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A Better Option For Viewing Transcripts Electronically

By **N. KANE BENNETT**

Most lawyers are familiar with the standard types of transcripts for depositions. Generally, you can get a full-sized copy, condensed copy (mini), or a copy on diskette. If you prefer to get transcripts electronically, you are probably used to getting the diskette, which is referred to as an ASCII (pronounced "askee").

If you are familiar with ASCII, you also are likely aware of its limitations for use with transcripts. Fortunately, there is another available option for electronic transcripts referred to as an E-Transcript. Court reporting services such as Brandon Smith and Del Vecchio offer E-Transcripts through RealLegal LLC for minimal or no fee. With more widespread availability and little to no cost, it's likely that E-Transcripts will take over as the format of choice for deposition transcripts.

ASCII transcript files have noted advantages over paper only transcripts. With ASCII, you can receive transcripts on a diskette or via email. You can open transcripts on your PC and view it through your word processing program, such as Word. You can save the transcript to your PC for preservation, copying and future use.

From your word processing program, you can copy and paste the transcript into new documents for use in reports, deposi-

tion digests, and legal briefs. You can make notes and comments for use in cross-examination. You can also use ASCII transcript files with additional litigation and trial support software such as Summation and TrialDirector.

However, the limitations of ASCII transcript files are significant for lawyers. The biggest problem is the line and page numbering with a printed ASCII transcript often does not match the line and page numbering of the actual transcript. This problem limits the uses of ASCII and requires you to have available an actual paper transcript. Otherwise, you risk cross-examining a witness or citing to your brief with different lines and pages.

ASCII transcripts also present security problems because anyone can freely alter the text of the transcript you are viewing by deleting or adding text. If you are familiar with the way an ASCII transcript file prints, you also know that it does not print out from your PC and look the same as the actual transcript and you do not have options for printing mini transcripts.

I used to order ASCII diskettes from court reporters in addition to a full copy and a mini. After using E-Transcripts, however, I no longer order an ASCII. In fact, unless I am taking the deposition, I find that an E-Transcript is the only transcript I need. I do not need a full copy or a mini. If you are taking the deposition, however, you probably still need an original transcript.

E-Transcript files solve the problems associated with ASCII while offering the same paperless advantages. RealLegal's E-Transcript files guarantee page and line

integrity with the actual transcript. Additionally, the files come as read only, which generally means you cannot tamper with or alter the text. The files are also virus- and password-protected. For authenticity, and admissibility purposes, court reporters can provide an electronic signature.

Viewed on a computer, the transcript looks like a photograph of the actual paper transcript. You don't need any special software to receive and view it. All that is needed is RealLegal's "free" E-Transcript viewer. The viewer comes embedded with the file from the court reporter or can be separately downloaded.

A great feature of the E-Transcript file is the printing options. You can print an actual-sized transcript that looks the same as an original copy. You can also print up to 16 transcript pages per page for a mini transcript. This feature eliminates the need to order a full-sized or mini paper copy of the actual transcript.

Searching terms in an E-Transcript is also user friendly. There is a hyperlinked word index that is featured on the side of the transcript as you view it on your computer screen. Copying and pasting is available as well. If you are writing a brief, or digesting a deposition, you can copy and paste from the E-Transcript to a Word document. When you copy and paste, you also copy the exact page and line numbers. There is also no problem with using E-Transcript files with other litigation and trial support programs like Summation or TrialDirector.

If the court reporter does not offer E-Transcript files, RealLegal offers a pay-per-use service that allows you to take an ASCII file and covert it to an E-Transcript. If you are an ASCII user, you will enjoy the advantages of E-Transcripts. ■



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E-Transcript™

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