

The Scrivener

A newsletter from Scribes—The American Society of Legal Writers



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Submissions

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

Darby Dickerson Receives Heart of Scribes Award



During the Scribes board of directors dinner on September 19, Scribes president and Southwestern Law School dean Darby Dickerson (left in photo) was honored with the Heart of Scribes award. The award recognizes the

tremendous impact Dickerson has had on Scribes and the incredible legacy she continues to build.

Scribes vice president and Schiller, DuCanto & Fleck LLP partner Michele Jochner (right in photo) commissioned the award and lauded Dickerson for her “unwavering commitment and dedication to our organization. Over the past two decades, Darby has invested not only her immense talent but also a remarkable amount of time to help shape our group into what it is today: a vibrant community of writers from the judiciary, academia, and private practice, all united by a shared passion for excellence in legal writing. In so many meaningful ways, Darby has truly been the heart of this organization.”

Once again, we would like to congratulate Dickerson and thank her for her years of exemplary service to Scribes.

Go Fast to Go Slow

By Ivy Grey, WordRake Chief Strategy and Growth Officer



If you've ever learned a skill, you've heard the advice that you need to go slow to go fast. The same applies to legal writing. We can learn from behavioral economists' extensive studies of chess masters, firefighters, and other professionals

about how expertise is built—and it's not by mimicking the work habits of experts. The process of becoming an expert differs from the work of being an expert.

We don't expect novices to have the problem-solving skills that experts do, but we don't realize that novices also lack the problem recognition and categorization skills that will allow them to develop elegant solutions. Without this know-how, novice writers will get stuck in shallow revision practices. And many do, as confirmed in Christopher Anzidei's [2002 study of the difference between novice and expert legal writing habits](#).

The reason why is explained in the model of system 1 and system 2 thinking developed by decision psychologist and Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman. System 1 is fast and intuitive and is good for catching obvious errors. System 2 is slow and analytical and is needed to see writing from the reader's perspective and to revise for clarity. Without coaching, novices rely

on system 1. As writing mentors, we must help young writers build the habit of using system 2.

The developmental stage of effortful revision lasts years or decades. However, with practice, writers eventually build a library of patterns and solutions. Once developed, this library allows writers to recognize problems and test fixes quickly. When experts use this library, their work appears intuitive but their speed rests on recognition and recall. This process is described in recognition-primed decision model, which psychologist and naturalistic decision-making pioneer Gary Klein described in 1985.

Combined, Klein's model and Kahneman's framework describe an arc of skill development: slow, deliberate thinking grows into fast, intuitive judgment. In 2009, they explained this growth in "[Conditions for Intuitive Expertise: A Failure to Disagree](#)."

What does all of this mean for us? If we want to help novice legal writers become experts, we must help them consistently engage in system 2 thinking during editing. To help them progress, we need to coach them to recognize editing opportunities, categorize common writing problems, and practice deliberate editing moves to solve the problems. We must also provide reasoned feedback that reinforces learning experiences and helps novices commit the right lessons to memory. Finally, we should strive to convince writers to put in the practice required to achieve mastery. Only then will they be ready for speed.

Member Spotlight: Jill Schumacher

By Kem Thompson Frost



Meet Jill Schumacher of Houston, Texas, a partner in [Daniels & Tredennick PLLC](#), who heads up the firm's appellate practice group. Board certified in civil appellate law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization, Schumacher holds an elite credential among the state's appellate

practitioners, and she's won local and state-wide awards for her advocacy.

Before going into private practice, Schumacher spent several years in public service, first as a judicial law clerk on an appellate court in Nebraska and then as a chambers attorney in one of Texas's busiest courts of appeals. These early opportunities enabled her to get an inside look at the judicial process, equipping her well for private practice in the appellate arena.

From early in her career, Schumacher has been deeply involved in the appellate community, taking on leadership roles in bar activities, volunteering for outreach projects, and feeding her penchant for legal writing. She has served as chair of the Houston Bar Association's Appellate Practice Section and in various other capacities on the leadership council for the better part of the past decade. She served as editor in chief of *The Appellate Lawyer* after years of writing a regular column in and contributing articles to the publication. A popular speaker for bar programs, Schumacher enjoys identifying and

unpacking emerging trends in the law. This year, she has been illuminating for Texas audiences a state rule of civil procedure that has emerged as a potential trap for trial and appellate practitioners. The more she speaks, the more she gets invited to speak.

Loaded with talent and hard-wired to help, Schumacher works collaboratively with others to make good things happen in her community and beyond. Whatever the setting, whatever the goal, she brings creative energy to problem solving. Whether she's answering questions for *Legal Lines*, taking the stage to show intellectually disabled teenagers what to expect in a guardianship proceeding, creating scripts for famous-case reenactments, helping Scribes deliver new membership benefits, or volunteering in other ways, Schumacher models a signature brand of service fueled by gratitude, punctuated with humor, and steeped in humility. Her selection for so many honors, awards, and leadership positions so early in her career reflects the high esteem she enjoys within the profession. It's no surprise that she's a mentor and a role model to many.

Education

Schumacher earned her law degree cum laude from Duke University School of Law, where she served as the research editor for the *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy*. Before law school, she graduated summa cum laude from Washington University in St. Louis, where she earned the Helen Stenner Memorial Prize for her writing in philosophy.

Member Spotlight: Jill Schumacher (continued)

Professional Recognition

Schumacher's many honors and awards include the following:

- Received Outstanding Young Lawyer of Texas Award from Texas Young Lawyers Association
- Received Outstanding Young Lawyer of Houston Award from Houston Young Lawyers Association
- Received Outstanding New Member Award from Texas Bar College
- Named in Lawdragon 500X's The Next Generation in Appellate, 2025
- Recognized by Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch in America, BL Rankings, 2024–2026
- Included on Texas Super Lawyers list, Thomson Reuters, 2023–2025
- Included on Texas Rising Stars list, Thomson Reuters, 2022
- Included on Houstonia Top Lawyers—Appeals list, 2021–2022



Contributions to Scribes

While serving on Scribes's Membership Committee (2022–2024), Schumacher brought high energy and fresh ideas to projects and working groups. She shined on the planning team for the Write to Be Heard webinar series with Scribes's education partner American Inns of Court, helping to identify potential speakers and topics. To help raise awareness of the jointly-sponsored program, she wrote the introduction to the series and teamed up with another Scribes member to coauthor an article on writing-focused mentoring for *The Bench*, American Inns of Court's flagship publication.

Q&A with Schumacher

Why did you join Scribes?

I wanted to be a member of an honor society that celebrates and promotes excellence in legal writing.

What do you enjoy most about your Scribes membership?

I enjoy working with lawyers, judges, and academicians across the country who share my keen interest in legal writing. Through my work on Scribes projects, I've expanded my circles, and I'm grateful for the professional opportunities Scribes membership has provided.

Like so many others, I love the Tuesday Writing Tips, *The Scribes Journal of Legal Writing*, *The Scrivener*, and all the other writing resources available to Scribes members. Most of all, I like being part of Scribes's mission to promote clear, succinct legal writing.

At the Podium

On October 20, **Michele Jochner**, a partner at Schiller DuCanto & Fleck LLP, was a featured speaker at the National Day on Writing event at the University of Illinois Chicago School of Law. During her session, Michele shared insights on the impact of precise, purposeful legal writing. She asserted that such writing strengthens advocacy efforts, promotes understanding, and demonstrates professionalism in the law.

Mark Cooney, a professor at the Cooley Law School, gave the following presentations:

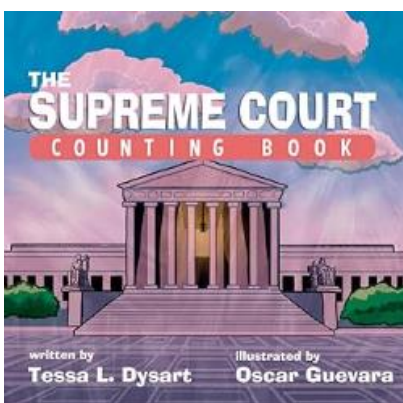
- “There’s a Hole in the Safety Net: How Legalese Jeopardizes Enforceability,” Legal Writing Institute Biennial Conference (July 19, 2024)
- “How Legalese Jeopardizes Enforceability,” Kimble Center for Legal Drafting (November 14, 2024)
- “Motion Practice in Criminal Cases,” Oakland County Bar Association (April 17, 2025)

On the Bookshelf and the Web

Scribes members Tessa L. Dysart and Mark Cooney recently added more publications to their résumés. Read on for details.

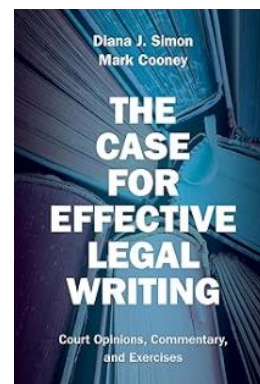
Tessa L. Dysart

Dysart, a law professor at the University of Arizona, published [*The Supreme Court Counting Book*](#), which teaches children about the US Supreme Court by taking them on a counting journey. The text is accompanied by vibrant illustrations created by Oscar Guevara.



Mark Cooney

Cooney and coauthor Diana J. Simon wrote [*The Case for Effective Legal Writing: Court Opinions, Commentary, and Exercises*](#). The first-ever casebook on legal writing, the volume presents court cases in which writing techniques significantly affected the outcomes.



Cooney also wrote the following articles:

- [Book Review of Elegant Legal Writing, by Ryan McCarl](#), *Legal Writing* (May 2025)
- [“Is Your Arbitration Clause Clear Enough?”](#) *Michigan Bar Journal* (March, 2025)
- [“Ten Tips for Clearer Briefs,”](#) WordRake Blog (March 7, 2025)

In the Judge's Seat



Mark Cooney served as a judge for the Center for Plain Language's 2025 ClearMark Awards. The purpose of the awards program is to recognize the best plain-language writing published by companies, nonprofits, and

government agencies in North America. The program honors not only English publications but also Spanish and French publications.

The 18 winners in this year's award program have been announced, and images of the publications are available at <https://centerforplainlanguage.org/awards/clearmark/2025-clearmark-awards-winners>.

Scribes Board Members Meet in Chicago for Retreat

On September 19, Scribes board members met in Chicago for a productive retreat. After meetings during the day, the board held a dinner during which various individuals were

honored. In addition, the Illinois law firm Schiller, DuCanto & Fleck LLP was presented with a plaque for its gold-level sponsorship of Scribes.



Left to right: **Justin Iverson** (UNLV William S. Boyd School of Law), **Amanda Fisher** (University of Arkansas School of Law), **Kem Frost** (retired justice, Court of Appeals for the 14th District of Texas), **Gina M. Benavides** (retired justice, Court of Appeals for the 13th District of Texas), **Ivy Grey** (WordRake), **Margie Alsbrook** (Mercer University School of Law), **Mark Cooney** (Cooley Law School), **Darby Dickerson** (Southwestern Law School and Scribes president), **Emily Janoski-Haehlen** (University of Akron School of Law), **Michele Jochner** (Schiller, DuCanto & Fleck LLP), **Jean Rosenbluth** (U.S. District Court for the Central District of California), **Megan E. Boyd** (Georgia State University College of Law), and **Brooke Bowman** (Stetson University College of Law)

Scribes Board Members Meet in Chicago for Retreat (continued)



Dinner attendees included (left to right) **Christopher Kennedy** (presiding justice, Illinois Appellate Court, Second District), **Joy Cunningham** (justice, Supreme Court of Illinois), **Thomas Lyons** (presiding judge, Law Division, Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois), **Elizabeth Rochford** (justice, Supreme Court of Illinois), **Michele Jochner** (partner, Schiller, DuCanto & Fleck LLP), and **Meighan Harmon** (managing partner, Schiller, DuCanto & Fleck)



Scribes president **Darby Dickerson** (left) and Scribes vice president **Michele Jochner** (right) present a plaque to **Meighan Harmon** (center), the managing partner at Schiller, DuCanto & Fleck LLP, to thank the law firm for its gold-level sponsorship of Scribes

Spotlight on AI

Scribes's members have published a variety of works on generative AI, including articles exploring ethical considerations and AI's role in the writing process. For interested readers, here's a sampling:

- Margie Alsbrook, "[Untangling Unreliable Precedent](#)," 37 *Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics* 415 (2024)
- Megan E. Boyd, "[AI, Lawyers, and the Courts](#)," *Georgia Bar Journal* (Nov. 2024)
- Megan E. Boyd, "[The Duty of Efficiency & Generative AI Pedagogy](#)," *Washington University Journal of Law & Policy* (2025)
- John G. Browning, "[Robot Lawyers Don't Have Disciplinary Hearings—Real Lawyers Do: The Ethical Risks and Responses in Using Generative Artificial Intelligence](#)," 40 *Georgia State University Law Review* 917 (2024)
- John G. Browning, "Real World Ethics in an Artificial Intelligence World," 49 *Northern Kentucky Law Review* 155 (2022)
- John G. Browning, "Ignorance Is Not Bliss: Educating Lawyers and Law Students About the High Cost of Shirking the Duty of Technology Competence," 19 *University of St. Thomas Law Journal* (2023)
- John G. Browning, "Let's Chat About ChatGPT: A Practical Guide to Risks in Attorney Use of Generative AI," *Akron Law Review* (2024)
- John G. Browning, "Setting Guardrails or Overreacting? Examining Judicial Treatment of AI in the Courtroom," *Charleston Law Review* (2024)
- John G. Browning, "No 'Robot Lawyers' Just Yet: The Role of Continuing Legal Education in Fulfilling the Duty of Technological Competence," 72 *Journal of Legal Education* (2024)
- Mark Cooney, "[Teaching AI to Use Plain Language](#)," 102 *Michigan Bar Journal* 26 (July/Aug. 2023)
- Ivy Grey, "[Weaknesses of AI-Generated Writing—and Why You Must Edit](#)," WordRake Blog (Nov. 2024)
- Michael B. Hyman, "[Talos Regenerated](#)," *Illinois Bar Journal* (Dec. 2024)
- Justin Iverson, "Surveilling Potential Uses and Abuses of Artificial Intelligence in Correctional Spaces," 9 *Lincoln Memorial University Law Review* (2022).
- Justin Iverson, "Legal Research in the Age of Machine-Learning," *Nevada Lawyer* (Oct. 2018)
- Michele M. Jochner, "[Rise of the Machines](#)," *Best Lawyers* (Aug. 2023)
- Michele M. Jochner, "[Family Law Wrestles with Ethics as It Embraces Technology](#)," *Best Lawyers* (Dec. 2024)

Mark Your Calendars: Upcoming Events

Scribes Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony

December 5, 2025, 11 a.m.–1 p.m. ET, on Zoom

During the meeting, the winners of the following awards will be announced:

- Law Review Award
- Brief Award
- Book Award
- Lifetime-Achievement Award
- Distinguished-Service Award

Make sure to [register](#) today!

Scribes Annual Book Award CLE

March 5, 2026, 11 a.m.–1 p.m. ET, on Zoom

Hon. Michael Hyman will interview Professor Wes Henrickson, author of *In Fraud We Trust*, the winner of 2025 Scribes Book Award. Look for a Zoom registration link closer to the event.

New AI in Legal Writing Webinar Series

Scribes and the American Inns of Court have worked together as education partners to

develop a webinar series on AI in legal writing. The series' first webinar in the series is now available. Read on for more details.

AI for Legal Writers: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

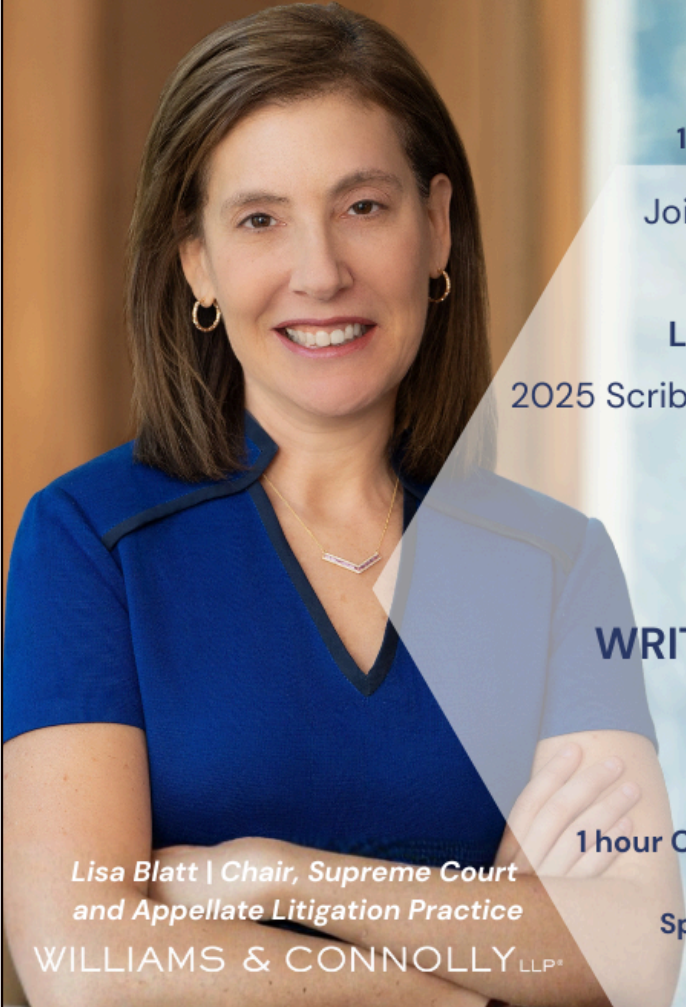
Artificial intelligence is an amazing tool that all lawyers can use to increase their efficiency and productivity. However, without continuous oversight and diligent review, AI can also land even the most experienced attorneys (and even judges) in hot water.

This webinar, presented by Christina Crozier, clinical assistant professor, University of Houston Law Center, will provide tips for ensuring this tool will help and not hurt your cases, your clients, and your reputation. You'll gain a better understanding of the good things that AI can do for attorneys, the importance of critical thinking, and strategies for vigorous oversight.

Scribes members who [register](#) for this on-demand webinar can get a 20% discount with the code **COURT20**.

Coming Soon

- If you want to nominate a Scribes member to be featured in our next member spotlight, please send the member's name and contact information to scribeslegalwriters@gmail.com. Self-nominations are welcome.
- Keep an eye out for the winter 2025–2026 edition of *The Scrivener*, which will feature profiles of the new Scribes officers.



SCRIBES
The American Society of
Legal Writers

Annual Awards Ceremony & CLE
DECEMBER 5, 2025
10:30 A.M.–12:00 P.M. CENTRAL STANDARD TIME

Join us as we honor the 2025 Scribes annual award winners, and present a CLE with **Lisa Blatt**, renowned appellate litigator and 2025 Scribes Lifetime Achievement Award recipient.

**LESSONS LEARNED,
WISDOM SHARED**

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