Antonio Bar Association, and Dallas Bar Association.

A Word from Scribes' President: Writing Tips and Takeaways

Scribes' president, Michele M. Jochner, recently attended the annual meeting of the U.S. Supreme Court Historical Society, where she connected with top attorneys from across the country and discussed the art of excellent legal writing. Here are a few writing tips and takeaways from those chats:

1. Bad writing can torpedo a winning case. Focus on clarity and organization, and avoid jargon to strengthen arguments and ensure the reader grasps the issue and is persuaded by your proposed solution.
2. First impressions are crucial; immediately establish credibility and rapport by using roadmaps and showing your work with thoughtful analysis of controlling authority.
3. Edit rigorously and proofread on a paper copy of the draft to catch gaps in logic and flaws in structure that can be missed in onscreen viewing. Cut the clutter, and use short and concise sentences written in the active voice to keep the presentation interesting and effective.



Jochner outside of the Supreme Court Building.

4. AI is a tool that can increase efficiency in research and writing, but it must always be balanced against human judgment and accountability.

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.

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Past Presidents Reflect 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 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 will be sharing their perspectives on our organization's journey throughout this anniversary year. In this issue of *The Scrivener*, we spotlight the reflections of two past presidents.

Susan Hanley Duncan

Executive Director of the Kentucky Bar Foundation and the Kentucky Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts Fund



Serving as president of Scribes during the 2020–2022 term was both an honor and a unique challenge.

Like so many organizations, Scribes was navigating the

uncertainty of a global pandemic while remaining committed to its mission of promoting excellence in legal writing. What I remember most is the resilience of our members and leaders. Even when we couldn't gather in person, the dedication to improving legal writing, mentoring new generations of

lawyers, and maintaining meaningful professional connections never wavered.

I'm especially proud of several initiatives that moved forward during that period. Scribes strengthened its educational partnerships; Scribes' collaboration with the American Inns of Court led to the development of the Write to Be Heard series of legal writing courses, helping make practical legal writing instruction more accessible to lawyers across the country. We also supported the publication of *The Scribes Manual for Law Review Editors*, providing a valuable resource for law review editors and students while reinforcing Scribes' long-standing commitment to excellence in legal writing. In addition, we expanded our educational programming through webinars featuring distinguished judges, practitioners, and legal scholars, allowing us to continue serving our members and the profession even when in-person programs were limited.

More broadly, I'm proud that Scribes continued to move forward during a time when standing still would have been understandable. The willingness of our board and members to adapt, embrace new ways of collaborating, and keep our programs and publications strong demonstrated the organization's remarkable character.

Over the years, I've seen Scribes continue to broaden its reach while remaining true to its founding purpose. Legal writing has become increasingly recognized as an essential professional skill rather than simply a technical

Past Presidents Reflect on Scribes at 75 (continued)

one. As the practice of law has evolved with changing technology, new forms of communication, and expanding audiences, Scribes has continued to champion what matters most: clarity, precision, and effective advocacy.

The organization's enduring success rests on a simple but powerful principle: Good legal writing matters. Every generation of Scribes leaders has understood that clear writing promotes better advocacy, better judicial decision-making, and greater public confidence in the legal system. Equally important has been the organization's commitment to bringing together judges, practitioners, professors, and students who share a passion for excellence and a willingness to learn from one another.

As Scribes looks toward its next 75 years, I see tremendous opportunity. Evolving technology and changing communication platforms will undoubtedly transform how lawyers research, write, and communicate. Yet these advances only reinforce the importance of the values Scribes has always championed. Technology can enhance the writing process, but it can't replace thoughtful analysis and clear expression. Scribes is uniquely positioned to help the legal profession embrace innovation while preserving the timeless principles of effective legal writing.

It was a privilege to serve as president of Scribes. I'm grateful to have led an organization whose influence extends far beyond its membership by elevating the quality of legal writing and, in doing so, strengthening the administration of

justice. As Scribes celebrates its 75th anniversary, I look forward to seeing the organization continue to inspire lawyers, judges, scholars, and students for generations to come.

Stuart H. Shiffman

Of Counsel at Feldman Wasser, Springfield, Illinois



I became a member of Scribes sometime in the late 1970s. My membership and service to the organization is the result of one man—Roy Mersky—who more than anyone else

nurtured and grew this organization. He encouraged every attorney he met to become a member. He did so by promoting the importance of legal writing. At Scribes' inception, membership required having published a document in a legal publication. I once remarked to Roy that he seemed to have a broad definition of legal publication. He simply smiled and went about recruiting. At every American Bar Association meeting I attended with Roy, he always encouraged attendees to join Scribes.

In serving the organization in many capacities, I was able to work with and meet many outstanding members of the profession. I'm reluctant to list names because I'll forget more contributors than I can recall. But Bryan Garner

Past Presidents Reflect on Scribes at 75 (continued)

was instrumental in raising Scribes' footprint in the legal community through his work in securing Supreme Court justices to attend some of our functions. When I was president, we awarded Justice Antonin Scalia a lifetime achievement award and held a well-attended function at the Harvard Club in New York as part of the American Bar Association's Annual Conference.

Scribes has been a great part of my legal career. Even after more than 50 years of legal service, I

use the writing suggestions I acquired from articles and seminars presented by the organization. Scribes' contributions to legal writing are evident in the fact that even as technology affects legal writing in many new ways, both beneficial and detrimental, the organization offers the legal community important insights into legal writing.

It's an honor to have served the organization, and I value the friendships made during nearly 50 years of membership.

