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Fall 2023



### President’s Message

by Laura Ashbrook

Greetings !!!

Heading into this holiday season, I hope these words find you all healthy, safe and “reasonably” happy. ☺

By “most” accounts, the ACRA annual convention in Prescott was a success! Our evaluation summaries

reflected satisfaction ratings - but for one - all 4’s and above, which “ain’t too bad”, as far as evaluation summaries go, ain’t too bad at all!

We had TWELVE students present for the weekend, and from my personal perspective, that was the absolute BEST part of it all. From my memory, anyway, that is the MOST students we’ve had in attendance at a convention in a very long time. I was told personally by many of them they felt welcomed, encouraged and supported, and that a convention experience such as that goes a LONG way towards helping them stay motivated as they trudge away on that CRA-ZEEE journey to becoming a working reporter.

Secondly...AND...importantly - once again, in my opinion - ACRA membership present at the annual business meeting Saturday voted overwhelmingly to accept voice writers as full-fledged members of ACRA going forward. I feel constrained to say regardless of your opinion on this method of reporting, in these current times of VERY REAL and EXPANDING threats of digital recording, a voice writer is a HUMAN BEING in a courtroom, hearing or deposition, and I am of the firm opinion that that should carry the day in overcoming past objections to offering them a full voting membership in our state association. And that’s all I’ll say about that!

I’d also like to thank each and every one of you who responded to the ACRA survey/poll that went out last month seeking a preference vote for a 2024 Arizona-only convention versus a 2024 multi-state convention scheduled for September 2024 in Breckenridge, Colorado. Your ACRA board felt it was important to get a “feel” for membership preference prior to making a decision in this regard.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>President’s Message</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Annual Convention Recap</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>DSA Award</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>NCRA Alerts ACRA of Shortcomings &amp; Dangers of Using AI</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Brief Corner</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Wild West Save the Date</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Opt-out of Zoom’s AI</b>	<b>13</b>

*President’s Message continued on Page 2...*

*...President's Message continued from Page 1*

My feelings/opinions on the multi-state convention model every other year, for anyone who has read my past president messages/articles, I'm fairly confident is no mystery. So..... it will come as no surprise that I'm very excited to report that the vote, although by a slim margin, resulted in favor of Arizona's involvement in a multi-state convention for Fall 2024 in Breckenridge, Wild Wild West II.

The states involved AND committed - contract signed - are Colorado, Arizona, Utah, Nevada and Montana. I am fortunate to be a member of this planning committee. They are a smart, dedicated, talented, energetic group of folks, and all of us are ONE HUNDRED percent committed to hitting this one "out of the park." So thank you again for your participation in that poll.

One of my primary goals for 2024 is to revive ACRA committees. One of the MANY fallouts of Covid was failing membership involvement on ACRA committees; as a matter of fact, committees altogether. There are so many opportunities to be involved in your state association by serving on a committee such as mentorship, legislation, digital recording, fundraising, bench and bar, to name a few. As board committee chairs are assigned, it is my hope they will be reaching out to members to join a committee. An association works SO MUCH BETTER when more members are involved. So.....PLEASE.....as a board member contacts you regarding committee involvement, dig deep and JUST SAY YES.

I'd like to close by reiterating what I mentioned in my last message: That the state of court reporting is STRONG. As reflected in just our individual state experience of having twelve students present at a convention is reflective of what is happening all across the country. The interest in reporting is on an upswing nationally. I receive e-mails almost weekly from students seeking information about court reporting programs and subsequently, encouragement once they're enrolled in one.

With digital recording wreaking havoc all across the country, this renewed interest in reporting is hopeful and encouraging. BUT..... please - please do not underestimate this real threat of digital. NCRA is VERY actively fighting this threat on a state-by-state basis and has a multitude of resources upon which states may draw, but ACRA battles on our state front also.

If there was EVER a time to step up your involvement with your association, NOW is that time.

Thanks for listening. Peace. Laura



ARIZONA COURT REPORTERS ASSOCIATION  
2023 ANNUAL CONVENTION



PRESCOTT, ARIZONA



GREAT  
SPEAKERS



*Congratulations,*

**KIM PORTIK**

Recipient of the  
2023 Distinguished Service Award



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## 2023 DSA PRESENTATION

It is my pleasure as the committee chair for the Distinguished Service Award this year to make a few brief comments without giving away who the recipient is yet. But today ACRA will present it's 34th DSA – 34.

The DSA is the highest award our association can bestow upon a person who has generously given their time, their knowledge, and their many efforts to our profession.

It is someone who always seems to go the extra mile to give back to the reporting profession, whether through board service, legislative activities, education, committee work, pro bono service, or someone who simply puts himself or herself out there in the promotion of our profession: Court reporting.

I am sure there have been instances in the past where an individual has been nominated by more than one person, and that did happen this year. More than one person nominated this year's recipient.

In fact, I hope I'm not breaking any rules by telling you that the person who is receiving the award this year was nominated by more than 20 people.

I myself have had the privilege of working with this person, and I have always admired their work ethic, their wealth of knowledge, their devotion to the court reporting field, and their willingness to always help others.

I am thrilled that this person today will receive a small token of appreciation for their many years of service.

I will now turn time over to Mary Onuschak who is going to introduce this year's recipient for the Distinguished Service Award.

I am so happy to be here with all of you to present the Distinguished Service Award to this year's recipient.

This recipient is not only an Arizona Certified Court Reporter, but also a certified realtime reporter. And a certified merit reporter. And a certified realtime captioner. And a certified legal video specialist. That's pretty impressive. But this really does not compare to what this recipient's service to the court reporting community has been.

There is no doubt that many of us can attest to her willingness to drop whatever may be occurring in her life to help us out of a bind or if we have a question.

She has given herself entirely toward the ACRA organization for many years as board member and executive director. Her commitment to excellence and her tireless work ethic has been an inspiration to all of us.

Her selfless service, leadership, and dedication to our profession has made our court reporting community a better one.

We would like to recognize and thank her by presenting the distinguished service award to Kim Portik.

[CLICK HERE TO READ KIM'S SPEECH](#)



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# RAFFLE TIME!!





TO ALL OUR SPONSORS AND VENDORS

*Thank  
you!*

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# NCRA ALERTS ACRA OF SHORTCOMINGS & DANGERS OF USING AI



The National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) would like to urge caution in regard to potential Continuing Legal Education (CLE) opportunities on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in legal proceedings. We would like to share some validated concerns we have regarding the issue that might protect our colleagues in the legal profession, especially attorneys.

NCRA is the professional association for stenographic court reporters who make the official record in legal proceedings. NCRA has been the certifying experts in the record-making business for almost a century, and our members take great pride in capturing the record for attorneys. The speed and accuracy of capturing the record by our members are unmatched. Our members understand that the transcript you rely on for your important work needs to be done in an unbiased and exact manner because every word matters. While we cannot speak to how AI can improve tasks like checking out at a grocery store, ordering food through your phone, or even the research you do for background information for your proceedings, we can speak about the dangers of relying on it for capturing the record. That is our expertise.

Understanding that some attorneys may be curious about vendors offering their products as the next greatest thing, we would like to offer some words of caution when it comes to the dangers of AI in legal proceedings. The stenographic court reporter captures what was actually said, gestures, and even puts in correct punctuation to testimony, which brings in the witness's actual meaning to their words. That cannot be said for AI speech recognition.

Below are just some bullet points of the known shortcomings and dangers of using AI speech recognition in legal proceedings:

- **Bias and Fairness:** AI systems can inherit biases present in the data on which they are trained. In legal contexts, this can lead to biased decisions, unfairly impacting certain groups or individuals.
- **Lack of Accountability:** When AI systems make mistakes or biased decisions, it can be challenging to assign accountability. This can lead to legal and ethical dilemmas regarding who is responsible for AI-driven errors. Also, there is no human to track the information back to for ultimate accountability or clarification.
- **Explainability:** How was an AI/ASR built? There are many ways it can be accomplished, and without getting too technical here, it is important that professionals are knowledgeable about the design. Depending on the design, a model can be less or more accurate, less, or more secure, and the data used to build it can be safe or unsafe. Without an explanation of the build, it is a huge risk to the results, both in accuracy of transcriptions, security of information, and even security of information used to build the engine.
- **Privacy Concerns:** AI may involve the processing of sensitive and private information, raising concerns about data security and the potential for misuse or breaches of confidentiality.
- **Inaccuracies and Reliability:** AI systems are fallible and can produce inaccurate results. In legal proceedings, errors can have significant consequences, affecting verdicts, sentences, or other legal outcomes affecting the life and liberties of people.
- **Transparency and Interpretability:** Many AI algorithms are complex and not easily interpretable. This lack of transparency can make it difficult for lawyers, judges, and other stakeholders to understand and challenge AI-generated recommendations or decisions.

*NCRA Alerts ACRA article continued on Page 8...*



*NCRA Alerts ACRA article continued from Page 7...*

- **Legal Challenges:** The legal system may not be adequately prepared to handle disputes or challenges related to AI evidence, standards, and methodologies, leading to legal uncertainty.
- **Ethical Concerns:** The use of AI in legal proceedings raises ethical questions about the role of human judgment, fairness, and the potential for dehumanizing the legal process.
- **Overreliance:** There is a risk that legal professionals may become overly reliant on AI tools, potentially diminishing their critical thinking and decision-making skills.
- **Costs and Access:** Developing and implementing AI systems in the legal field can be expensive, potentially creating disparities in access to justice based on the financial resources available to different parties and populations.
- **Unintended Consequences:** The use of AI can have unintended consequences, such as creating new legal issues or exacerbating existing ones.
- **Security Risks:** AI systems can be vulnerable to hacking or manipulation, which could compromise the integrity of legal proceedings.
- **Traceability Concerns:** If a transcript is processed by an AI/ASR system today, three years from now an appeal process may question the accuracy of that transcript. It is important for the appeals court to confirm accuracy on the when, where, and what AI/ASR engine was used and who is responsible for certifying the accuracy of the AI output.

- **Ethical Assurance:** Having a stenographic court reporter capturing the record in legal proceedings is not only the gold standard for ensuring you have an accurate, timely, and professional transcript prepared but also that the record being created is watermarked with stenographic notes to preserve the integrity, security, and chain of custody of it as well.

Ultimately, ethical considerations and the protection of individual rights and privacy should be at the forefront when even considering AI in legal proceedings. An attorney's job is hard enough without these additional concerns about the record-making process. For further proof of the dangers of AI, simply look to the news where there are daily examples of dangerous and fake AI-generated stories, songs, and media reports.

The National Court Reporters Association would like to be a resource to you and your colleagues on how we can help you provide the best record possible for your clients. With all the noise and flash around AI, we believe it is our job to help you do your job.

Responsibility in making the record cannot be shifted to AI or an algorithm. It should be placed with responsible individuals, certified stenographers. While AI might be acceptable in some areas of society, the high stakes, accuracy, and accountability of legal proceedings should be above reproach. We offer this information as a fact check to those offering a cure-all solution (in the form of CLEs or webinars) of AI for your proceedings.

Sincerely,

**Kristin M. Anderson, M.A., RPR, FCRR**

*2023-2024 NCRA President*



# BRIEF CORNER



STENO	TRANSLATION
STOEPLS	seems to me
NUFRGS	no further questions
PAEPBN	passenger
KAUPGS	calls for speculation
RURD	raise your right hand
THAOERB	anesthesia



TO ALL VOICE WRITERS,  
Welcome to ACRA!



On September 16, 2023, members of the Arizona Court Reporters Association voted to change the bylaws to include voice writers in the association.



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## SAVE THE DATE

September 19th through 22nd, 2024

Wild West Court Reporter & Captioner Convention

THE REPEAT!

The Great States of **COLORADO, ARIZONA, MONTANA, NEVADA and UTAH** cordially invite you to Breckenridge, Colorado, to attend the Second Wild West Roundup, hosted by the beautiful **Beaver Run Resort** in **Breckenridge, Colorado!**

Be sure to check Breckenridge out! Breckenridge is an **amazingly beautiful town** approximately 95 miles from Denver. The fall splendor of this little town is as good as any **"Fall Experience"** can get. Hiking is abundant, along with bike trails, fly fishing, golf, horseback riding, ghost tours, and **Awesome Fall Festivals**, certainly no shortage of activities available to your family or friends while you are getting those pesky CEUs!

The WW Multi-State Committee is actively working to put together a content agenda that **Rivals None**, social activities designed to encourage **ALL** attendees to feel welcome, and afford everyone the opportunity to mingle and meet new friends from **ALL over the country**, not just the host state of **Colorado and participating states of Arizona, Utah, Nevada and Montana.**

STAY TUNED, as details will be forthcoming to include agenda content, registration cost, family activities, et cetera, allowing plenty of time to put this on your bucket list and make plans to attend!

**Meanwhile . . .**

SAVE THE DATE

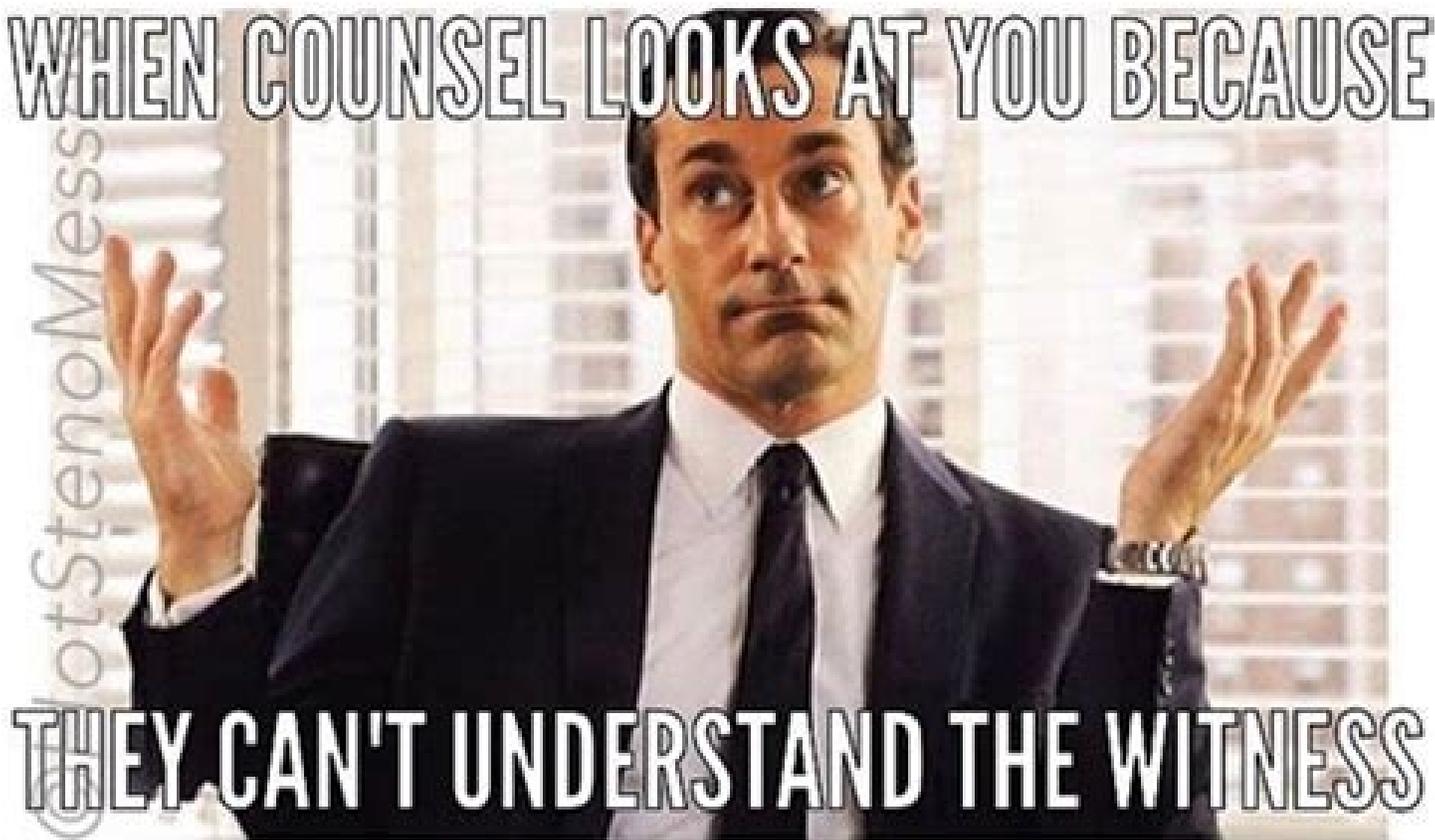
PLAN AHEAD

This is going to be an AWESOME TIME!



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**ATTENTION MEMBERS!**

**REFER A FRIEND TO JOIN ACRA IN 2024**

**GET A \$50 GIFT CARD FOR EVERY REFERRAL**

Only referrals that result in membership will receive a gift card. Please email all referrals to [office@acraonline.org](mailto:office@acraonline.org)

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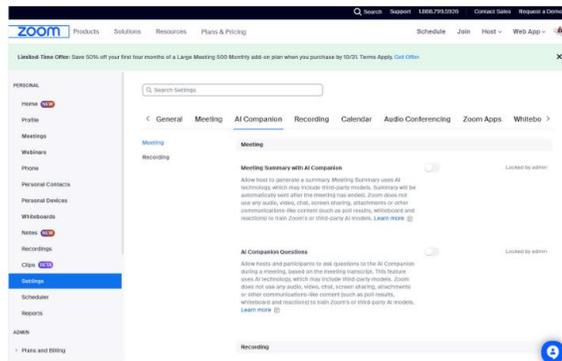
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## WANT TO OPT-OUT OF ZOOM'S AI?



At the moment, Zoom does not provide an option to specifically opt-out of having your calls be used to train its AI models because, according to Zoom, the company isn't using the content of your calls to train its AI tools. 🤔

Check your Zoom settings to ensure that the A.I. feature is disabled.



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