

I am simply amazed by the dramatic pace at which technology has advanced. Twenty-five years ago came the advent of CAT. Twenty years ago, computer-integrated courtrooms came on the scene. From that point forward, we have seen the various paths that court reporting, thanks in large part to technological advances, has taken: Realtime reporting in deposition and official settings; closed captioning and related software; CART or on-site realtime services for students in schools, colleges and universities; the Open Meetings Act being passed which resulted in transparency across the nation, making way for mass amounts of local governing agencies to offer off-site CART/captioning to the public. In that area alone, CART providers/captioners are writing various city and county council meetings, Metropolitan Transit Authority of New York committee meetings, national conferences and seminars in the United States and Canada, whether by means of a television or by Internet connection. I mean, think of that. Obviously reporters and the attendant industries have taken these new technologies and applied them to the betterment of our profession. There has even been captioning of NPR radio to the public.

Now infiltrating our lives are the latest technologies of texting, *facebook*, *Twitter*, *myspace*, cell phones linked via satellite, and other networking tools. These technologies can and do connect us to each other.

As an example, I am on *facebook*; Donna Clark-Licari is as well. I had never met Donna, but through our mutual friends on *facebook*, in this case fellow captioners, we had had dialog via computer back and forth, but never met each other face-to-face. We knew what each other looked like, just from photos posted on our *facebook* pages. Imagine how exciting it became when, at the NCRA convention, Donna and I ran into each other. I knew her; she knew me. We could barely contain our excitement. I said to her, "Oh, my gosh, Donna, I loved what you posted on the captioner forum about modem problems. It's great to meet you in person." Her response to me was, "Wow, Val, thank you. It's great to meet you as well." How phenomenal that two people who are connected via Internet only can become so familiar with one another, garner respect for one another, share common interests with one another, yet never meet. Think how that technological advancement linked us together when, under different circumstances, we may have passed each other at a national or state convention and not once said one word to each other, simply because we didn't know each other. Technology has come a long way, and our profession has come right along with it.

Rather than dismissing newer technology as isolating, we can use that same technology to bind and unite us as well. We as a profession are only as strong as our weakest link. So my question to you is, "How strong is your link? Where are you in the chain?" Many resist change and want to continue with old ways of thinking and working, but we must embrace these new technologies in order to not only survive, but to further advance as a profession. So, back to my original question then: Are you prepared? We will be offering several opportunities during the next year for you to connect with fellow professionals and continue your preparations. Please join us!