

# The Evolution of Transcript Management Technology



The basic tasks of legal transcription have not changed substantially over the years. Stenographic reporting is still a high-skilled, high-pressure job requiring extraordinary speed and attention to detail and accuracy if the end result is to be a reliable record of who said what and when. While stenographic writers are now paired with laptop computers that output electronic transcripts, and video recording is beginning to be used in some courtrooms, the transcription skillset continues to be in demand in the legal world.



On the other hand, the *management* of transcripts—once created and converted to a digital format—is undergoing a rapid and substantial transformation that is streamlining the work of paralegals and attorneys and, ultimately, helping them do better legal work faster and at lower cost.

Three important features distinguish transcripts from other legal documents.

- *Transcripts are time-stamped.* Mismatched or poorly integrated technologies can compromise time stamps, which in turn can create confusion and slow down proceedings, or even cast doubt on legal reasoning.
- *Transcripts must be carefully paginated according to the rules of specific jurisdictions.* Court reporting software or other programs created to import or convert text from one application to another may not always be designed to optimally manage pagination.

- *Transcript designations play a significant role in legal proceedings.*

Designated excerpts from transcripts are key building blocks of legal arguments. Creating, tagging and cross-referencing designations is often a massive undertaking for paralegals, and many of the tools they use for this work are clumsy or manual.

A transcript is not just another document, and to date very few technology companies have the specialized legal expertise to design software that can deal effectively with each of these idiosyncrasies. Over the past few years there have been some exciting technological developments that are paving the way for much more efficient transcript management. For one thing, there are now digital import tools that are smart enough to recognize anomalies and fix issues related to time stamping and pagination, so we can be confident transcripts are truly accurate.

Beyond this development, there are several other technological advances that are changing the very nature of transcript management. The *first advance* is cloud-based computing. Because of the flexible and dynamic nature of the cloud, I predict the days of saving transcript files on a network drive or dumping them into an in-house legacy transcript management software will soon be over. You can't reliably search across multiple files in a network drive, nor can you easily view testimony at the macro level across witnesses. There are a few transcript management tools which represent a step in the right direction by offering functionalities like searching, annotation and hyperlinking across centralized transcripts, but these tools are often underutilized because they *only* handle transcripts—which is only one category within a very diverse collection of document types that legal teams mark, categorize, organize and otherwise pull together to make a case. This limitation forces the case team to toggle between multiple cumbersome software tools, each of which only addresses a sliver of the need.

This brings us to the *second factor* in the transformation of transcript management: the creation of virtual workspaces (in the cloud, of course) that handle everything pertaining to a legal matter, including transcripts, synchronized video, designations, key

documents, key facts, chronologies, attorney work product, and more. Not only do these workspaces make such materials available in a single, secure place, they also include a comprehensive set of tools for managing these materials and establishing logical

## The basic tasks of legal transcription have not changed substantially over the years.

relationships among them—thus generating new insights and, ultimately, winning case strategies. All of the materials are in a single virtual workspace, all are managed with a single toolset that accommodates highlighting, annotations, deposition and trial exhibits, hyperlinking, sharing work product with colleagues and so on. And all are accessible to authorized users from any connected device, including a smartphone. Imagine the difference this radical consolidation of tools, functionalities and materials can make for paralegals managing designations for a large, complex case. A single, smart, secure environment for managing everything—including, but not limited to, transcripts.

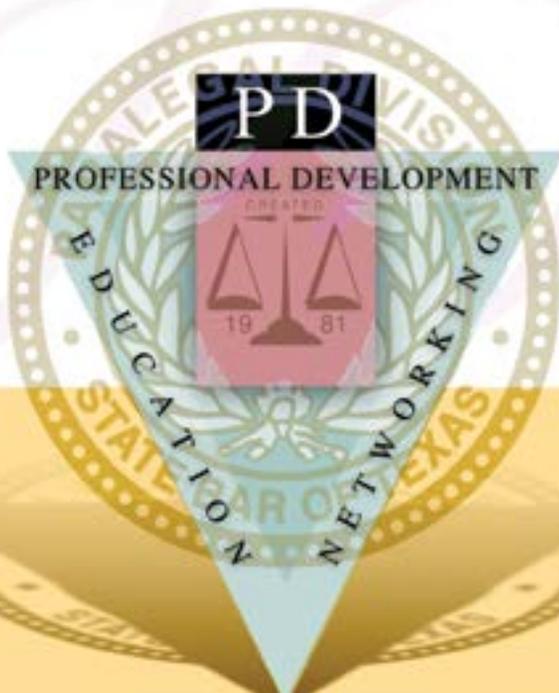
Which brings us to the *third factor* that is changing the nature of transcript management in today's legal environment: The importance of collaboration has finally begun to be reflected in legal technology. In fact, there is software in use today that combines each of these attributes:

- 1) available cloud-based virtual workspaces
- 2) designed specifically for legal collaboration and
- 3) able to accommodate the full range of litigation-related materials.

And, yes, they also can manage the idiosyncrasies and anomalies of time stamps and pagination unique to transcripts. Isn't it time you investigated the latest transcript management tools?

Clare Foley is vice president for litigation solutions for Opus 2 Magnum. Clare has been a driving force in the litigation services market for more than 20 years and, in her current role, advises law firms and corporate clients on their cloud collaboration strategies, specifically around the deployment of the Opus 2 Magnum platform. Although originally from Ireland, Clare lives in the United States and guides both U.S. business strategies and international services for Opus 2. Clare is a contributing author to several trade publications and a regular speaker on cloud technology.

✉ [cfoley@opus2.com](mailto:cfoley@opus2.com)



*Be a step above the rest –  
Join the Paralegal Division  
of the State Bar of Texas*

PD provides many benefits for career growth:

- Networking with paralegals across the state
- Powerful CLE opportunities such as Texas Advanced Paralegal Seminar (TAPS)
- Professional Development
- Professional magazine with substantive articles and updates from across the nation

**THINK ABOUT IT.....**  
**an organization designed just for YOU! ENHANCE YOUR CAREER by becoming a part of PD today.**

Go to [www.txpd.org](http://www.txpd.org) and see for yourself or contact the PD Coordinator via email at [pd@txpd.org](mailto:pd@txpd.org) or call (512) 280-1776