

## Careers in Court Reporting, Captioning, and CART – An Introduction

Broadcast captioning.

Judicial court reporting.

Communications Access Realtime Translation.

Webcasting.

These are just some of the career paths that are available in the reporting field. If you possess the skill and drive to become a reporter or captioner and are good with language, creative, and self-motivated, then the high-tech field of reporting might be for you.

This is a career that offers flexibility, good pay and a chance to give back to your community by providing essential services. It's a great choice for recent graduates or anyone thinking about changing jobs to make the most of their skills.

### Career Highlights

From a local courthouse to the floor of the United States Senate; from a high-rise office building to a home office in a basement, careers in the reporting profession offer many diverse and unique professional opportunities for the right individuals.

The role of reporters continues to evolve from serving as information managers in complicated trials, to capturing depositions and business proceedings in digital format, to assisting millions of deaf and hard-of-hearing persons through advanced captioning technology. The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that job opportunities in this field will grow 25 percent through 2016. Also, the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which requires that 100 percent of all new programming in the top 25 markets must be captioned, has established a high demand within the profession.

A career in reporting or captioning offers:

- Flexible hours, often from home
- A high demand for workers – in some specialties, there's a looming shortage
- Full-time salaries that are solidly above the U.S. median, averaging over \$60,000 a year
- Education and training available at more than 100 community colleges and proprietary schools
- An associate's degree and certification that can be achieved in two-four years.

People considering a career in reporting are most likely to succeed if they:

- Have strong language skills.
- Are “audio” learners who quickly assimilate and process what they hear.
- Like and are comfortable with technology; realtime reporting and captioning require a high level of technical performance, and the technology is continually evolving.
- Good manual skills on a standard keyboard, although reporters will be trained in a different system.
- Thrive under time and deadline pressures. Reporters must be able to concentrate for long periods of time.
- Have an interest in owning their own business and time. Although some court reporters work full-time for judges and court administrators, many others freelance to attorneys. Broadcast captioners usually work for firms that provide assignments, but captioners often can determine their own availability. CART and Internet reporters often freelance.

#### NCRA-Certified Programs

The knowledge and skills to become a court reporter or stenocaptioner are taught at more than 100 reporter training programs, including proprietary schools, community colleges, and four-year universities. Many of these programs offer distance learning options.

The following is a link to NCRA’s list of certified and participating programs:  
<http://ncraonline.org/Careers/Schools/>

#### Career Options

According to the 2008-09 edition of the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, job opportunities for court reporters are expected to be excellent as job openings continue to outnumber jobseekers. Court reporters with certification should have the best job opportunities. Employment of court reporters is projected to grow faster than average for all occupations through 2016. Demand for court reporting services will be spurred by the continuing need for accurate transcription of proceedings in courts and in pretrial depositions, and by the growing need to create captions for live or prerecorded television and to provide other realtime translating services for people who are deaf and hard-of-hearing.

Court reporters are highly trained professionals who share a unique ability to convert the spoken word into information that can be read, searched and archived.

## **WHAT DO COURT REPORTERS DO?**

Court reporters capture the words spoken by everyone during a court or deposition proceeding. Court reporters then prepare verbatim transcripts of proceedings. The official record or transcript helps safeguard the legal process. When litigants want to exercise their right to appeal, they will use the transcript to provide an accurate record of what transpired during their case. During the discovery phase, attorneys also use deposition transcripts to prepare for trial. By combining their skills with the latest technology, some court reporters can provide realtime access to what is being said during a trial or deposition for the benefit of all involved parties. A court reporter providing realtime allows attorneys and judges to have immediate access to the transcript, while also providing a way for deaf and hard-of-hearing Americans to participate in the judicial process.

## **OTHER REPORTER CAREER PATHS**

More than 70 percent of the nation's 35,000-plus court reporters work outside of the courthouse. Because court reporting involves a highly specialized skill set, reporters have a variety of career options:

### **Official Reporter**

Official court reporters work for the judicial system to convert the spoken word into text during courtroom proceedings. The reporter also prepares official verbatim transcripts to be used by attorneys, judges, and litigants. Official court reporters are front and center at controversial or famous cases – criminal trials, millionaire divorces, government corruption trials and lawsuits – ensuring that an accurate, complete, and secure record of the proceedings is produced. Official court reporters may also provide realtime during a courtroom setting to allow participants to read on a display screen or computer monitor what is being said instantaneously.

### **Freelance Reporter**

Freelance reporters are hired by attorneys, corporations, unions, associations and other individuals and groups who need accurate, complete, and secure records of pretrial depositions, arbitrations, board of director meetings, stockholders meetings and convention business sessions.

### **Broadcast Captioner**

Broadcast captioners, also called stenocaptioners, use court reporting skills on the stenotype machine to provide captions of live television programs for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers through realtime technology that instantly produces readable English text. Captioners provide captions for local stations, national

networks and cable channels. They caption news, emergency broadcasts, sports events, and other programming.

### **CART Provider**

A version of the captioning process called Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), also known as live-event captioning, allows court reporters to provide more personalized services for deaf and hard-of-hearing people. CART providers accompany deaf and hard-of-hearing clients as needed – for example, to college classes – to provide an instant conversion of speech into text using the stenotype machine linked to a laptop computer.

### **Webcaster**

Webcasters are reporters who use their training to capture financial earnings reports, sales meetings, press conferences, product introductions, and technical training seminars and instantly transmit the captions to all parties involved via the Internet. As participants speak into telephones or microphones, the words appear on everyone's computers, accompanied by any relevant documents or graphics.

## **Student Profile, Training and Education**

### **A PROJECTED STUDENT PROFILE**

Reporting careers require from two to four years of technical training. More than 100 private and community colleges across the country offer an associate's degree in reporting. Many of these schools have a distance learning option that allows students to obtain their education wherever they live in the U.S.

Students must be able to meet deadlines, work well under pressure and concentrate for long periods of time. The most essential skill taught to reporting students is machine shorthand. Once a student has mastered the basics of machine shorthand, he or she will concentrate on building speed and accuracy. To graduate, students typically need to perform machine shorthand at a speed of at least 225 words per minute. Many jurisdictions require reporters to pass certification examinations that test written knowledge as well as speed and accuracy.

Some of the coursework students typically study includes civil and criminal law, grammar, stenographic theory, legal and business terminology, anatomy, medical and forensic terminology, computer technology, business management and judicial procedures.

For more information:

[www.bestfuture.com](http://www.bestfuture.com)

[www.bls.gov/oco/ocos152.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos152.htm)