

A STUDY OF COURT REPORTER TRAINING
PROGRAMS IN TEXAS
AND OKLAHOMA

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The skill of the verbatim reporter, the trust placed in his/her integrity, honesty, impartiality and dexterity by members of the legal profession, render the title "verbatim reporter" a symbol of an honored profession (Bieber, 1966). Shorthand reporting is an interesting, though demanding, and well-paid career (Kacen, 1976). Court reporter training programs are intended for career-minded individuals who can demonstrate the capability and dedication to work hard to achieve the required skills necessary as a shorthand reporter (Capital City Trade and Technical School Catalog, 1981-1982). The field offers excellent job opportunities for talented persons willing to work hard to learn the necessary skills (Kacen, 1976). In addition to attractive earnings, benefits of varied work, professional environment, prestige, the chance for travel and the option of going into business for oneself attract individuals to this career field (Kacen, 1976).

More court reporters, hearing reporters, and convention reporters are in demand; the shortage is seriously hampering the processing of litigation in our courts. Conventions, conferences and hearings of nongovernmental organizations also go begging for shorthand reporters. There are several causes of the shortage of court reporters. The large increase in the amount of litigation has caused rapid expansion in the number of courts, requiring additional court reporters. Hearings, used increasingly in business and government as a means of discussing issues and

resolving differences, require shorthand reporters. Hundreds of conventions and conferences call for a record of the proceedings (Leathersich, 1972, p. 32).

Court reporting is an interesting, satisfying and well-paid career. Training programs are producing graduates to supply the demand for court reporters. In addition, less expenditure of time and money is required to prepare for shorthand reporting than for any other profession offering the possibility of like income (Leathersich, 1972).

However, information was gained during the data-gathering process which indicated that many students, after successfully completing their court reporter training, were unable to pass the state examination to obtain a license to work in the court reporting profession. "Training in the court reporting field is a difficult task for both students and instructors" (Jacobsen and Borchardt, 1980, p. 3). To be successful in completing training, students should master the shorthand machine skill, obtain an excellent foundation in proper grammar usage, in word knowledge, and build an extensive vocabulary in law, legal and medical terminology. Students also have to learn preparation of transcripts and other legal documents in the proper legal format. Acquiring the skill and good foundation with related areas mentioned, will help determine the degree of success the individual will experience as a court reporter when he goes onto the job (Sappington, 1982c).

According to Jacobsen and Borchardt (1980, p. 3) . . . "the rate of student withdrawal and failure in such programs is high." Less than half of those who begin in a machine shorthand course will persist beyond the first or second semester. Students need encouragement

and motivation so they will continue to progress and accelerate in their training. It is difficult for them to continually maintain the discipline required to successfully complete court reporter training (Austin, 1982). Students, who are admitted but fail to complete their training, represent a waste of time, money and effort for the training institution and the instructors as well as for themselves (Jacobsen and Borchardt, 1980).

"The reporting profession offers challenging, interesting, and rewarding work; however, it requires manual dexterity, accuracy and perseverance to put in long hours of practice" (Kennedy, 1980, p. 24). However, some of the students who had the interest and who had persevered through the disciplinary measures which enabled them to successfully complete their training had additional problems.

After completing the court reporter training, these students were not totally prepared to pass the examination required to obtain a license to work and to function competently in the court reporting profession. Other students experienced difficulty and problems in the job situation due to the lack of learning opportunities covering specific job-related knowledge. Therefore, the researcher decided to conduct a study of the court reporter training programs to determine whether the programs needed improvement.

Statement of the Problem

The problem with which this study dealt was the lack of knowledge relative to strengths and weaknesses of the court reporter training programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine perceived major strengths and weaknesses of the court reporter training program in an Oklahoma college and a Texas school.

Research Questions

The research questions chosen for this study were as follows:

1. How is the court reporter training program perceived by court reporters, instructors and students?
2. What aspects are viewed as necessary to improve court reporter training programs?

Need for the Study

Graduates of court reporter training programs, as they are presently structured, have experienced the need for more knowledge and expertise in numerous areas related to their training and work situations. If the present course of study could be improved to be more closely related to numerous situations which actually occur in a court of law or other types of work assignments, the difficulties experienced could be eliminated. As a result of this study, it was hoped that an awareness of instructor and student needs could, in the future, aid students and employers by producing more effective training programs, more responsive to present and future needs.

Limitations

The following were limitations or constraints of this study:

1. The data gathered were limited to an Oklahoma college and a Texas school that offered court reporter training programs.
2. The resources from which the sample was obtained were limited to information and data provided by the instructors and students of court reporting of each school or college and by court reporters of the community surrounding each school or college.
3. The questionnaire technique has some inherent shortcomings.
4. Participants who received the questionnaire in class groups received no special instruction or guidance other than the cover letter which accompanied each questionnaire. No participant of any group of the survey received verbal contact with the researcher.

Assumptions

The assumptions made before undertaking this study were as follows:

1. The court reporting field will continue to have a demand for professionals.
2. Students, instructors, and court reporters used for this study were representative of future students, instructors, and court reporters.
3. There is room for improvement in the court reporter training program.

Definition of Terms

The definition of terms, as used in this study, are as follows:

Adequate - For the purpose of this study, a term which means that court reporter training programs produce graduates who have acquired the necessary machine shorthand skill and related knowledge to obtain gainful employment as a court reporter in the court reporting profession.

Certificate of Proficiency (CP) - Certification received by an individual who has passed the national examination required for a CP. This certificate is sometimes called the Merit Certificate (Riple, 1982).

Certified Shorthand Reporter (CSR) - Certification received by an individual who has passed the state's examination required to obtain a license to work as a court reporter. The National Shorthand Reporters Association (NSRA) requires members to write 225 words per minute to become certified (Kacen, 1976).

Court Reporter - Specialized shorthand reporter who writes, by means of a shorthand machine, all statements made at legal proceedings and whose records are the official transcripts. An individual who writes the proceedings that take place in a court of law is known as an official court reporter (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 1980).

Court Reporter Training (CRT) Program - A series of various established courses designed to provide students with skills related to court reporting. Theory courses teach students the keyboard and operation of the stenotype machine, while speed building courses teach students to record dictation at high rates of speed, until the rate of 225 words per minute is obtained. Related courses teach students to build vocabulary in legal and medical terminology to prepare them for the exposure they will experience in the job situation. Related courses also teach how to prepare legal forms in proper legal format.

Daily Classes - For the purpose of this study, a term which means a structured classroom period each day which would afford a court reporter student learning opportunities that would enable him to progress and accelerate at a faster rate, or pace, than classes two or three times per week (Peterson, 1982).

Free-lance Reporters - Specialized shorthand reporters who record out-of-court testimony for attorneys, proceedings of meetings, conventions and other private activities. Still others record the proceedings in the Congress of the United States, in state legislatures, and in both state and federal agencies. Sometimes the latter are also called hearing reporters and legislative reporters (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 1980).

Instructors - Individuals who teach students the court reporting skills and knowledge.

Less than Adequate - For the purpose of this study, a term which means court reporter training programs which produce graduates who possess court reporter skills and knowledge, but without the sufficient skills necessary to ensure the students' passing the state's examinations to obtain a license to work. In addition, elimination of on the job problems have not been stressed.

Machine Shorthand - A phonetic system, i.e., dictation is taken by writing the way words sound, using English letters, printed on a paper tape, on a shorthand machine (Stenograph Corporation, 1982).

National Shorthand Reporters Association (NSRA) - A national association of certified shorthand reporters. General requirements and minimum standards for CSR are established by the Board of Approved

Reporters Training (BART) of the NSRA. NSRA headquarters is located in Vienna, Virginia (NSRA, 1982).

Shorthand Reporters - Specialized stenographers who record all statements made in a proceeding. This is most often done by shorthand machines. (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 1980).

Strengths - For the purposes of this study, those parts of the court reporter training program which make the overall training better than such training would be were the certain courses or other characteristics excluded from the program. "Strengths" should be considered the strong parts of the overall program.

Students - Individuals who study the court reporting skills and knowledge.

Weaknesses: For the purpose of this study, the absence of those certain characteristics or courses which serve to render the graduate less prepared for the work situation than desired. "Weaknesses" should be considered the parts that are absent but were they included, would make the overall training program better and stronger. Graduates would be better prepared were the additional learning opportunities available to them.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I introduced the study, presenting the problem, purpose, research questions, need for the study, limitations, assumptions and definitions of the terms used in this study. Chapter II includes a review of related literature concerning court reporting in general, some of the major strengths and weaknesses of the court reporter training program and how the training program could be improved in

order to more effectively and more responsively meet the needs of future students and employers. Chapter III discusses the population and sample, development of the survey instrument, procedures for collecting data and analysis of the data. Chapter IV presents the findings of the study. Chapter V contains suggestions, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the literature was conducted to determine what information was available to the researcher that related, either directly or indirectly, to court reporter training programs. The review is organized into the following sections: (1) Facts and Information, (2) Court Reporter Training Programs, (3) Strengths of the Court Reporter Training Programs, (4) Weaknesses of the Court Reporter Training Programs, (5) Disadvantages of the Court Reporter Training Programs, and (6) Summary.

Facts and Information

Brief History of Occupation

Verbatim reporting is far from new. The deliberations of the Roman Senate and the speeches of its more famous members were recorded on wax tablets by scribes (Miller, Foster and Fincun, 1978). This system of shorthand, a system of abbreviating the Latin language, was taught in Roman Schools and remained in use for about 700 years (Occupational Guidance, 1979). It was used by reporters hired by the early church to record the trials of Christians (Occupational Guidance, 1979). There are records of trials and hearings in English dating back to the year 1292 (Occupational Guidance, 1979). Less than a hundred years ago, one became a reporter via the apprenticeship system. A

young person typed for a court reporter from the reporter's dictation of the notes he had written at trial. It was a double-writing operation, but it served two purposes. The apprentice learned much from his mentor about the art of writing shorthand, acquiring speed through his work as an amanuensis (secretary), and a knowledge of good English usage; he also learned what court reporting was all about - and how much more there was to it than just writing fast. Eventually, the apprentice got a position vacated due to age or retirement (Miller, Foster and Fincun, 1978). The apprentice system remained "in effect for quite some time" (Miller, Foster and Fincun, 1978, p. i).

Typists at the time working from cylinders or tapes studied their pen or machine shorthand after working hours, sometimes using their cylinders or tapes for practice after transcription, and prepared themselves for their careers (Miller, Foster and Fincun, 1978, p. i).

Court Reporters

Official court reporters work exclusively for a specific court, assigned to a judge on the basis of an annual salary. Free-lance reporters work for a court reporting firm or are self-employed. These individuals have greater variety of assignments and usually work on the basis of hourly wage plus a page rate for all pages and copies of transcripts they produce. Other reporters are known as hearing reporters, who perform duties at governmental agency hearings, and legislative reporters, who take notes in law-making bodies. However, reporters are used in many other places such as important meetings, conferences, conventions, investigations, for taking depositions and recording arbitrations (Oscar Rose Junior College, 1982).

Working Conditions

Court Reporters' work environments consist of surroundings of courtrooms and the offices of attorneys. The work environments are clean, comfortable, well-lighted, air conditioned and ventilated. The reporters remain seated and perform considerable movement of fingers and hands throughout most of the work day (Careers, Inc., 1979). Reporters must be alert in order to record all testimony. Speed is determined by dexterity, but it is also dependent on the ability to accurately hear and understand every word spoken. For such understanding, an extensive vocabulary and a thorough knowledge of grammar are as essential as good hearing (Kacen, 1976). Many times witnesses talk too fast, talk at the same time, have poor diction, speak with a foreign accent or can be difficult to hear (Careers, Inc., 1979). Testimony taken during court proceedings ranges from boring and repetitious to interesting, humorous, or offensive. When rapid deliveries of transcripts are required, a reporter works with another reporter and a crew which includes typing and clerical assistance. Thus reporters do not always work alone.

Earnings, Compensation and Hours

In the United States, the general earnings of court reporters range between \$18,000 and \$45,000 a year (Oscar Rose Junior College, 1982). Beginning reporters average between \$15,000 and \$17,000 a year (Houston Post, 1981). Reporters with some experience make as much as \$25,000 per year (Careers, Inc., 1979). Established free-lance reporters average \$35,000 to \$40,000 and can make as much as \$50,000 to \$60,000 annually (Houston Post, 1981).

Working hours are determined by court, conference, or convention proceedings. Reporters' hours are often irregular and exceed the normal 40-hour week. Records are usually transcribed after normal work hours. Reporters receive additional compensation based on the length of the transcripts (Careers, Inc., 1979). Fringe benefits of court reporters usually include a one-month paid vacation each year and paid holidays. Other benefits are sick leave, health and life insurance coverage and pension plans (Oscar Rose Junior College, 1982).

Employment Prospects and Outlook

Because demand for court reporters presently exceeds supply, employment prospects for court reporting school graduates are excellent (Oscar Rose Junior College, 1982). Employment opportunities for court reporters should continue through the 1980's. In addition to new openings created by the growing number of court cases which have expanded at all levels and by increased demand, several hundred court reporters are needed each year to replace those who retire or leave the occupation for other reasons (Careers, Inc., 1979).

While the overall demand for stenographers is declining, the outlook for skilled shorthand reporters remains healthy. The increase in civil law suits and criminal cases is providing an impetus for expansion of court systems and, thus, the number of jobs for reporters (Occupational Guidance, 1979, pp. 111-116).

Related Career Fields

Other related and more familiar careers include stenographer; general, legal, technical, and medical secretary; medical office

assistant; and reproduction typist. Additional more difficult and challenging career fields include foreign language translator and computer operating personnel (Careers, Inc., 1979).

The keyboard shorthand skills of court reporters also prepare the individuals for modern information handling, word processing technology and the computer science fields, enabling the students, who wish to work toward a variety of administrative and management positions. For example, administrative-executive secretary positions include working with top management to coordinate projects, provide administrative support and possible supervision of other staff members. Those in medical scientific secretary positions work closely with doctors, researchers and scientists preparing research reports for hospitals, laboratories, or universities. Those in legal secretary positions prepare documents and transcribe legal testimony for lawyers. This type work prepares individuals to move into paralegal work assisting lawyers with research for cases (Stenograph Corporation, 1982).

Physical and Personal Requirements

Age, sex, strength or appearance are immaterial, provided the court reporters have the physical stamina to endure the day in court or the day's assignment, if not in the courtroom. Persons considering a court reporting career should have above average academic ability and the skills necessary to develop exceptional typing and shorthand speeds. They should have excellent hearing and vision, eye-hand coordination and manual dexterity. Emotional stability, patience, accuracy, and the ability to organize and concentrate are essential characteristics.

These individuals should also be conscientious, orderly and able to get along well with people. Pleasant and outgoing personalities are considered as assets (Careers, Inc., 1979).

Kacen (1976) surveyed 35 National Shorthand Reporters Association (NSRA) approved schools of shorthand reporting. Responses received from the schools' directors ranked, by order of importance, the following nine criteria for success as a reporter: (1) good knowledge of English, (2) persistence or drive, (3) high general intelligence, (4) good manual dexterity, (5) ability to work under pressure, (6) maturity, (7) courteous manner, (8) previous work experience, and (9) college degree.

Kacen (1976) reported responses in a miscellaneous category were received which suggested that prospective court reporters should also possess a willingness to please clients, typing skills, and the ability to adapt to different work situations.

Educational Background

Graduation from high school (or equivalent General Educational Development [GED]) is the minimum education required for entry into a court reporter training programs (Careers, Inc., 1979). Most schools require applicants to be 17 years old (Kacen, 1976).

Court Reporter Training Programs

Court reporter training programs presently include courses in (1) shorthand, to enable students to record, with accuracy, at least 225 words per minute; (2) typing, to will enable students to type at least 60 words per minute; (3) English, covering grammar, word

study, punctuation, spelling and capitalization; (4) law, including principles of civil and criminal law, legal terminology and common Latin phrases, rules of evidence, court procedures, the duties of court reporters, the ethics of the profession, and visits to actual trials; and (5) elementary anatomy and physiology and medical word study including medical prefixes, roots and suffixes (Careers, Inc., 1979).

In some states, court reporters must hold Certificates of Proficiency from the NSRA or from state agencies to qualify for appointments. Applicants for appointments as official court reporters in U.S. District Courts must have four years of prime court reporting experience in addition to a Certificate of Proficiency from the NSRA (Careers, Inc., 1979).

Strengths of the Court Reporter

Training Programs

The court reporter training programs were discussed with Peterson (1982) who is an instructor as well as a student of court reporting. Some of the stronger parts of the court reporter training programs, according to Peterson, are mentioned below. Literature researched substantiated the information which was given by Peterson.

Learning the Skill

Court reporter training programs have been designed to prepare students to be proficient in their career skills. The training programs have been successful and doing a good job (Peterson, 1982). Students learn the keys and basics of the shorthand machine in machine shorthand

theory courses. After the basics course, they enroll in speed building courses where they learn to write dictation at the speed of 225 words per minute (Knapp, 1982). Some schools give dictation to students for practice at speeds over 250 words per minute to enable them to write with more ease at 225 words per minute (Capital City Trade and Technical School Catalog, 1981-1982). The 225 words per minute speed is required of reporters to become Certified Court Reporters by the NSRA (NSRA, 1982).

Associated Courses/Knowledges

According to Knapp (1982), a major strength of court reporter training programs is that the programs provide learning opportunities which enhance students' abilities and knowledge in related areas with which they will work. The related areas include courses in English, typewriting, transcription, law and legal terminology, medical terminology and dictation classes (Knapp, 1982). English courses are required in most schools where students strive to complete associate degrees (Alvin Community College, 1983). When students elect to learn the career skill without completing associate degrees in court reporting, English courses are not required (Oscar Rose Junior College, 1981-1982). The machine shorthand skill was found to be easier to learn when students possessed typewriting skills (Kennedy, 1979).

Law and legal terminology courses were designed to help students build legal vocabularies and develop skills in recognizing the meaning of legal terminology by studying prefixes, suffixes, word roots and abbreviations (Bethscheider and Knapp, 1978). Over 80 percent of the cases in civil and criminal court requires taking and

transcribing dictation of medical material. For this reason, the study of anatomy of the body has been included in the medical terminology courses (Bethscheider and Knapp, 1978). According to Bethscheider and Knapp (1978), it is essential for court reporters to be proficient in recognizing, using and spelling law and medical terminology since this is the area within which they work. Even minute errors in letters, legal instruments and transcripts can cause serious repercussions (Knapp, 1981). These courses are valuable to the students in work performance.

Training Materials

In addition to learning the career skill and completing the courses associated with court reporter training, training materials provided to aid and assist students' learning have provided another major strength to the training programs. Professionally made practice tapes, which consist of various types of testimony materials, dictated at various speeds, have been advantageous to the students of Oscar Rose Junior College (Peterson, 1982).

Training materials consist of (1) textbooks for all the courses included in court reporter training programs, (2) other books covering various aspects of court reporting designed to prepare students for their careers, (3) books to aid educators in teaching, (4) dictation books for instructors to use for dictating to classes, and (5) special dictionaries written for machine shorthand. There are cassette tapes for students to use for practice at home and articles written by practicing court reporters. The NSRA Magazine, known as the National Shorthand Reporter, contains articles pertaining to all

aspects of court reporting written to help prepare students for the work world ahead (Peterson, 1982).

Computer Technology

Computer technology has impacted shorthand reporting. Transcription time and effort required to produce transcripts have been reduced; backlogs of untranscribed notes that impede the efficient operation of our courts have been diminished somewhat (Miller, Foster and Fincun, 1978). Encoding devices that attach to the reporters' shorthand machines encode notes on magnetic tapes. The tapes, when fed directly into a computer, produce quick and easily corrected printouts of the proceedings (Stenograph Corporation, 1982). This technology has greatly reduced the time-consuming tasks of transcribing notes.

Higher Education

Court reporter training programs not only prepare students for entry-level employment but also provide stepping stones for additional training at the technical or four-year college level (Hauelsen, 1975). Leathersich (1972, p. 32) stated, "if at all possible, the prospective reporter should attend college. This would provide the academic background so helpful to the reporter in his work."

Weaknesses of the Court Reporter

Training Programs

The court reporter training program was discussed with Austin (1982)

who is an instructor of court reporting. Some of the weaker parts of the court reporter training programs, according to Austin, are mentioned below. Literature researched substantiated the information which was given by Austin. According to Austin (1982), the inclusion of certain additional courses to existing court reporter training programs could strengthen the programs.

Additional Courses Needed

English. As previously stated, English courses are not required at most schools offering court reporter training. More English courses are needed to expose students to grammar, spelling, capitalization, punctuation and vocabulary (word knowledge) (Austin, 1982). Riple (1982) confirmed that she had observed that most students were lacking in basic skills in English. Correct spelling, punctuation, and proper use of grammar are vitally important (Austin, 1982). Failure to correctly spell and punctuate the prepared transcripts will be a determining factor as to whether or not students do well as court reporters (Sappington, 1982c).

Internship. Internship courses are needed and could be invaluable for teaching students more closely what goes on in a courtroom (Austin, 1982). Students have experienced the need for experienced-based learning (Kennedy, 1980). Through internships, students would learn by observing court reporters on the job. In this way students would learn what their work world will be like and what they will work with daily. Ideas would be gained and ways of handling situations would be learned by visiting and observing live court and other legal proceedings. Students would learn the methods and procedures that are acceptable

to the court. They would also learn what methods work best for handling situations pertaining to individuals' behavior in court (Sappington, 1982c). Some schools provide mock trials to give students work world experience (Leathersich, 1972). The study conducted by Kennedy (1980) to determine the need for internships provided substantial evidence to support the need for internships. Increased job placement opportunities for graduates also resulted from this study.

Courtroom Procedures. The court reporter training lacking in courtroom procedures courses. This course is designed to teach students general knowledge about the court reporting profession by simulating actual work conditions. Internships provide the only other way students presently have to learn the general knowledge (Peterson, 1982).

The types of procedures students are required to have learned for proficiency on the job are as follows: how to prepare depositions, swear in witnesses, mark exhibits and identify speakers in multi-speaker situations (Sappington, 1982b). Other procedures include knowing how to properly prepare transcripts and numerous and varied legal forms. Students should have learned how to prepare legal forms in proper format and style of case, i.e., if the matters were arguments, stipulations or excerpts. Units to teach students how to prepare legal forms could be developed and included in the courtroom procedures course (Weidmann, 1982). Teaching students the methods acceptable by the court for gracefully stopping court proceedings, when necessary, provides valuable training (Weidmann, 1982). This instruction could also be included in courtroom procedures

course (Weidmann, 1982). Finally, students are required to have learned proper use of the library and reference materials, such as, how to research citations (Sappington, 1982b). According to Bethscheider and Knapp (1978), this vital course bridges the gap between classroom and the working world, giving the student the experience essential to assure confidence and ability necessary on the job after course completion.

General Office Practices. General office practices courses have been designed to teach free-lance and official court reporters their office duties and responsibilities. In addition to learning the use of office dictation equipment, students would learn to dictate for their transcriber, keep accounting and tax records, perform basic bookkeeping, letter writing and use of video tapes. In this course, students are required to apply previous training to actual simulated work situations as done in courtroom procedures (Knapp, 1982).

Business Communications/Business Management. Ripple (1982) stated that another course that is needed is one on business communications, to help students develop skills in techniques of writing business communications. Emphasis placed on the writing of letters involving credit and collections, remittances, acknowledgements and inquiries could be valuable in teaching the managing of office duties and responsibility. A business management course needs to be designed to teach court reporters how to deal with collection problems with clients. They need to know a good way to handle delivery of transcripts to lessen collection problems they may encounter. This type course could help the student learn for future reference, general knowledge about how to run his own business.

Motivation and Discipline. Motivation and discipline courses could provide the much needed support and encouragement students need in this area. Teaching students to realize that they must discipline themselves to devote their own mind and time to achieving their skill is difficult (Austin, 1982). Motivation and discipline to practice on their machines are major factors for being successful at achieving the skill necessary for gainful employment. Learning and retention are poor when lapses of study and practice of two or three days have occurred. Students, when discouraged, need to be assured of their ability to learn. Chances of success for students are directly proportioned to the long hours devoted to practice (Kennedy, 1979).

Disadvantages of Court Reporter Training Programs

In discussing the court reporter training program with Austin (1982), several drawbacks of the training program were indicated. Those disadvantages, described by Austin (1982) as such, are outlined as follows.

Aptitude Measuring Instrument

There is a lack of aptitude measuring instruments for use in entrance examinations for beginning court reporter students (Austin, 1982). Although published statistics are rare, personal experiences of those involved in this area indicated high rates of student withdrawal and failure in such programs (Jacobsen, 1980). Schools are not able to test to determine if students have the aptitude necessary

to complete the training (Austin, 1982). Students who are admitted but fail to complete the training represent a considerable waste of time and money both for the training institutions and the students (Jacobsen, 1980). Availability of an aptitude measuring instruments could help avoid the frustration, loss of time, money and effort (Austin, 1982).

Often, the admissions requirements for court reporter training programs are the same general admissions requirements which apply to the college as a whole (Jacobsen, 1980). In a survey made by Kacen (1976), nearly half of 21 schools surveyed required their applicants to take entrance examinations. However, the schools devised their own tests and the tests evaluated only language and thinking aptitudes.

Jacobsen (1980) stated that her study was undertaken in an attempt to find an aptitude-test battery which could be administered to beginning court reporting students at MacCormac College. Plans were to use results of such a test battery to predict success of students and counsel them regarding admission to the court reporter training program. The four-test battery which was developed as a result of this study has been demonstrated to be a better predictor of student success in court reporting than the combination of ACT composite score and high school record which had been used previously by MacCormac College. Jacobsen stated that the staff of MacCormac College believed the aptitude-test battery developed could significantly improve the efficacy of the admissions process for other schools and colleges that provide court reporter training programs.

Training Schools

A noticeable disadvantage of court reporter training is the lack of training schools (Sappington, 1982a). Oklahoma has a shortage of training programs available to students who aspire to the court reporting profession (Peterson, 1982). At the time of this writing, Oscar Rose Junior College, Midwest City, Oklahoma is the only school in the state which offers court reporter training (Peterson, 1982). The Oscar Rose Junior College Program is offered by evening classes due to the lack of sufficient students needed for day classes.

Evening class scheduling has caused other disadvantages. Court reporter students need daily dictation in order to progress and accelerate in their training (Peterson, 1982). With the Monday, Wednesday and Friday or Tuesday and Thursday scheduling, they cannot experience daily dictation. Students have experienced the need for more and better class scheduling (Sappington, 1982a).

Kennedy (1979) stated that her study found that courses offered during daytime held greater success for students than those at night. The major factor in success is the continuity of classes; therefore, the five daily classes resulted in greater success than meetings held two evenings per week.

Instructors

According to Peterson (1982), another disadvantage of court reporter training is a lack of available qualified instructors. Most instructors are practicing court reporters who also wish to teach. In court reporting, it is not necessary that an instructor possess a high degree of skill, but that the instructor have a

good knowledge of the theory and enough skill to be a good instructor of others (Kennedy, 1979).

Summary

Court reporting appears to be an honored profession, offering excellent job opportunities and a rewarding career for career-minded persons. Those who aspire to the court reporting career have to work hard to achieve the required skill. They have a lot to learn in addition to the skill.

Information pertaining to the various knowledge required of court reporters was given. Information pertaining to court reporter training was also given. Explanations were enumerated pertaining to the difficulties experienced by students with on-the-job performance after training completion.

Although there are both strong and weaker parts to the court reporter training programs, minor adjustment could further strengthen the training programs. Because of the demand for more court reporters, this profession has become more respectable and has begun to attract more students. Schools and colleges have made a good start toward meeting the demand for more court reporters.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine the major strengths and weaknesses of the court reporter training program. The findings gathered from this study could then be used to improve existing court reporter training programs so those programs could more effectively and more responsively meet the needs of future aspirants to the court reporting profession. This chapter describes the population and sample used in this study, reviews the development of the survey instrument, the collection of the data and the data analysis.

The Population and Sample

The population from which the sample was drawn consisted of the entire court reporting student body and all instructors of court reporting of the Oscar Rose Junior College in Oklahoma and Capital City Trade and Technical School in Texas. The population also consisted of a random sample of court reporters within the community surrounding each college and school surveyed. The study population was composed of 226 individuals from the three participant groups.

Development of the Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire designed by the researcher. It consisted of a variety of questions concerning

court reporter training programs, courses and training materials. Questions were constructed from information gathered from personal interviews with professionals and students associated with the court reporting profession.

The initial questionnaire was field tested for clarity and content by one court reporter, one student of court reporting and eight personnel of the Education Office, Tinker Air Force Base. See Appendix A for a complete listing of the names of the individuals who field tested the initial questionnaire. Minor revisions, based on comments from the field testing, were made. These revisions consisted only of corrections of a typographical error, sentence punctuation, and change of one singular verb to plural form. See Appendix A for a sample of the final questionnaire. No revisions or corrections were made to the cover letter which was attached to each questionnaire used for the field testing.

Collection of Data

The questionnaire was hand-carried and delivered to the instructors of court reporting who administered the questionnaire in their classes at the school or college offering the training programs. Students who received the questionnaire in their class groups were asked to participate, but received no special instruction or guidance other than the cover letter which was attached to and accompanied each questionnaire. The questionnaire was also sent by mail to practicing court reporters of the community surrounding the same schools or colleges that offered court reporter training programs. The cover letter which was attached to and accompanied each questionnaire explained the

purpose of the study, the questionnaire, and the method for returning it to the researcher. No participant of any group of those surveyed received verbal contact with the researcher. The cover letter was the only communication used by the researcher. See Appendix B for a copy of the cover letter. Self-addressed, postage-paid envelopes were provided for convenience of respondents in returning the completed questionnaires to the researcher. No follow-up attempts to receive more completed questionnaires were made.

Analysis of Data

The data were compiled from the returned questionnaires. The questionnaires were sorted into groups of court reporter students and instructors, and practicing court reporters. Information given was tallied to determine the differences in perceptions of the students, instructors and court reporters within the participative group for each question asked in the questionnaire. Tables were prepared to present the results obtained from the survey participants. The data were analyzed by use of a frequency count, percentages, range and means. The results were presented and reported in table and narrative form.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine the major strengths and weaknesses of the court reporter training programs. The findings of this study are presented in the following sections: (1) Response Rate, (2) Participation Characteristics, (3) Perceptions of the Court Reporter Training Program, and (4) Improvement of the Court Reporter Training Program.

Response Rate of Study Participants

The response rates of participants of this study are presented in Table I. One hundred percent of both the court reporting students and instructors at the Oscar Rose Junior College in Oklahoma participated in the study. Forty-three percent of the court reporting students and 67 percent of the instructors of the Capital City Trade and Technical School in Texas were study participants. Twenty-five percent of the Oklahoma court reporters responded while 55 percent of the Texas court reporters responded to the questionnaire. Of the total number of individuals contacted for the survey (226), 105 persons responded which was an overall response rate of 46 percent.

TABLE I
RESPONSE RATE OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Participant Group	Responses N=105	Total Distributed N=226	Percent
Students			
Oklahoma	24	24	100
Texas	56	130	43
Instructors			
Oklahoma	2	2	100
Texas	4	6	67
Court Reporters			
Oklahoma	14	55	25
Texas	<u>5</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>55</u>
Total	105	226	46

Participation Characteristics

Responses of participants to questions pertaining to participation in court reporter training programs are presented in Table II. These questions concerned formal training, average distance students traveled to obtain their training and amount of time spent practicing their machine shorthand skill. All the students and instructors of the participant group reported that they were presently engaged in or have had formal training. Of 19 court reporters surveyed (14 in Oklahoma and five in Texas), only two reported that they had not had formal training.

The average distance traveled by students to obtain training was a range of five to 25 miles for the majority of all Oklahoma and Texas students. The next highest average distance traveled by students was a range of one to five miles. One Oklahoma student reported that she traveled in excess of 150 miles to obtain training. The majority of instructors reported that they lived within 25 miles from their training school while only one reported that she traveled a range of 26 to 50 miles to the training school. The majority of court reporters reported that they traveled a range of one to five miles for training while four reporters stated that they traveled in excess of 150 miles.

The majority of all Oklahoma and Texas students reported that they practiced writing their skill on their machines one and one-half to two hours per day outside the classroom. A large number reported that they practiced one hour or less per day. Eighty-six percent of the students practiced two hours or less per day. Most students

TABLE II
 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING PARTICIPATION IN
 TRAINING PROGRAMS BY PARTICIPANT GROUP

Participation Characteristics	FREQUENCY					
	Student		Instructor		Court Reporter	
	OK N=24	TX N=56	OK N=2	TX N=4	OK N=14	TX N=5
Formal Training						
Yes	24	56	2	4	13	4
No	0	0	0	0	1	1
Average Distance to Training						
1 - 5 miles	7	11	0	2	7	1
6 - 25 miles	11	32	0	1	2	0
26 - 50 miles	5	6	1	0	0	0
51 - 150 miles	0	4	0	0	1	3
150 +	1	1	0	0	4	0
No Response	0	2	1	1	0	1
Practice Time						
0 - 1 hours	8	22	-	-	-	-
1.1 - 2 hours	13	26	-	-	-	-
2.1 - 3 hours	1	6	-	-	-	-
3.1 - 4 hours	1	1	-	-	-	-
4.1 - 5 hours	0	1	-	-	-	-
5.1 +	1	0	-	-	-	-

(57.5 percent) practiced from one to three hours per day outside the classroom time. One Oklahoma student reported that she practiced six hours per day.

Responses to questions related to students' preferences for class scheduling are presented in Table III. Thirty-eight percent of the Oklahoma students and 93 percent of the Texas students preferred daily classes. While 29 percent of the Oklahoma students preferred class three times per week, only three percent of the Texas students chose three class periods per week as their preference. Slightly more than 11 percent (11.25) of all students had no preference. The majority of all students (75.75 percent) preferred daytime rather than evening classes on a daily basis.

Perceptions of the Court Reporter Training Programs

The results from Question 11 "In general, are present training programs: successful and doing a good job; not successful or doing a poor job; adequate; or less than adequate?" are presented in Table IV. Forty-six percent of Oklahoma and Texas students responded that present training programs were successful while 42 percent responded the programs were adequate. Fifty percent of all instructors said the programs were successful while 33 percent said they were adequate. Sixteen percent of the instructors said the programs were less than adequate. However, virtually all (95 percent) of the practicing court reporters felt that present training programs were adequate but less than successful. Overall, of the 105 respondents, 39 percent said present training programs were successful

TABLE III
 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RELATED TO PREFERRED
 SCHEDULING BY STUDENTS

Schedule	Oklahoma		Texas	
	N	%	N	%
Frequency of classes				
Daily	9	38	52	93
3 times/week	7	29	2	3
2 times/week	0	0	1	2
No Response	8	33	1	2
Time of Day				
Day	8	33	55	98.2
Evening	11	46	1	1.8
Either	4	17	0	0
No Response	1	4	0	0

TABLE IV
 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING PERCEIVED SUCCESS
 OF PRESENT TRAINING PROGRAMS BY PARTICIPANT GROUP

Opinion	Student		Instructors		Court Reporters		Total N=105	
	OK N=24	TX N=56	OK N=2	TX N=4	OK N=14	TX N=5	N	%*
Successful	13	24	1	2	0	1	41	39.1
Not Successful	0	2	0	0	3	0	5	4.8
Adequate	10	24	1	1	8	2	46	43.8
Less Than Adequate	1	5	0	1	2	1	10	9.5
No Response	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1.9</u>
Total	24	56	2	4	14	5	105	99.1

*Numbers may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

while 43 percent said training programs were adequate.

Responses to Question 18 pertaining to the quality of court reporter training programs are presented in Table V. The majority of all respondents in the participant group felt that the quality of present training programs was fair to good (43 percent said fair; 24 percent said good). Most of the practicing court reporters (84 percent) said present training programs were poor to fair. Of the total group, 5.7 percent said present training programs were excellent.

Responses to the questions concerning impressions of the court reporter training programs are presented in Table VI. Sixty percent of the respondents felt that employers were satisfied and favorably impressed with the proficiency of today's training program graduates. Slightly more than half (53 percent) of the practicing court reporters felt satisfied and favorably impressed with their own proficiency upon completion of their training programs. The remaining 47 percent felt not pleased or unhappy to very unhappy with their own proficiency level upon completion of training.

The results of responses to the questions concerning training materials are presented in Table VII. The majority of all respondents (58 percent) said that training materials were adequate. Thirty-five percent of all respondents said training materials were not adequate.

Fifty one percent of all respondents (51 percent) said that training materials were plentiful while 38 percent said they were not plentiful. Ten percent failed to respond.

Responses to the questions related to preparation for state and national certification examinations are presented in Table VIII. Of 80 respondents who were students, the majority said that students have been prepared during training to pass the State Certified

TABLE V
 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING QUALITY OF
 COURT REPORTER TRAINING PROGRAMS BY
 PARTICIPANT GROUP

Opinion	Students		Instructors		Court Reporters		Total N=105	
	OK N=24	TX N=56	OK N=2	TX N=4	OK N=14	TX N=5	N	%
Excellent	0	6	0	0	0	0	6	5.7
Good	3	16	1	2	2	1	25	23.8
Fair	10	22	1	2	8	2	45	42.9
Poor	1	4	0	0	4	2	11	10.5
No Response	<u>10</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>17.1</u>
Total	24	56	2	4	14	5	105	100.0

TABLE VI
 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING IMPRESSIONS OF
 PROGRAMS BY PARTICIPANT GROUP

Perception	Students		Instructors		Court Reporters		Total	
	OK N=24	TX N=56	OK N=2	TX N=4	OK N=14	TX N=5	N	%*
Employers ' Response								
Pleased	16	35	2	2	6	2	63	60.0
Not Pleased	5	9	0	2	5	1	22	20.9
Unhappy	1	1	0	0	1	1	4	3.8
Very Unhappy	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	2.8
No Response	2	9	0	0	2	1	14	13.3
Court Reporters ' Response								
Pleased	-	-	-	-	6	4	10	52.8
Not Pleased	-	-	-	-	4	0	4	21.0
Unhappy	-	-	-	-	2	0	2	10.5
Very Unhappy	-	-	-	-	2	0	2	10.5
No Response	-	-	-	-	0	1	1	5.2
Instructors ' Response								
Pleased	15	37	2	1	7	1	63	60.0
Not Pleased	7	6	0	3	4	2	22	20.9
Unhappy	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	1.9
Very Unhappy	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	1.9
No Response	1	10	0	0	2	2	15	14.3

*Numbers may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

TABLE VII
 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING TRAINING
 MATERIALS BY PARTICIPANT GROUP

Materials	Students		Instructors		Court Reporters		Total	
	OK N=24	TX N=56	OK N=2	TX N=4	OK N=14	TX N=5	N	%
Adequate								
Yes	20	32	1	3	4	1	61	58.1
No	3	22	1	1	7	3	37	35.2
No Response	1	2	0	0	3	1	7	6.7
	<u>24</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>105</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Plentiful								
Yes	18	25	2	4	5	0	54	51.4
No	6	27	0	0	6	1	40	38.1
No Response	0	4	0	0	3	4	11	10.5
	<u>24</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>105</u>	<u>100.0</u>

TABLE VIII
 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING PREPARATION FOR
 EXAMINATIONS BY PARTICIPANT GROUP

Prepared to take:	Students		Instructors		Court Reporters	
	OK N=24	TX N=56	OK N=2	TX N=4	OK N=14	TX N=5
State Certified Shorthand Reporter Examination:						
Yes	17	39	2	4	8	0
No	2	5	0	0	5	4
No Response	5	12	0	0	1	1
National Certification of Proficiency Examination:						
Yes	3	33	0	4	4	2
No	20	10	2	0	9	3
No Response	1	13	0	0	1	0

Shorthand Reporter Examinations. Seven students (two from Oklahoma, five from Texas) said that students have not been prepared during training to pass this examination. Seventeen students (five from Oklahoma, twelve from Texas) gave no response. All the Oklahoma and Texas instructors as well as eight practicing Oklahoma court reporters said students have been prepared during training for passing the states' examinations. Nine practicing Oklahoma and Texas court reporters said students' training did not prepare them sufficiently to pass the examinations.

Thirty-six of the 80 student respondents said that students have been prepared during training to pass the National Certification of Proficiency Examination while 30 students said they have not been prepared. Fourteen students gave no response. All Texas instructors, plus two Texas court reporters, said students were prepared. All the Oklahoma instructors, plus 12 Oklahoma court reporters, said students were not prepared during training to pass their National Certification Examination.

The results from Question 17 "Do you feel the court reporter training programs now offered, when completed, prepare one for all facets of the work situation?" are presented in Table IX. Twenty percent of the 105 respondents stated that the current court reporter training programs prepared one for all facets of the work situation. However, 74.3 percent of all those surveyed did not feel that current training programs prepared one for all facets of the work situation. Eighteen practicing court reporters said "No" to this question; one said "yes". Fifty-seven students felt that the programs "did not" prepare students for all facets of work while seventeen students thought

TABLE IX

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING PERCEPTIONS OF COURT REPORTER
 TRAINING PREPARATION FOR ALL FACETS OF WORK BY
 PARTICIPANT GROUP

Opinion	Students		Instructors		Court Reporters		Total	
	OK N=24	TX N=56	OK N=2	TX N=4	OK N=14	TX N=5	N=105 N	%
Yes	3	14	1	2	1	0	21	20
No	20	37	1	2	13	5	78	74.3
No Response	<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>5.7</u>
Total	24	56	2	4	14	5	105	100.0

programs "did" prepare the students. There were a few students (5.7 percent) who gave no response. Half of the instructors felt that the current programs prepared one for all facets of work; half did not. Twenty-five percent of the Texas students answered in the affirmative whereas only 12.5 percent of the Oklahoma students answered affirmatively.

Improvement of the Court Reporter Training Programs

Responses to the question pertaining to present structuring of court reporter training programs are presented in Table X. Virtually all (90.5 percent) of those surveyed felt present court reporter training programs needed improvement. A small percentage (5.70 percent) disagreed that the present programs needed improvement. while another small percentage (3.8 percent) gave no response. Most (94.7 percent) of the practicing court reporters agreed the current programs needed improvement. The remaining five percent (5.3 percent) gave no response. The majority of all instructors agreed the present programs needed improvement with one exception. Ninety percent of the students surveyed said the present programs needed improvement while slightly more than six percent (6.2 percent) disagreed with the majority on the question. Almost four percent (3.75 percent) gave no response.

The mean responses from Question 20 are presented in Table XI. The eight needs statements listed are broken down by participant groups for Oklahoma and Texas. Means were calculated for each

TABLE X
 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING PRESENT STRUCTURING OF
 COURT REPORTER TRAINING PROGRAMS BY PARTICIPANT GROUPS

Response	Students		Instructors		Court Reporters		Total	
	OK N=24	TX N=56	OK N=2	TX N=4	OK N=14	TX N=5	N=105 N	%
Agree	22	50	2	3	14	4	95	90.5
Disagree	1	4	0	1	0	0	6	5.7
No Response	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3.8</u>
Total	24	56	2	4	14	5	105	100.0

TABLE XI

MEAN VALUES AND RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING ITEMS NEEDING TO
BE INCLUDED IN COURT REPORTER TRAINING PROGRAMS BY
PARTICIPANT GROUPS

Statement	Students				Instructors				Court Reporters			
	OK \bar{X}	Rank	TX \bar{X}	Rank	OK \bar{X}	Rank	TX \bar{X}	Rank	OK \bar{X}	Rank	TX \bar{X}	Rank
Additional Methods	6.40	1	6.83	1	6.5	2.5	7.25	1.5	5.54	4	6.00	2
Additional Courses	5.63	2	6.40	2	5.0	4	7.25	1.5	6.09	1	6.67	1
Flexibility	4.68	4	2.96	8	6.5	2.5	4.00	5	3.45	6	1.67	8
Qualified Instructors	2.25	8	3.87	5	3.0	6	3.00	7.5	5.67	3	5.00	4
Training Schools	4.32	5	3.78	7	3.0	6	3.40	6	5.75	2	3.33	6
Aptitude Testing	3.95	6	4.00	3	7.0	1	5.50	3	5.08	5	5.67	3
Shortage of Materials	3.47	7	3.93	4	1.0	8	4.25	4	2.25	8	3.33	6
Philo- sophies	5.19	3	3.79	6	3.06	6	3.00	1.5	2.73	7	3.33	6

statement. The statements were rank ordered within the participant groups. The means ranged from 7.25 to 1.00. The range for students was from a high of 6.83 (Texas) for additional methods to a low of 2.25 (Oklahoma) for qualified instructors. The range for instructors was from a high of 7.25 (Texas) for additional methods and additional courses to a low of 1.0 (Oklahoma) for shortage of materials. The range for court reporters was from a high of 6.67 (Texas) for additional courses to a low of 1.67 (Texas) for flexibility in class scheduling.

Oklahoma students ranked additional methods as number one (6.40) and additional courses as number two (5.63). Texas students ranked these items similarly; first, additional methods with a mean of 6.83 and additional courses second with a mean of 6.4.

Oklahoma instructors ranked aptitude testing (7.0) as number one while additional methods (6.5) and flexibility (6.5) were tied for second rank. Texas instructors ranked additional methods (7.25) and additional courses (7.25) tied for one and two.

Oklahoma court reporters ranked additional courses (6.04) number one and training schools (5.75) number two. Texas court reporters ranked additional courses (6.67) as number one and additional methods (6.00) as number two.

Oklahoma students ranked qualified instructors (2.25) as the least needed improvement while shortage of materials (3.47) was next lowest. The Texas students ranked flexibility (2.96) as the least needed improvement and training schools (3.78) next lowest.

The Oklahoma instructors ranked shortage of materials (1.0)

as the least needed improvement while qualified instructors (3.0), training schools (3.0) and school philosophies (3.0) all tied for the next lowest improvement needed. Texas instructors ranked additional methods (7.25) and additional courses (7.25) as the least needed improvement while qualified instructors (3.0) and school philosophies (3.0) as tied for next lowest improvement needed.

Oklahoma court reporters ranked shortage of materials (2.25) as the least needed improvement and school philosophies (2.73) as next least needed improvement while Texas court reporters ranked flexibility (1.67) the least needed improvement. Texas court reporters ranked training schools (3.33), shortage of materials (3.33) and school philosophies (3.33) tied for next lowest improvement needed.

Additional methods was ranked fairly high by all the participant groups. Additional courses was also ranked fairly high by all groups. Qualified instructors, shortage of materials and school philosophies were fairly close in the lowest ranking by the participative groups.

Overall responses to Question 21, pertaining to things liked best about their own training programs, are presented in Table XII. Specific instructors were most often listed as best liked (29 responses), representing 31.86 percent of the 91 total responses. The next most liked item was live dictation (17 responses) which was 18.68 percent of those who responded. Class scheduling (eight responses), own pace (seven responses) and machine theory (six responses) followed next as things best liked.

Items listed the least often as the best liked things about the participants' training programs were efficient program (one response), accuracy stressed (one response), preparation of legal documents

TABLE XII
 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING THINGS LIKED BEST
 ABOUT TRAINING PROGRAM

Response	Frequency
Specific Instructors	29*
Live Dictation	17
Class Scheduling	8
Own Pace	7
Small Classes	7
Theory (Machine)	6
Intensified Practice	4
Tapes	4
Computer Orientation	2
Speed Practice	2
Accuracy Stressed	1
Available Materials	1
Efficient Program	1
Preparation Legal Documents	1

*Responses may indicate more than one response per person.

TABLE XIII

OVERALL RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING THINGS LIKED
LEAST ABOUT TRAINING PROGRAM

Response	Frequency
Academics (Need more classes other than machine theory)	11*
Restrictions/School Policy	9
No On-The-Job Training	8
Class Hours Too Short	8
Lack of Courtroom Procedures Instruction	7
Lack of Understanding Attitude; Inefficiency of the Administration	6
Evening Classes	5
Inadequate Training for Such High Tuition	5
Lack of Training Tapes	5
Lack of Teacher Preparation	4
Lack of Qualified Instructors	4
Tedious Practice	4
Test System	4
Preparation - Legal Transcripts Class	3
Lack of Theory Classes	2
Large Class in Beginning Theory	2
No Legal and Medical Terminology Classes	2
Insufficient Live Dictation	1
Lack of Business Management Instruction	1
Lack of Computer Orientation Instruction Class	1
Lack of Speed Building Techniques	1
No Student Screening	1

*Responses may indicate more than one response per person.

(one response), speed practice (two responses), and computer orientation (two responses).

Overall responses to Question 22, concerning things liked least about their training programs, are presented in Table XIII. The item listed most frequently was more classes other than machine shorthand, with 11 responses, which was 11.7 percent. The second most often least liked item was school policy restrictions (nine responses or 9.5 percent). Next frequently listed items were no on-the-job training (eight responses or 8.5 percent), and lack of courtroom procedures instruction (seven responses or 7.4 percent). Lack of an understanding attitude toward students' problems together with inefficiency of school administration (6), inadequate training for such high tuition costs (5), and evening classes (5) followed next. Next lowest things listed, which were least liked, were lack of qualified instructors, lack of teacher preparation, tedious practice, and testing system, each with four responses.

Next less often listed were lack of theory classes, too large classes for beginning theory, and no legal and medical terminology classes, each with two responses. The responses listed less frequently as those things least liked about training programs were lack of speed building techniques, lack of computer orientation, lack of business management instruction, insufficient live dictation, and no student screening, all with one response.

Results of overall responses to Question 23, concerning suggestions for improving court reporter training programs, are presented in Table XIV. The suggestion most frequently given for improvement of the training programs was internship (on-the-job training) courses

TABLE XIV
 OVERALL RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING SUGGESTIONS FOR
 IMPROVING COURT REPORTER TRAINING PROGRAMS

Response	Frequency
On-The-Job Training (Internship Courses)	23
Courtroom Procedures Courses	14
Computer Orientation Courses	13
Academics (courses other than Machine Theory)	9
Court Reporters for Instructors	8
Dictation Materials and Equipment	8
Jury Charge/Question and Answer Dictation Materials	7
Better Instructors	7
More Live Dictation Time	5
Motivation and Discipline Courses	5
Preparation of Legal documents (Transcripts and Depositions)	5
Daily Classes	4
Legal and Medical Terminology Courses	3
Aptitude Entrance Examinations	2
Longer Class Periods	2
More Court Reporting Schools	2
Better Speed Building Systems	1
Job Placement Service	1

*Responses may indicate more than one response per person.

(23 responses or 19.49 percent of all respondents). The second most listed suggestion for improvement was courtroom procedures courses (14 responses or 19.49 percent of total respondents). Suggestions for computer orientation courses followed closely with 13 responses, or 11 percent of all participants. More classes other than machine theory received nine responses (7.67 percent), court reporters as instructors received eight responses (6.8 percent), while more dictation equipment and materials also received eight responses (6.8 percent). Jury Charge/Question and Answer dictation and better instructors received seven responses each as suggestions to improve court reporter training programs.

Suggestions for improving court reporter training programs listed less often were job placement services, longer class periods, better speed building systems, more training schools, legal and medical terminology courses, daily classes, and aptitude entrance examinations.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes and discusses the results of the study. The sections of Chapter V are: (1) Summary, (2) Conclusions, and (3) Recommendations.

Summary

The problem of the study was a lack of knowledge relative to strengths and weaknesses of court reporter training programs. The purpose of the study was to determine the major strengths and weaknesses of the court reporter training programs. This study could then be used to improve existing training programs so those programs could more responsively meet the needs of future aspirants to the court reporting profession.

The population for the study was the entire court reporting student body and all instructors of court reporting at Oscar Rose Junior College and Capital City Trade and Technical School as well as a sample of practicing court reporters within the communities surrounding the Oklahoma and Texas schools. The instrument used to gather this data was a questionnaire designed by the researcher which was distributed to the students and instructors of the school and college surveyed and to court reporters employed in the towns where the school and college were located. Forty-six percent of the population and sample responded

to the questionnaire.

Findings of this study indicated that daily classes during daytime hours were preferred by most students. Court reporter training programs thought to be "adequate" to "successful" by students and instructors were felt to be "adequate" to "less than adequate" by 95 percent of the practicing court reporters. Quality of present training programs was judged to be "fair" to "good" by 43 percent of all respondents, but "poor" to "fair" by court reporters.

Sixty percent of the respondents' impressions of court reporter training programs were that employers and instructors were pleased with the proficiency level of today's graduates upon their completion of training. However, 53 percent of the court reporters said they were pleased whereas 47 percent said they were not pleased and were unhappy to very unhappy. Training materials were considered adequate but of poor quality. The majority of respondents felt the materials were plentiful but many disagreed.

All the court reporters except one, most of the students and 50 percent of the instructors said that present training programs did not prepare one for all facets of work. Most respondents perceived that present training programs needed improvement.

The high rank order given by respondents to additional methods and additional courses indicated the need for a broader range of courses. The most frequently listed suggestions for improving the existing programs were: (1) internship courses, (2) courtroom procedures courses, (3) computer orientation courses, (4) more classes other than machine theory, (5) court reporters for instructors, (6) more training schools, (7) legal and medical terminology courses,

and (8) daily classes.

Conclusions

Students, instructors and court reporters were fairly happy with court reporter training programs. However, they all agreed that existing training programs needed improvement. The conclusions drawn from this study are as follows:

1. The high percentage of practicing court reporters who felt current training programs to be adequate to less than adequate indicated room for improvement of these programs.
2. The quality of training programs considered poor to fair by a high percentage of court reporters indicated the need for improvement of present training programs.
3. Impressions of current court reporter training programs given by respondents who were "not pleased and unhappy" to "very unhappy" with their proficiency upon completion of training indicated a lack in training methods.
4. There was a perceived need for more and better quality training materials.
5. A high percentage of respondents who felt current programs did not prepare one for all facets of the work situation indicated a need for additional courses pertaining to court reporting to provide on-the-job training.

Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations are presented as a result of this study. These recommendations which are intended to be helpful in

improving existing training programs so future graduates will be more proficient are as follows:

1. Training schools and colleges should make programs flexible to accommodate all interested students by providing both daytime and evening classes.

2. Training schools and colleges should offer more additional courses in the areas of computer orientation, internship and courtroom procedures.

3. Training schools and colleges should offer additional methods of teaching students specific functions not covered in courses presently offered.

4. Students and instructors should work together with administration to develop the programs that will meet their needs.

5. Students and instructors should work together to obtain better quality training materials in a plentiful supply.

6. Institutions should develop an aptitude screening process for court reporter training applicants.

7. Practicing or retired court reporters should also be used as instructors to give students exposure to their personal skill and knowledge of the job situation.

8. Interested higher education institutions should work with their governing boards to secure adequate funding for new court reporter training programs.

Recommendations for Further Study

The following recommendations are based on the results of this study:

1. A replication of this study should be conducted using all the schools and colleges, in Oklahoma (it is anticipated there will be additional schools in Oklahoma in the very near future) and in Texas, that offer court reporter training programs. By replicating this study in this way, a larger population could be obtained to substantiate or refute the findings of this study.

2. A replication of this study should be conducted for a national survey to obtain an even larger population and sample to use to substantiate or refute the findings of this study. Information obtained from a like population from other schools and colleges in the United States that offer court reporter training programs would be invaluable for improving the existing programs.

3. A follow-up study at a later date should be made to determine what improvements have been incorporated into court reporter training programs. For planning purposes, it would be valuable to determine what length time period is necessary to incorporate needed changes into existing programs.

4. A concentrated study, involved only with the more important aspects, should be made.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INDIVIDUALS WHO FIELD TESTED THE
INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE AND
THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Bill Brown	Oscar Rose Junior College Staff Member
Troy Corder	Guidance Counselor Tinker Air Force Base Education Office
Majorie Foutz, Ed.D.	Oklahoma State University Staff Tinker Air Force Base
Lola King	Education Specialist Tinker Base Education Office
Sue Murphy	Test Proctor Tinker Air Force Base
Bob Tollison	Guidance Counselor Tinker Air Force Base
Bill Sappington	Education Services Officer Tinker Air Force Base
Lisa Sappington	Court Reporter Student Capitol City Trade and Technical School Austin, Texas
Greg Snyder	Professional Military Education Instructor Tinker Air Force Base
Monica Weidmann	Practicing Court Reporter Austin, Texas

Court Reporter Training Programs

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please respond to the following questions by checking the appropriate spaces, or by providing the requested information. Please use your own personal opinions, where appropriate.

Your Name _____

Are you: An Instructor? _____; A Student? _____; A Court Reporter? _____.

Name of your School: _____

1. To the best of your knowledge, how many training programs are offered by Schools or Colleges in Oklahoma? _____; In Texas? _____.
2. Did you have formal Court Reporting Training? _____ Yes; _____ No.
3. What distance from your home did you travel to obtain Court Reporting Training? _____ (approximate miles)
4. Were you required to take an entrance examination for Court Reporting Training before commencing your formal Court Reporting Training? _____ Yes; _____ No.
5. Do you feel an entrance examination would be beneficial to a person considering the Court Reporting Training? _____ Yes; _____ No.
6. Do you prefer classes _____ daily?; _____ 3 times a week?; _____ 2 times a week?
7. Do you prefer daytime classes? _____; or evening classes _____?
8. If you are a student, how many hours, outside of classroom do you spend practicing on your machine shorthand skill each day? _____ (appx. hours)
9. In your opinion, are training materials adequate? _____ Yes; _____ No.
10. Are training materials plentiful? _____ Yes; _____ No.
11. In general, are present training programs: _____ Successful and doing a good job; _____ Not successful or not doing a good job; _____ Adequate; or _____ Less than adequate?
12. Do you think employers are satisfied and favorably impressed with the proficiency of today's graduates upon completion of the training program? _____ Pleased; _____ Not pleased; _____ Unhappy; _____ Very unhappy.

13. If you are a Court Reporter, were you satisfied and favorably impressed with your proficiency upon completion of your training program? Pleased; Not pleased; Unhappy; Very unhappy.
14. Have Students been adequately prepared during training to pass the State Certified Shorthand Reporter Examination upon completion of Court Reporter Training? Yes; No.
15. Have students been adequately prepared during training to pass the National Certification of Proficiency Examination upon completion of Court Reporter Training? Yes; No.
16. Do you think instructors are satisfied and favorably impressed with the proficiency of today's graduates upon their completion of the training program? Pleased; Not pleased; Unhappy; Very unhappy.
17. Do you feel the Court Reporting Training Programs now offered, when completed prepare one for all facets of the work situation? Yes; No. Please explain _____

18. In general, how would you describe the quality of Court Reporting Training Programs, as presently structured, in comparison to the on-the-job proficiency required of Court Reporters? Excellent; Good; Fair; Poor. Please explain your response _____

19. Do you agree or disagree: Court Reporting Training Programs, as presently structured, need improving? Agree; Disagree.
20. Please rank the following statements according to importance: Number 1 being the MOST important to Number 8 being the LEAST important need relative to Court Reporting Training Programs:
- _____ the Training Program Courses now offered need to include methods to teach students specific functions not now covered in course materials (example: how to prepare transcripts in the proper legal style, how to prepare a deposition, how to swear in a witness);
- _____ the Training Programs need to include additional courses, not presently offered, such as Computer Orientation, Business Management, Internship, Courtroom Procedures, Motivation-Discipline Training, English and Grammar;
- _____ there is a lack of flexibility in course format (examples: need for obtaining daily classes);

(continued on next page)

20. _____ there is a lack of qualified instructors;
_____ there is a lack of available training schools and colleges;
_____ there is a need for aptitude testing methods and procedures to eliminate loss of time, money and frustration for Students who may not be capable of completing the training;
_____ there is a shortage of training materials available;
_____ there are some limitations and restrictions due to school philosophies and policies which decrease flexibility in solving some problems in the Training Programs (example: class scheduling).
21. Name one thing you like best about your own training program:

22. Name one thing you like least about your own training program.

23. List your one suggestion for improving Court Reporting Training Programs: _____
24. Please feel free to make any additional comments, suggestions or criticisms you wish. Write additional information on the reverse side of this page and number any comments with the same number as the question to which it refers.

Please return to: Betty Sappington
2800 Old Farm Lane
Edmond, OK 73034

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER

February 10, 1983

TO: SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

As a graduate student of Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, I am conducting research on Court Reporter Training Programs. The purpose of this research is to determine whether existing programs are adequate or if there are areas that need improvement.

Please take a few minutes to respond to the enclosed questionnaire. Your response will be of great value in recommending future improvements.

Upon completion, return to: Betty Sappington, 2800 Old Farm Lane, Edmond, Oklahoma 73034. Please return promptly in order that I may compile the data collected from this survey not later than February 20, 1983.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours truly,

Betty Sappington
Graduate Student
2800 Old Farm Lane
Edmond, OK 73034

VITA

Betty Gae Hughes Sappington

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: A STUDY OF COURT REPORTER TRAINING PROGRAMS IN TEXAS
AND OKLAHOMA

Major Field: Occupational and Adult Education

Personal Data: Born in Tipton, Oklahoma, July 1, 1939, the
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Education: Graduated from Victory High School, Davidson,
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Director of Materiel Management, Materiel Support Branch, Tinker
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