Scribblings from the President
By Scribes President Justice Michael B. Hyman

Members of Scribes share a passion for the mechanics and magic of good legal writing. Scribes supports this passion in many ways:

- Our publications, The Journal of Legal Writing and The Scrivener;
- Our Scribes Tips, posts on writing, grammar, research, and internet research dispatched to members via email once or twice a week;
- Our annual meeting and CLE presentations, for 2018, in Chicago, April 13, at The John Marshall School of Law;
- Our committees, Book Award, Brief-Writing Award, CLE/Annual Meeting, Law-Review Award, Nominating Lifetime-Achievement Award, Membership and Outreach, Nominating, Scribes Journal, The Scrivener, Strategic Planning, and Website; and
- Our Student Society, a relatively new project to introduce good legal writing to law students.

My sole aim in this column is for you, our valued members, to volunteer to get involved in Scribes and connect with other legal professionals, who like you, have a fondness for clear, engaging, effective, and coherent legal writing.

It is easy to make your membership more meaningful. To take advantage of all Scribes has to offer, simply contact our Executive Director, Philip Johnson, at scribeslegalwriters@gmail.com.

Besides inviting you to get involved, I want to leave you with practical, old-fashioned advice on writing from famous fiction
writers which I have taken the liberty of reworking to apply to legal writing.

- Isaac Bashevis Singer: The delete key is the author's best friend.
- Elmore Leonard: If it sounds like a lawyer wrote it, I rewrite it.
- Stephen King: The scariest moment is always just before you push send.
- Ernest Hemingway: The hard part of legal writing is finishing it.
- Gustave Flaubert: The art of legal writing is the art of discovering what the judge will believe.
- Beatrix Potter: There is something delicious about writing the first words of a brief. You never quite know where they'll take you.
- Fay Weldon: Lawyers...fashioning nets to sustain and support their case as they fall helplessly through the chaos of their client’s making.
- Elmore Leonard again: I try to leave out the parts that judges skip.
- Mark Twain: Of course truth is stranger than legal writing; legal writing has to make sense.
- Zadie Smith: It is such a confidence trick, writing a legal document. The main person you have to trick into confidence is yourself.
- Julia Cameron: Just as a good rain clears the air, a good brief clears the courtroom.
- George Orwell: If lawyers cannot write well, they cannot think well, and if they cannot think well, others will do their thinking for them.
- Rudyard Kipling: Words are, of course, the most powerful tool used by lawyers.
- Lu Ji: Writing the facts is a struggle between truth and untruth.
- George Orwell again: In legal writing, particularly in briefs and law review articles, it is normal to come across long passages which are almost completely lacking in meaning.
- Ambrose Bierce: The first and last pages of a brief are too far apart.
- Albert Camus: Those who write clearly can convince the judge; those who write obscurely have some explaining to do.
- Doris Lessing: You only learn to be a better legal writer by actually joining Scribes.

New Members

Andy Abrams, Charleston, SC
Kathleen Alsina, Bellaire, TX
Crawford Appleby, Los Angeles, CA
Sophia Barinova, Saint Petersburg, Russia
Zachary Breidenbach, Pottstown, PA**
Lindsay Bryda, Arlington Heights, IL
Judy Clausen, Atlantic Beach, FL
Scott Fraley, Waco, TX
Mona Houk, New York, NY
Robert Koehler, Tampa, FL
Joel Kohm, Vancouver, British Columbia
Robin McCall, Los Angeles, CA
Mary McDonnell, San Jose, CA
Matthew Miller, Camas, WA
Nick Poz, Lubbock, TX
Joseph Regalia, Las Vegas, NV
Jennifer Roberts, Peachtree City, GA
Kathleen Sher, Concord, NH
Rachel Smith, Brooklyn, NY
Stephen Smith, New York, NY
Shawnmarie Staton, Shoreline, WA
Stephen Stanwood, Campbell, CA
Kathryne Young, Northampton, MA
Roger Zamparo Jr., Hoffman Estates, IL

** Student-Editor Member
New Executive Director

As of August, Scribes has a new executive director: Philip Johnson. Philip is also the Instructional and Student Services Librarian at The John Marshall Law School, which is a position he’s held for four years. Prior to starting work at John Marshall, Philip completed a joint degree program in law and information science at the University of Texas—Austin. He’s a native Texan who also graduated from U.T. with a bachelor’s degree in English. After that, he taught middle school in Houston before returning to law school. Philip can be reached at scribeslegalwriters@gmail.com.

Awards and CLE

Get ready for Scribes’ annual CLE event, scheduled for April 13 at the John Marshall Law School. At the CLE, we will present our annual awards for best student brief, best student law review note, and best book on a legal subject. The nomination period for our brief award has ended, but we are still accepting nominations for the law review and book awards. We will also award a lifetime achievement award this year, the recipient of which will be announced at a later date.

For more information about any of this, including award nomination forms, reach out to Philip Johnson at scribeslegalwriters@gmail.com or by using the contact form on our website, which you can find here.

The Scribes Student Chapter at The John Marshall Law School in Chicago hosted a special meeting in October 2017 with Illinois Supreme Court Justice Mary Jane Theis, who shared writing tips with the students attending the program. Pictured here are Justice Theis, the Scribes Student Chapter President Chelsea Button, and Scribes National President-Elect Mark E. Wojcik.

“You only learn to be a better writer by actually writing.”
~ Doris Lessing
Darby Dickerson, Immediate Past President of Scribes, Wins the 2018 AALS Section Award for her Significant Lifetime Contributions to Legal Research and Writing
By Mark E. Wojcik, Scribes National President-Elect

Darby Dickerson, Dean of The John Marshall Law School in Chicago and Immediate Past President of Scribes—The American Society of Legal Writers, has been selected as the winner of the 2018 Association of American Law Schools Section Award from the Section on Legal Writing, Reasoning, and Research. This prestigious award recognizes individuals who have made significant lifetime contributions to the field of legal research and writing. The award was created in 1995 and conferred for the first time at the 1996 AALS Annual Meeting. The award has sometimes been described as a “Lifetime Achievement Award in Legal Writing Education.”

Darby Dickerson began her full-time academic career in 1995 as a legal writing professor at Stetson University College of Law. She was one of the first legal writing professors to become dean of a law school. She has now served as the dean of three law schools—first Stetson, then Texas Tech University School of Law, and finally The John Marshall Law School in Chicago. Dean Dickerson, now with many career accomplishments and public accolades, began teaching legal writing without job security or status. During the early years of her career, in addition to training students to succeed in practice, Darby was a leader in professional organizations working to bring recognition to legal writing professionals.

Dean Dickerson was the first author of the ALWD Citation Manual: A Professional System of Citation, a book praised for improving the teaching and learning of legal citation in the United States. Her academic and professional articles demonstrate a lifelong dedication to creating and sharing knowledge about the legal profession, including the ethics of legal writing, law school pedagogy, and the lawyer’s (and law professor’s) place in society.

Darby is a nationally-known leader in legal education. Besides serving on the Executive Committee of the AALS, she is also a Past Chair of several AALS sections, including the Deans’ Section and the Section on Institutional Advancement.

In 2005, she was the second person to receive the Burton Award for Outstanding Contributions to Legal Writing Education. In 2013, she was the inaugural recipient of the Darby Dickerson Award for Revolutionary Change in Legal Writing, named by the Association of Legal Writing Directors (ALWD) to honor her contributions to legal writing. And in 2016, National Jurist Magazine named her one of the “most influential people in legal education.”

Dean Dickerson is the Immediate Past President of Scribes and one of its longest-serving presidents. She is also an elected
member of the American Law Institute and Sustaining Life Fellow of the Texas Bar Foundation. She is active in the American Inns of Court, having been part of three Inns: the Mac Taylor Inn in Dallas; the Ferguson-White Inn of Court in Tampa (where she served on the Executive Board and as President); and the Texas Tech University School of Law Inn of Court in Lubbock (where she was a founding member and on the executive committee). She has also been active in bar activities at the local, state, and national level.

Darby Dickerson received her B.A. and M.A. from the College of William & Mary, and her J.D. from Vanderbilt University Law School. After graduation she clerked for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit and then practiced commercial litigation with the law firm now known as Locke Lord in Dallas, Texas.

The 2018 AALS Section award will be presented to Dean Dickerson at the AALS Annual Meeting in San Diego during luncheon for the AALS Section on Legal Writing, Reasoning, and Research that will be held on Thursday, January 4, 2018, from 12:15 to 1:30 p.m. That luncheon is a ticketed event and tickets should be purchased when registering for the AALS Annual Meeting.

The award recipient is selected from nominations submitted to the section. An awards committee makes an initial selection of the winner or winners for that year. The section executive committee then approves the nomination. Finally, the AALS approves the conferral of the award. Nominations of persons not selected for the 2018 Section Award will be carried over for consideration for the 2019 Section Award, together with any new nominations. Persons nominated in earlier years but not yet selected can be re-nominated.

Here is a cumulative list of individuals who have won the Section Award from the AALS Section on Legal Writing, Reasoning, and Research for lifetime contributions to the field of legal research and writing. (Some years are missing because the award was not presented that year.)

- 1996 – Mary Lawrence (Oregon) [first recipient of the award]
- 1997 – Ralph Brill (Chicago-Kent)
- 2002 – Helene Shapo (Northwestern)
- 2003 – Laurel Currie Oates (Seattle)
- 2005 – Marilyn Walter (Brooklyn)
- 2006 – Terri LeClerq (Texas)
- 2007 – Anne Enquist (Seattle)
- 2008 – Eric Easton (Baltimore)
- 2009 – Richard K. Neumann, Jr. (Hofstra)
- 2010 – Joe Kimble (Thomas Cooley)
- 2011 – Elizabeth Fajans (Brooklyn)
- 2012 – Susan Brody (The John Marshall Law School-Chicago) and Mary Barnard Ray (Wisconsin)
- 2013 – Terrill Pollman (UNLV) and Jill Ramsfield (Hawaii)
- 2014 – Jan Levine (Duquesne)
- 2015 – Mark E. Wojcik (The John Marshall Law School-Chicago)
- 2016 – Suzanne Rowe (Oregon)
- 2017 – Linda B. Berger (UNLV)
- 2018 – Darby Dickerson (The John Marshall Law School-Chicago)
Institutional Members

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Mississippi College School of Law
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