



National Verbatim Reporters Association

Glossary

Education Committee, 2025

Introduction

Rationale

Persons entering the field, considering the field, and consumers of the court reporting and captioning services are often confused about the terminology used within the profession. This document is to serve as a guide to the various terms students, professionals, and users of services will encounter.

Scope

This guide is meant to serve as a jumping-off point for practitioners and consumers of reporting services.

Though we incorporate some caption-specific information and terminology, please see the CART/Captioning guide for a more thorough listing

COMMITTEE DISCLAIMER: This is not an exhaustive list and these terms were discussed amongst the committee and definitions consented to. You may encounter differing definitions. This document is meant to serve as a resource and we fully expect there to continue to be evolution in our discourse as we in the profession continue to embrace our working technology.

STENOGRAPHY

From Merriam-Webster's Dictionary: "the art or process of writing in shorthand; shorthand, especially written from dictation or oral discourse; the making of shorthand notes and subsequent transcription of them."

We contend that oral stenography (voice writing) and machine stenography both fit this definition. Voice writers write to their computers in voice shorthand using verbal shortcuts and unique sounds to equate to words on the screen; machine stenographers use a manual keyboarding language to produce words on the screen.

Terminology - The Profession & Professionals

court reporting, v - the act of taking down the spoken word and creating a written record as an impartial third party in a court, deposition, or other legal setting by the professional individual who has the duty to memorialize said record.

court reporter, n - the impartial third party in various legal and civic settings that captures the live testimony using their training, skill, and education (including their licenses and certifications) to create the official certified transcript for use.

captioner, namely, captionist, n - one who captions, a captioning services provider.

captioning, v - generic term for speech-to-text services when used for equal communication access for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals and those with a language barrier.

captioning service, n - service in which captions are provided that enables the viewer to follow the speakers' dialogue, sound effects, music, and so forth through the written word.

CART captioner, namely, CART provider, CART reporter, and CART writer, n - captioner that provides CART captioning.

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) captioning, namely, "captioning," CART, live verbatim captioning, live subtitling, n — generally, this modality covers all word-for-word realtime captioning that is not broadcast captioning.

**The captions will be displayed on the captioner's laptop or the consumer's laptop, smartphone, tablet, desktop, or be projected onto a large screen or monitor. A key distinction from broadcast captioning is that, traditionally, the captions do not overlay a video but are on a screen of their own. It should be noted that this is not always any longer true; for example, internet-based webinars and meeting applications typically display captions on the same screen as the video feed. CART originally stood for computer-assisted realtime translation. A common error is to say "transcription" instead of "translation." Other misunderstandings include substituting "technology" for "translation" or assuming the "t" is for "time," as in "communication access real time." Some individuals only use the acronym "CART" to refer to steno machine captioning. Some only refer to captioning in an educational setting as "CART." "CART" is only used when describing human-generated captions.*

General Terminology

acoustic model, n - the repository/database of the user's voice sounds within the speech recognition engine

advocate, n - an individual or organization who champions the profession

arbitration, n - process of resolving a dispute out of the court system

Automatic Speech Recognition, ASR, namely, Automatic Speech-to-Text (AST), speech recognition, machine transcription, live automatic captioning, live captioning, and live transcription, n—speech-to-text performed by computer software that can recognize the spoken word and convert it to text without human assistance or intervention; this is considered a subdomain of AI and ASR systems and can be speaker-dependent or speaker-independent.

*“Speech recognition” is sometimes erroneously referred to as “voice recognition” (which is not related to captioning). Voice recognition is a security technology for identifying speakers via voice print.

****Machine stenographers and voice stenographers may use ASR as a tool but it is not their main skill in preserving the record**

brief - a translation feature that suggests shorter, conflict-free abbreviations for words and phrases, requiring fewer keystrokes on the stenotype machine than would normally be written or fewer full words spoken by a voice stenographer.

CAT (“computer-aided transcription”) software, n - the program that assists court reporters and captioners in their ability to finalize their output into specific outputs. This takes the raw output from their devices and applies readable formatting for use by the end user. It also allows the reporter/captioner to create realtime useable tools and production tools.

CAT User Groups, n - specialized groups wherein practitioners using the software can meet (sometimes annually, in person or virtually) and learn about becoming more efficient in using the product or the updates that will be coming soon as they update their software.

CCR (Certified Court Reporter), CSR (Certified Shorthand Reporter), et cetera, designations, n - broadly, designations from states where there is a state licensing board and minimum knowledge and skills exam to perform the act of court reporting.



certification, n - the granting of a “certificate” after successful passing of a test or series of tests. This is often done by a national body that serves to promote and promulgate professional standards.

certified transcript, n - final transcript as produced by the reporter with pages at the end noting various particulars that may include the oath, the third-party status of the reporter, whether the witness requested review, the number of pages/volumes, etc. This is a transcript which, when it includes an attestation of completeness by the reporter, may be filed with the court or may be cited in official briefings.

clean verbatim, namely, condensed verbatim, intelligent verbatim, n—captioning that eliminates filler words (e.g. like, um, you know), meaningless repetition, false starts, and so forth, but is otherwise verbatim.

closed microphone, v - using a mask (closed environment) in a live proceeding, judicial or captioning/CART. This closed environment basically will “muffle” and dampen the sound coming from the voice writer’s speech.

confidential - refers to something that is intended to be kept private or secret, often due to its sensitive or personal nature.

confidentiality - the practice of keeping information private and protected from unauthorized access or disclosure ensuring that sensitive or personal information is shared only with those who are authorized to know it.

correction, n - how a voice writer will teach their SRE so that it can update its data and create a more accurate realtime output as the voice writer continues to dictate.

daily copy, n - in the judicial setting, when the official transcript - fully edited and proofread - is requested on the same day as it is taken. Depending on your region of practice, delivery can be up to 24 hours from the conclusion of the proceeding.

deposition, n - a process whereby a witness is placed under oath to testify in a legal proceeding. This proceeding may take place in various locations, including an attorney’s office, public office building, private offices, law libraries, et cetera.

dictionary, n - part of the CAT system that takes the raw output (either voice steno or machine shorthand) and applies formatting to create the proper output for the end user on the screen.



digital reporting, sometimes called electronic reporting, n - a method of using audio means to record all participants in a proceeding while creating annotations of the proceedings, which together form the basis of the creation of the record.

educator, n - an individual who trains/educates verbatim reporters and captioners.

examination under oath, n - a process whereby a witness is sworn under oath and examined or questioned.

expedite, n - when the transcript is requested to be delivered outside of the normal delivery period - faster. ("Standard" is variable based on location and if produced in an official or freelance setting, among other variables.)

freelance reporter - a self-employed reporter who provides court reporting services to various clients such as law firms, corporations, or individuals on a contract basis often working on depositions, hearings, arbitrations, or other legal proceedings outside of a traditional courtroom setting, capturing and transcribing verbatim testimony using stenographic equipment.

headset, n - device used for creating your output without a sound-dampening mask. Not for use in in-person legal proceedings.

hearing, n - a judicial session; opportunity to be heard, to present one side of a case, or to be generally known or appreciated; a listening to arguments. (There are many types of hearings).

impartiality, n - professional responsibility of reporter to be fair and unbiased to each participant in a proceeding and to be alert to and disclose any potential conflict of interest

language model, n - contextual, user-specific data for the speech recognition engine (aka, Dragon Food).

legal setting, n - judicial or quasi-judicial setting which may include, but is not limited to, arbitration, mediation, depositions, a courtroom, hearing room, jury room, jail, prison, police station, or field stop.

legislative court reporter - A legislative court reporter takes down proceedings in state legislatures and the United States Congress.



licensure, n - the granting of the legal ability to practice in a specific profession. This license would require renewal fees, performance of annual educational sessions, ethical and other professional duties.

official court reporter, n - works in a courtroom to create a verbatim, accurate written record of everything that is said during legal proceedings. This includes transcribing spoken words during trials, hearings, depositions, and other legal events that then becomes an official part of the court record. They may also be responsible for producing transcripts upon request by attorneys or parties involved in the case. Unlike freelance reporters, official court reporters are typically employed by the court system itself.

open microphone, v - technique of performing voice writing using your normal tone of voice and using a specific input device that would be connected to your computer but will NOT sound dampen. Used in Captioning/CART and sometimes in remote judicial proceedings.

O&1 (Original & 1 copy), n - in the deposition setting, this is when the taking attorney will receive the "O," original transcript, which is often sealed for the court and not useable prior to trial and the "1," which is the working copy for the attorney (both transcripts are certified, verifying that the court reporter agrees they are true and accurate).

proofing, v - the step that happens after scoping whereby the person reads for context and inserts suggested proofer's marks for the reporter prior to their final production. This step is generally NOT completed with the use of audio, but may be performed with CAT software or other text media that allows for the proofer to create their edit marks.

realtime machine stenography, n - the use of shorthand language using a steno machine that creates an instantaneous output by a skilled practitioner to create the written record from the spoken word.

realtime reporting, n - the creation of words simultaneously (or within a few seconds) upon a screen or display as they are being spoken.

realtime voice writing/realtime oral stenography, n - the use of voice dictation to create an instantaneous output by a skilled practitioner to create the written record from the spoken word.

recognition, n - raw output from an **SRE**. This is how it heard YOUR voice say something. This can be edited and trained to correct the SRE's understanding of your **USER PROFILE** as applied to its **VOCABULARY**.

rough draft, n - in the judicial setting, when the transcript, though not edited fully, will be produced to the client with the knowledge that there may be errors. Many jurisdictions require a disclaimer on each rough draft transcript noting that the transcript will not be cited in any subsequent hearing. Many also require the purchase of the final transcript as well.

scoofing, v - term that has been used to blend scoping and proofing together whereby the person performing does both services generally because the reporter is highly skilled and their realtime output is particularly clean.

scoping, v - when a raw file is reviewed/edited by either the practitioner or someone skilled in editing for court reporters who will use their knowledge of English grammar and punctuation, research, and general transcript production rules to create an edited document that can then be proofread before being finalized and produced. This step is usually performed with the use of a CAT software "edit" station as well as the audio files from the reporter.

Speech Recognition Engine (SRE), n - the specialized software program that is customized to an individual speaker's voice and applies the way their voice sounds to a preprogrammed **VOCABULARY** to create text.

speech-to-text; namely, lexical transcription, n - the process or act of converting the spoken word to written text.

*In our context, it is to provide equal communication access for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals and those with a language barrier. However, studies have shown that captioning elevates the experience for everyone, including those with different abilities to learn or those where the spoken language is not their primary language.

stenotype machine ("stenograph"), n - a specialized machine that has a unique keyboard that allows the court reporter to press multiple keys at once, creating shorthand symbols that represent sounds, words, or phrases.

stenotype machine writer - a court reporter who uses a stenotype machine to transcribe spoken words quickly and accurately.

steno theory (machine shorthand), n - a language that machine stenographers learn to take specific letter combinations on a steno machine keyboard and turn them into corresponding English words or phrases. (other spoken languages have their own steno theories.

stroke (machine shorthand), n - Any combination of keyboard depressions made at one time on the stenograph machine which creates the output of the individual keys on one "line" of the stenographic notes. A stroke may represent a syllable, a word, or a combination of words.

transcription, n - speech-to-text to develop a transcript.

*A transcript is a product produced as a record for use after a spoken word event concludes and cannot be used in real time for communication access. Transcripts are usually edited for spelling, formatting, appearance, and punctuation to ease reading and comprehension or meet a mandated style.

transcriptionist/transcriber, n - one who transcribes; one who creates transcripts.

translation, n - how the words from the **SRE's recognition** are affected by your dictionary in your **CAT** software or how a machine writer's raw steno is affected by their CAT dictionary.

trial, n - a formal proceeding before a judge and jury (or just a judge in a bench trial), wherein legal disputes are settled

USB device/USB sound card/sound pod, n - the connective device that will take the audio from your mask and connect it to the computer - "analog to digital."

user profile, n - for voice writers, their "user profile" is created by their speaking of the words into the SRE (usually Dragon) and the software will match the sound of one's voice to the expected sounds of various words in the vocabulary

user settings, n - in CAT systems, these are the generic commands that the reporter creates to develop the formatting for the output of their transcript.

utterance, n - how an SRE subdivides what it hears as it creates its output. This is the base size that is used in "correction."



validation, n - the process by which a certification examination is verified. This process is performed by an outside party and encompasses metrics regarding bias and other industry-specific standards that are to be measured by the proposed examination.

verbatim - in exactly the same words as were used originally.

vocabulary, n - in an SRE, the baseline of all data that correlates to words, commands, and specialty formatting (like money, accents, etc). This is the foundation of a voice writer's output.

voice command - a translation feature that suggests shorter, conflict-free abbreviations for words and phrases, requiring fewer spoken words than what you say.

voice writer - an individual who speaks into a microphone that is using a special voice recognition system or software that converts spoken words into text in real time.

voice writing - a useful method of transcription used by court reporters and other professionals where the individual speaks into a microphone while simultaneously creating a written record for legal proceedings, such as court hearings or depositions.