

The Deposition Reporter

DEPOSITION
REPORTERS ASSOCIATION
OF CALIFORNIA

Summer 2024

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**STEPHANIE LESLIE, CSR #12893, RPR, CRR, GCRR,
PRESIDENT OF REGAL COURT REPORTING**

Hello again, Steno Family:

I hope everyone is having a lovely summer and staying cool through the crazy heatwaves we've been experiencing recently. Your DRA board has been hard at work planning some fantastic events for the year, including an upcoming GAP training on Zoom for high-speed students and new reporters to help bridge the gap between school and the working world and, of course, our annual convention which will take place May 2-4, 2025, in Ventura. We just wrapped up our one-day fall seminar in Sacramento last weekend. It was great seeing everyone for some learning as well as networking and lots of fun! Our day started with some helpful financial advice and answers to burning questions from a CPA and financial advisor, and it ended with some critical updates our members need to know regarding some big legislative changes!

One of the highlights of my serving on the board for the past several years has been the opportunity to be kept abreast of all the latest information essential to our industry. Whether you choose to serve in a similar manner or not, you can position yourself to be equally as knowledgeable and well-informed by attending events like these throughout the year. I can assure you that our seminars are invaluable and consistently prove to be a worthwhile investment for members. We each need to be experts at what we do to continue to offer gold-standard service to our clients, and I would argue that continuing education is one of the best ways to do that. You won't regret it!

In addition to annual events that are in the works, your DRA board also continues to keep close tabs on legislative changes that could potentially affect California CSRs as well as finding innovative ways to proactively advocate for our industry. We are continuously suggesting practical solutions to state legislators, attorneys, and judges, and we are pleased to announce that several of our proposals have already been adopted into statutory language to likely be implemented in the coming months. Your support as members and active participants with us is vital to our efforts, so thank you all so much for continuing to renew your membership and tell your fellow colleagues about our DRA! As always, we welcome your suggestions, feedback, and assistance in our efforts in whatever ways you can contribute, big or small. If you would like to know one way you can help, we have a war chest that is in need of additional funds to continue our legislative fights for you. Please consider going to our website (caldra.org) to donate or contact your district rep to find out how you can help!



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DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD WINNERS 2024



Mary Pierce, Past President, Legislative Chair,
CSR 6143

This year's Distinguished Service Award was conferred upon two longtime DRA members at the San Diego convention, Trina Utlely Cox and Evelyn Mah.

The Deposition Reporters Association of California chooses an individual for the Distinguished Service Award (DSA) based on their having "dedicated significant time, effort and talent to advancing the stenographic reporting profession, as well as the goals and philosophies" of our association. Most times, the recipient has been a past member of the board of directors. This year was wonderfully different. In a couple of ways.

For the first time in its history, we presented two awards in a single year. Neither recipient had ever served on the DRA board. And believe me, they've been asked. But these ladies have demonstrated time and again that they could serve in many other ways and make contributions that might have slipped by if they had been otherwise engaged. On a sports team, they might be considered the "sixth" member of the team. The first one you call in from the bench, and someone on whom you come to rely based on previous experience and, frankly, reliability.

Trina Utlely Cox, first and foremost, is a gift to all court reporting students. And not just in California. Everywhere. She is a student mentor extraordinaire, a model by which all other mentors may be measured. Which probably isn't fair to the other mentors. That's just how high Trina sets the bar. Many of her mentees have become licensed court reporters, and at least two or three have won student scholarships. I don't think that is merely coincidence. And along with one of her recent mentees, her efforts helped to correct a glaring failure embedded in the online testing process. Jessica Lobato had encountered serious audio corruption on more than one testing occasion for the CSR, and when she complained she was told that the problem was on her end. After a tenacious and persistent campaign by Trina and Jessica, the online testing vendor finally acknowledged that half of the audio files being used for the CSR exam were indeed corrupted. Trina not only helped Jessica with her correspondence to the CRB, but she wrote a wonderful letter herself to them, urging the CRB to investigate and correct the situation with godspeed. It took a while to get through, but Trina and Jessica played a crucial role in making that happen for the benefit of our profession, those who use our services, and all -

those who hope to take the test themselves one day.

In addition to being a longtime mentor, Trina is at the SoCal student picnic every year. She's there early for setup and usually late for teardown. And don't be surprised if her husband Paul is helping out, too. If there's manual or physical labor involved, if you get Trina, you likely also get Paul. Which is better than a BOGO coupon by a long shot. Paul, a patriotic veteran, even left his tour of the Midway in San Diego Harbor when there was a staging issue back at the convention this spring. Trina and Paul did most of the staging for last year's convention luncheon, including Trina having spent months leading up to the event soliciting antique steno machine donations, cataloguing the history of each, as centerpieces at the luncheon.

Evelyn Mah has been a licensee in California for nearly 50 years, and an agency owner for more than 30 years. A rainmaker businesswoman, she has earned the respect of high-powered attorneys, the best court reporters in the field, and even competitors that own their own agencies. She is known to be tough, smart, honest, resourceful, supportive and generous. I could continue, but why don't you go. If you know her, you must have your own words because I've never met anyone who had something bad to say about Evelyn Mah.

A member for the entirety of DRA's existence, over the years Evelyn has made myriad contributions to the association for the benefit of her colleagues and her profession. She's been a speaker at many seminars, a sponsor at every convention, and an incredibly generous donor. She advocates behind the scenes to clients and non-clients to educate them about digitals, guides them on what questions to ask to ensure you have a licensed court reporter and your rights if you don't. And she encourages the many reporters that work for her to do the same.

While Evelyn is fully capable of standing in the spotlight, she's just as happy – probably happier – staying behind the scenes. Or at the edges, let's say. Because she can get more done for the profession by standing at the crossroads. She sees more. She hears more. She makes things happen standing there.

In fact, Evelyn was instrumental in the first article that I ever had published in the Daily Journal here in California – “Make Sure Your Court Reporter Is Really A Court Reporter.” Maybe you read it! Well, Melissa Buchman, the attorney with whom I wrote the article, is a client of Evelyn's. One day when the rest of her office staff was otherwise engaged, the phone rang. Because no job is beneath Evelyn, she answered the phone. Melissa Buchman was on the line, and while she had the boss, she told the tale that became the backstory of our collaborative article.

Evelyn reached out to me and relayed the story of what was obviously a digital recorder disaster out of a deposition in a very contentious family law matter. She encouraged me to reach out to Ms. Buchman, suggesting that we write an article together. We were both interested, but very busy, so Evelyn penned the first few paragraphs to help us get started. After several weeks of back-and-forth exchanges of content, the article appeared in the Daily Journal in April of 2022 and quickly spread across the nation, shining a bright light on the need for transparency and title protection, as well as the catastrophic pitfalls that may result from using anything other than a certified shorthand reporter to record and transcribe a legal proceeding.

See, Evelyn knows a great opportunity when she sees one. And although she probably could have written the article with Ms. Buchman herself, she suggested I should do it, as the current president of CalDRA. There are many times that Evelyn has tapped someone on the shoulder, encouraged them, and even challenged them to challenge themselves. Instead of doing it herself and taking the credit, Evelyn elevates other people with firm but gentle nudges, bestowing her confidence in you and offering her unfettered support. She'll help in any way she can, while asking for no credit whatsoever. She just wants the association and the profession to be stronger and better and smarter. As she said when she accepted the award, give something back. Give time if you can. If you can't give time, give money.

There are so many ways to give, and we need it all. Because as blessed as we are as an association and a professional community, you can never have too many Trinas or Evelyns.

CalDRA's Convention Highlights



We are so thankful for everyone who attended, donated, and/or sponsored a student. All of our effort would mean nothing without our supportive membership!



This year's convention was a resounding success! Not only did we surpass our original goal of attendees, but we set a record for how many people attended! We hope next year will be as fruitful!



CalDRA's Convention Highlights Continued



WHERE ARE THE GARDENERS?

Andrew Ha, CSR 14537

Drought is no stranger to Californians, and, likewise, the dearth of certified shorthand reporters is no stranger to our industry. To overcome the ongoing winter, two types of seeds were sown through the last couple years: One, organizations like the DRA have been reaching out to prospective students and developing tools for promoting interest in court reporting at a scale unprecedented, and, two, starting in January 2023, the California legislature began to allow voice reporters to take the CSR. I am happy to report that these seeds now flower, heralding the coming of a new era of bounty and health for the court reporting industry. Yet there is one problem: Who is there to tend to this newfound growth?

I took the opportunity to interview my court reporting school's full-time program director, Jocelyn Epperson. She received her CSR license in 1991, but a nerve condition developing in her pinky finger redirected her towards teaching. She taught at Bryan University, Tri-Community, Cerritos College, and Downey Adult School, often concurrently, before eventually becoming a full-time Downey Adult School employee.

At the time of my education between 2019 and 2022, Downey Adult School educated a population of approximately 140 students throughout any given year, and this average held true for at least the 10 years Jocelyn has spent as the full-time program director. As of April of 2024, that number is now approximately 250 students, a 78 percent increase in under two years, and she expects an increase to 290 students for the 2024 Fall trimester. She attributes this dramatic increase in student numbers to a combination of organizational rallying and outreach by the likes of the DRA and the introduction of voice writing to the state.

She said that outreach efforts by these organizations have never been pushed as hard in prior years as they have been

through 2023. But now, for the first time in her career, she will have to turn students away.

"Back then we didn't have that problem," she says, regarding the amount of resources to educate students. "We were able to take pretty much anyone that came in, and it was just [machine writers]." Due to the number of students, she has had to halt enrollment, institute an entrance exam, and take students with the highest scores first. These restrictions have been limited to voice students since the August 2023 orientation, but it may have to include machine students as well within the near future. "The Court reporting field needs these students to become reporters and get out there and start working. However, we only have resources for so many. We just cannot take them all. I would love to."

The crux of the problem is having too few educators. The students need live speakers to give dictation and people to grade tests, provide drill classes, readback classes, punctuation and grammar classes. The school needs full-timers and part-timers alike. I asked her what educating at the school would be like. She said that educating can range from providing classes, day and/or night, giving live dictation, to providing once-a-week lessons on grammar, punctuation, drills, and so on. As of last year, Downey Adult School has gone hybrid, meaning that students are freely able to go in person or take the morning or night remote classes in any combination on a day-to-day basis. This also means that educators can be fully remote as well.

Acquiring teaching credentials through the district and LACOE can be done over a period of about two years, during which you can educate as if you had them. By that deadline, you will need to have your credentials before you can continue teaching. This means that if you have no credentials before you can continue teaching. This means that if you have no intention of teaching for longer than that period, then you do not need to gain those credentials. You can offer your time and expertise to the next generation of students for a period of approximately two years, all without having to commit to a completely new career.

Ideally, we could manifest a sort of revolving door of one-to-two-year educators. I propose we could do this by collecting a pool of potential educators, organized by their seasonal availability, subject matter interest, and perhaps intensity of desire to perform from a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being mild interest and 5 being, "Put me into a classroom right now." Then schools could draw from this pool of candidates until they meet their needs, and the remainder will be reserved for new openings in the subsequent seasons. This way, we can supply a consistent, steady stream of resources over the foreseeable future instead of inundating the system with a deluge of excess before having interest wither on the vine in subsequent years.

From every reporter I've had the grace to speak with, I've heard how court reporting has been good to all of us who've managed to make it through to the other side. I'm less than one year in, and I am already changed, and my family need fear nothing despite the passing of my dad. "A society grows great when old folks plant trees in whose shade they know they shall never sit." Just as my

dad had done in raising me, we now have the opportunity to cultivate the next generation of reporters and keep our industry healthy and strong. If you feel the call, please contact your DRA District Representative. The sapling students await the care of your green thumbs.

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Reporter Spotlight: Sarah Maksim



SARAH K. MAKSIM
CA CSR 14053
Pleasant Hill, California

How long have you been reporting?

I have been working for nine years.

Where did you grow up?

I lived most of my life in Santa Clara, but I've moved to Concord, and now I'm about to buy a house in Oakley!

Tell us about your family.

My fiancé, Alex and I have two dogs, Mazzy and Pepper, three fish, about 200 plants, mostly orchids.

How did you first get involved with DRA?

I was a brand new reporter, and I wanted to know as much as I could about how to be a proper professional. I heard about DRA from Monyeen Black and Toni Pulone and their energy hooked me instantly.

What do you like to do when you're not reporting?

I like to garden, kayak, play videogames, and enjoy time outside with my fur family.

What is the most exotic place you have ever taken a deposition?

If you exclude maximum security prisons, I had a deposition in a Buddhist convent in San Francisco. That was super interesting.

If you could do it all over again, would you choose court reporting as a career?

Without a doubt! Being a freelance reporter has given me so many opportunities to be successful. I truly love what I do, and I look forward to helping new reporters be as successful and happy as I am.

What is one professional accomplishment you'd still like to achieve?

I want to provide realtime to my clients. I'm still not ready, but I'm working towards it.

What's your cocktail order?

I don't drink often, but when I do, I enjoy Cabernet Sauvignon.

Do you still practice on your machine?

I don't practice speed building anymore, but I do edit my dictionary and improve my accuracy some days after work.

What advice would you give to a struggling court reporting student?

There are a few things I would do. I would look for a mentor or ask a firm to coach you for the first couple years of reporting. Schools only teach you how to pass the CSR, but there are many other nuances of the profession that are very important. If you are nervous about jumping into the depo world, many of us are eager to help put you in touch with the right people who care about your progress. Don't be afraid to ask us for help!

Most importantly, constantly remind yourself that even though we are alone most of the time we work, that doesn't mean that you don't have support. There are a plethora of resources available at your fingertips. You are NEVER alone.

If you couldn't be a court reporter anymore, what career would you choose?

Japanese interpreter, gardener, or professional dog whisperer.

If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Italian or Japanese.

What is your favorite guilty pleasure?

Online shopping.....oh, who are we kidding.....shopping in general. I'm a sucker for a good deal!

Why is DRA membership important to you?

There's no doubt in my mind that the connections I make through DRA are the most important. I have made life-long friends through this organization, and although I've only been reporting for a little under a decade, I have seen so much growth in my abilities. I owe it to DRA and all the members for being there and listening and encouraging me towards excellence. I can only strive to pay it forward.

New Members

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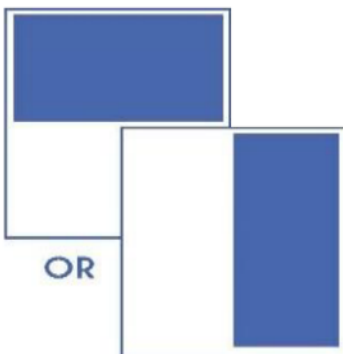
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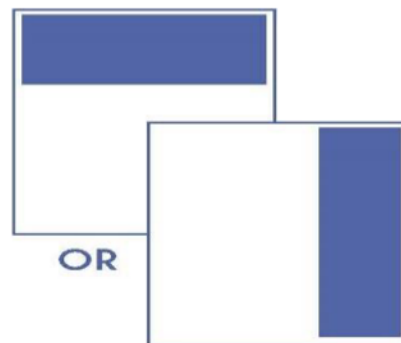
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