

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
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Scribes Honors Lisa Blatt with Lifetime-Achievement Award

During Scribes’s 2025 awards ceremony, the society honored Lisa Blatt with the Lifetime-Achievement Award. Blatt is a partner at Williams & Connolly LLP and serves as the chair of the firm’s Supreme Court and appellate practice. During her career, she has argued more than 50 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court and has achieved a win rate of 81% in cases the court has decided.



Lisa Blatt (left) accepts the Scribes Lifetime-Achievement Award, presented by Scribes President **Michele Jochner** on December 5, 2025, at the Scribes Annual Awards Ceremony.

Legal Writing as an Exercise in Sociolinguistics

by Amanda Fisher, Assistant Professor of Law, University of Arkansas

The legal profession exists as a subculture of larger social groups. As members of this subculture, individuals typically share common objectives, beliefs, and training. An essential commonality among members of the legal subculture is legal language. Sociolinguists examine how language and cultures are intertwined, and because law is language, legal practitioners and educators should consistently observe and examine how legal language and legal culture intersect.

Since language includes both the written and spoken word, legal language encompasses both legal writing and verbal skills, such as oral arguments. Historically, law practice was a verbal exercise, so verbal skills are held in high regard. However, legal academics often regard legal writing as unintellectual. Legal education instills practitioners with common conventions for writing, such as regarding the parts of a brief or a memorandum, and common conventions for oral arguments, but language is more than the sum of its mechanics. Law students sometimes miss the deeper importance of connecting legal writing with language and culture. Examining legal writing sociolinguistically requires a framework that includes theory, culture, and authority. Because legal writing does not have a universal doctrine yet, borrowing from another field helps define the components of legal writing as it relates to language and culture.

One framework that includes the angles of theory, culture, and authority is Harold Hoiback's military doctrine theory. The first

angle is the technical aspects of legal writing. These aspects are the processes that individuals begin learning during the first year of law school and include the organizational paradigms, the unique spellings and meanings of legal terms, and grammar that differs from colloquial language. These aspects of legal writing are what make it rational, forming the theory of the discipline. The second angle is the cultural aspect of legal writing, which relies more on effectively communicating, artfully persuading the reader, and evoking an emotional response from the reader to further the client's position. This cultural aspect fosters versatility in writing, particularly when it may be necessary to stray from traditional, rigid writing conventions to achieve client objectives. The third angle is the authority that legal writing embodies. Authority is broader than case precedent and includes how legal writing both obtains and maintains power. Two examples of authority are judges who hold practitioners to high writing standards and professors who help law students meet the expectations of written practice.

Lawyers wield written and spoken language. Answering a sociolinguistic inquiry about how legal writing, language, and culture connect requires implementing a framework for the field of legal writing. Applying Hoiback's military doctrine theory captures each essential aspect of legal writing. Theorizing legal writing in the way that sociolinguists theorize how language intersects with culture adds value not just to legal writing but to the role of language in effective law practice.

Scribes Unveils New Mission Statement and Announces 2026 Officers

On December 5, 2025, the Scribes board of directors adopted a new mission statement and installed the organization's new president and vice president.

Scribes has long had organizational goals, and the board adopted a new mission statement to affirm Scribes's longstanding commitment to fostering clarity and professionalism in legal writing while embracing evolving tools and expectations.

New Mission Statement

"Scribes champions excellence in legal writing. Since 1951, we have promoted clear, succinct, and persuasive legal style and argument. We advance these goals through our publications, awards, outreach, and educational programs. As legal writing continues to evolve, we embrace innovation guided by human judgment and accountability."

2026 Officers

- President: **Michele M. Jochner**, Partner, Schiller DuCanto & Fleck LLP
- Vice President: **Mark Cooney**, Professor of Law, Cooley Law School
- Secretary: **Emily Janoski-Haehlen**, Dean and Professor of Law, University of Akron School of Law
- Treasurer: **Brooke J. Bowman**, Professor of Law, Stetson University College of Law
- Immediate Past President: **Darby Dickerson**, President, Dean, and Professor of Law, Southwestern Law School

About the New President

Michele M. Jochner

is a nationally recognized authority on appellate advocacy and legal writing. She brings decades of judicial, scholarly, and



professional experience to her new role in Scribes and will serve through the December 2027 board meeting. Before entering private practice, Jochner served for 15 years as a judicial law clerk to two chief justices of the Supreme Court of Illinois, working on numerous high-profile matters of first impression. As a partner at the internationally known law firm Schiller DuCanto & Fleck LLP, she focuses on complex, high-asset domestic relations cases and handles all appellate matters for the firms' three offices. Jochner has authored more than 250 articles on legal writing and substantive law; she has also lectured on legal writing and appellate advocacy across the country. Additionally, she has served as an adjunct professor at both DePaul University College of Law and The John Marshall Law School. In testament to her career-long commitment to legal education, the Supreme Court of Illinois appointed Jochner to serve as the chair of the court's Minimum Continuing Legal Education Board. Jochner has also served in many other leadership roles, including on the board of governors for the Illinois State Bar Association and on the board of managers for the Chicago Bar Association; she has also been recognized as one of the 50

Scribes Unveils New Mission Statement and Announces 2026 Officers (continued)

Top Women in Law by *The Chicago Lawyer* and received the Top Women Lawyers in Leadership Award from the Women's Bar Association of Illinois. In addition, Jochner has been repeatedly recognized as one of the Best Lawyers in America, as a Super Lawyer, and as a Leading Lawyer.

About the New Vice President

Mark Cooney has long been a cornerstone of Scribes's publications and writing initiatives. He served as editor in chief of six volumes of *The Scribes Journal of Legal Writing*, shaping the journal's scholarly direction and strengthening its national influence. He currently serves as a senior editor of the journal, mentoring authors and promoting the highest standards of clarity

and craftsmanship. Professor Cooney's commitment to advancing legal writing also reaches thousands of practitioners and students each year through his widely



circulated writing guidance, including his contributions to Scribes's Tuesday Tip series. In addition to his Scribes service, Cooney chaired Cooley Law School's Research and Writing Department from 2011 to 2025 and has published extensively on legal writing, appellate practice, and tort law.

Michele M. Jochner Receives 2025 Joseph Kimble Distinguished Service Award



Michele M. Jochner, Scribes's new president, is the 2025 Joseph Kimble Distinguished Service Award winner. The award recognizes individuals who have made exceptional, sustained contributions to Scribes and the advancement of legal writing.

Jochner has demonstrated extraordinary leadership and deep commitment to Scribes. As the vice president, Jochner played a pivotal role

in strengthening the organization. Jochner's efforts included hosting a board retreat, securing a major sponsorship, and helping draft Scribes's new mission statement. Jochner's "work ethic, strategic insight, diplomacy, and dedication to excellence have elevated Scribes in meaningful and lasting ways," according to past Scribes president Darby Dickerson.

Jochner is also a partner at Schiller DuCanto & Fleck LLP in Chicago and is a nationally recognized authority on appellate advocacy and legal writing.

Scribes Announces 2025 Brief-Writing Award Winners

Scribes congratulates the winners of its 2025 Brief-Writing Award, a national honor recognizing exceptional legal writing by law students in interscholastic moot court competitions.

This year, Scribes received 35 submissions—each a brief that already had earned a “best brief” recognition in a regional or national moot court competition. After passing an initial review by professors, judges, and practicing attorneys, top briefs advanced to Scribes’s Brief-Writing Award Committee, whose members selected the top three briefs.

First Place: University of Georgia School of Law
Students: Taylor Stablein, Mona Abboud, and Casey Wofford

Faculty Advisor: Professor Kellie Casey

Second Place: Regent University School of Law

Students: Elie El-Habr, Sarah Imgrund, and Dylan Mahoney

Faculty Advisor: Professor Michael Hernandez

Third Place: Texas Tech University School of Law

Student: Hailey Kukendall

Faculty Advisor: Professor Rob Sherwin



Scribes Congratulates Its 2025 Law Review Award Winners

Scribes congratulates the winners of its 2025 Law Review Award, which honors the top student-written articles published in a law review or journal. Darby Dickerson, immediate past president of Scribes, explained that “the authors combine meticulous research with clear, compelling prose. Their work exemplifies the kind of thoughtful, impactful legal writing Scribes seeks to celebrate.”

First Place: Alexandria Touron

Re-Recording the Record: The Case for a Stronger Moral Right of Integrity in the United States, 93 *Fordham L. Rev.* 2339 (2025).

Touron is a third-year student at Fordham University School of Law, where she serves as an associate editor of the *Fordham Law Review*.

Second Place: Stephanie Flores

Silent Suffering: Demanding Individual Accountability for Sexual Assault Against Disabled Children in School Environments, 33 *J.L. & Pol’y* 167 (2004).

Flores graduated from Brooklyn Law School in 2025 and is now a law clerk at Dentons.

Third Place: Camille Laude

Comment: Family Vlogging and Child Harm: A Need for Nationwide Protection, 64 *Jurimetrics J.* 285 (2024).

Laude is a 2025 graduate of Arizona State University’s Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law and is now an associate at Kemp, Jones & Coulthard.

Congratulations to the National Order of Scribes 2025 Inductees

The National Order of Scribes is an organization that recognizes graduating law students who excel in legal writing. Each year, any law school that is a current institutional subscriber to Scribes may nominate up to five students or three percent of the graduating class to be inducted into the National Order of Scribes. Scribes congratulates the 2025 inductees.

Boston University School of Law

- Sanketh Bhaskar
- Preetham Chippada
- Henry Drembus
- Crystal Hsu
- Mara Lynch
- Helen Warfle
- Karen Yao

California Western School of Law

- Anna Gurr
- Alexandra Kepler
- Mitch McCarthy
- Jared Paulson

Mercer University School of Law

- Nadin Catak
- Bailey Hotard
- Tyler Kelly
- Cameron Obioha
- Dawson Welsh

Ohio State University Moritz College of Law

- Evan Ernst
- Michael Factor
- Olivia Hiltbrand
- Georgina Jolivette
- MJ Preston

South Texas College of Law Houston

- Alexis Acevedo
- Sümeyye İslamoğlu
- Caroline Lubel

- Brandt Raymond Wild
- V. Cole Zimmerman

Southwestern Law School

- Stephanie Anderson
- Piper Hinson
- Ramon Sison
- Rocco Basile

Texas A&M School of Law

- Gabrielle M. Armstrong
- Caleb C. Cook
- Michael I. Cooper
- Ainsley M. McNally
- Ian C. Stephens

Texas Tech University School of Law

- Chase Bailey
- Katie Bone
- Ivan X. Naranjo
- Michelle Sutton

University of Houston Law Center

- Michael P. Burger
- Ana Elena Calleja Rodriguez
- Abel Chacko
- Megan D. Kibler
- Madison L. Oswald
- Valerie Rangel
- Douglas E. Steinman
- Sofia Alejandra Winograd

University of Oklahoma College of Law

- Alisha Clegg
- Megan Davis
- Hannah Doudican
- Annie Dunn
- Winchell Gallardo

University of Richmond

- Brenna E. Harman
- Miriam K. Mays
- Katherine G. Menello

Register for AI in Legal Writing Webinars and Scribes Annual Book Award CLE Program

Webinar Series on AI in Legal Writing

Scribes and the [American Inns of Court](#) have collaborated as education partners to develop a three-part webinar series on AI in legal writing. As a benefit of Scribes membership, all members can save 20% when registering.

Read on for a description of each webinar.

The AI Revolution in Legal Practice and Writing: Insights from the Bench and Bar



The Honorable Jennifer Elrod, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit; Jonathon K. Hance, Partner, Bracewell

AI is here to stay. Understanding what it is, its benefits, its pitfalls, and how practitioners and the courts are interacting with the tool is critical. It is your ethical duty to know how it can potentially benefit your clients and negatively affect the quality of your practice. Gain insight into both the shortcomings and benefits of AI and legal practice, including client expectations, regulation of AI use, and the role of the judiciary.

Competence in the Age of AI: Writing, Research, and Responsibility



Ivy B. Grey, Chief Strategy and Growth Officer, WordRake

Legal writing is a key component of how lawyers serve their clients, but many lawyers now have a new

starting point for their text: generative AI. While this new technology changes our workflows, it does not change our ethical duties; our duties just come in surprising new ways.

AI in Legal Writing: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly



Christina Crozier, Clinical Assistant Professor, University of Houston Law Center

AI is an amazing tool that all lawyers can use to increase their efficiency and productivity. However, without continual oversight and diligent review, AI can also land even the most experienced attorneys (and even judges!) in hot water. This webinar will provide tips for ensuring AI will help and not hurt your cases, your clients, and your reputation.

Scribes Annual Book Award CLE Program

On March 5, 2026, at noon Eastern time, Scribes will host a conversation with Wes Henricksen, author of *In Fraud We Trust: How Leaders in Politics, Business, and Media Profit from Lies—and How to Stop Them*, the 2025 Scribes Book Award winner. He will discuss with the Honorable Michael B. Hyman the research and writing that shaped the book and examine how mass deception works, why current laws fall short, and potential legal solutions to protect the public. [Learn more and register.](#)

Scribes Offers New Membership Categories and Subscription Opportunities

Scribes recently restructured its membership categories. Membership now includes four categories, each of which reflects Scribes's high standards as an honor society composed of members of the legal profession who have met specified legal-writing criteria and who share Scribes's goals.

Qualifying individuals may seek to join or sustain membership in one of the following categories:

- [Regular](#)
- [Life](#)
- [Sustaining Life](#)
- [Student / Newer Lawyer](#)

The former institutional and associate membership categories are no longer available, but institutions and individuals formerly in these categories may continue to enjoy Scribes's publications, educational offerings, and other benefits by becoming Scribes subscribers. Through annual institutional subscriptions, law schools may continue to nominate students for induction into the National Order of Scribes, an honorary organization that recognizes graduating law students who excel in legal writing. Additionally, law schools' journal staffs may attend the National Conference for Law Review Editors at no additional cost. Through subscriptions to Scribes, law firms and law departments can continue to help equip their attorneys with resources to enhance writing skills. Likewise, individuals who do not presently meet membership criteria can continue to access the tips, newsletters,

journals, programming, and discounts they have come to value.

Institutional Subscribers: Any ABA-approved law school, state-approved law school, federal or state court, law firm, law department, law library, or other legal organization may become an institutional subscriber. Further, a legal writing department, law library, or law journal within an ABA-approved law firm may apply to be an institutional subscriber.

An institutional subscription entitles each attorney in the organization whose name and email are provided to Scribes to receive electronic copies of *The Scrivener*; *The Scribes Journal of Legal Writing*; and semimonthly email tips on legal research, writing, and grammar. In addition, each attorney in the organization will receive the same discounts offered to Scribes members for continuing legal education and other special programs offered by Scribes and open to the public during the subscription period. Former institutional members will become institutional subscribers at their next renewal.

Individual Subscribers: Any person who shares Scribes's goals may become an individual subscriber. An individual subscription entitles the subscriber to electronic copies of *The Scrivener*; *The Scribes Journal of Legal Writing*; semimonthly email tips on legal research, writing, and grammar; and free attendance at Scribes's annual CLE program. Those who were formerly associate members will become individual subscribers at their next renewal.

Congratulations to Michele M. Jochner

on becoming the new President of Scribes



Recipient of the Prestigious

2025 Joseph Kimble

Distinguished Service Award

Recognizing Her Extraordinary
Commitment to Scribes

We support Scribes and its
mission to advance the
highest standards in
legal writing.



We See What Others Don't

SCHILLER DUCANTO & FLECK