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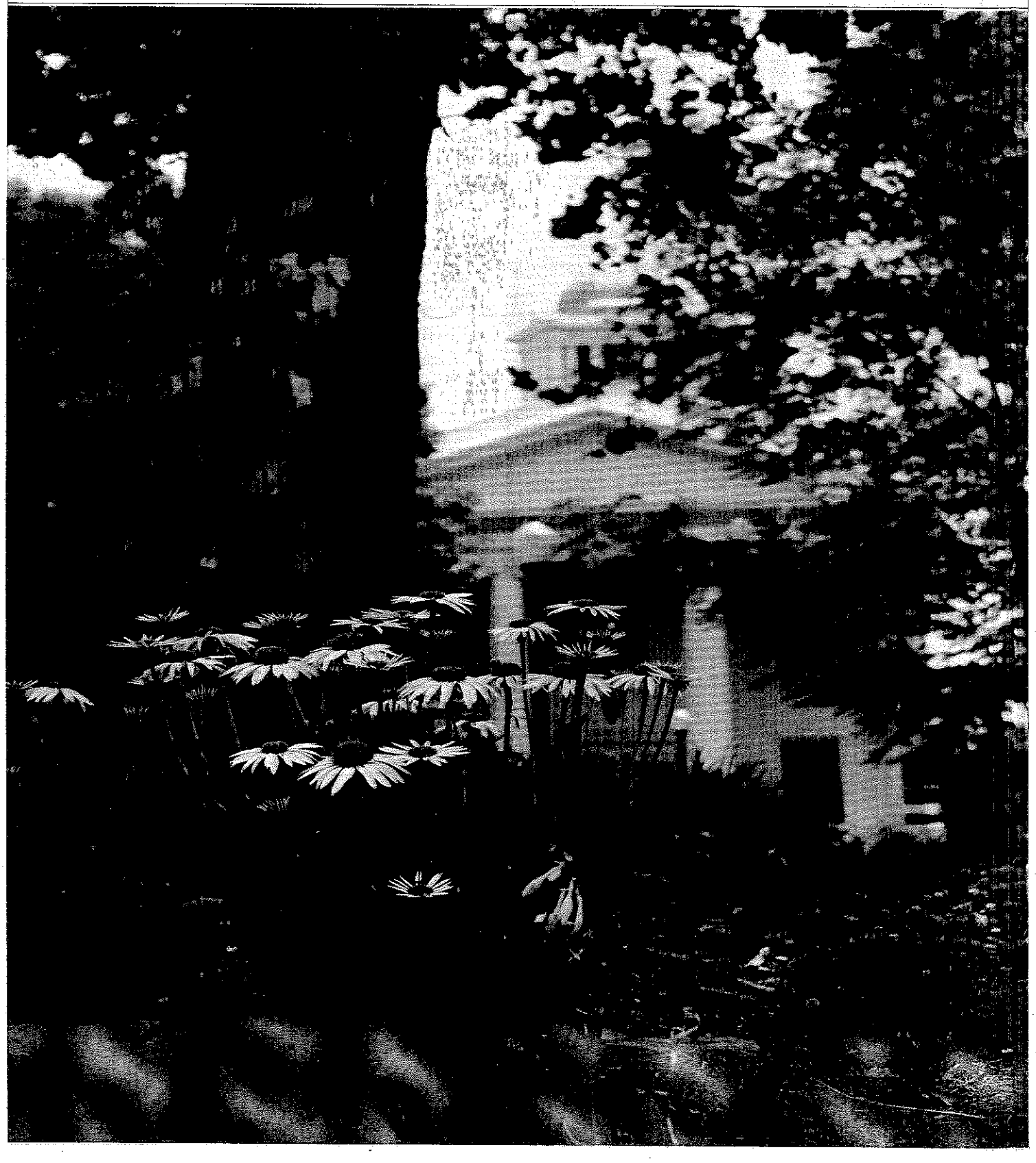

Chase Law: An Arsenal of Legal Writing Tools

by Carol Furnish, Assistant Director for Instruction and Outreach Services, Chase Law Library

A few weeks ago a Chase graduate asked for recommendations on legal writing sources. I thought I would share a few of the newer titles along with my favorite tools. Keep in mind that the Kentucky Bench & Bar and the Cincinnati Bar Association Report offer regular columns on legal writing issues.

I. General Works on Legal Writing

Darmstadter, Howard, Hereof, thereof, and Everywhereof: A Contrarian Guide to Legal Drafting. Chicago: ABA Section of Business Law, 2002. This book discusses various legal drafting issues. In addition to the chapters on sentence structure and document design, the book reviews agreements, the securities prospectus, creating the appendix, and how to insert amendments.

Dworsky, Alan L. The Little Book on Legal Writing. 2d ed. Littleton, CO: F. B. Rothman, 1992. This resource covers the basics of usage, style, spelling, typeface, and other writing issues.

Garner, Bryan A. The Redbook: A Manual on Legal Style. St. Paul: West Group, 2002. This manual emphasizes how legal writing differs from other forms of technical writing. It provides examples of how to write memos, opinion letters, demand letters, pleadings, motions, appellate briefs, and contacts.

Painter, Mark P. The Legal Writer. 2d ed. Cincinnati, OH: Jarndyce & Jarndyce Press, 2003. The book offers forty rules to improve your legal writing. Rule 14 explains Ohio's new system of citation in case you practice in both states.

Schiess, Wayne, Better Legal Writing: 15 topics for Advanced Legal Writers. New York: William S. Hein, 2005. The manual discusses document design and organization, sentence structure, etc. A large portion of the book focuses on persuasive writing.

II. General Style Manuals

New York Public Library, The New York Public Library Writer's Guide to Style and Usage. New York: HarperCollins, 1994. This reference tool contains everything writers and editors will need to resolve questions on grammar and style.

Schertzer, Margaret, The Elements of Grammar. New York: MacMillan, 1996. [Available as a Netlibrary e-book]. This guide discusses the parts of a sentence, punctuation, capitalization, and how to select the correct word. Grammar can be defined as a study as to what is preferred and what is to be avoided in effective speech and writing.

Shrunk, William, et al. The Elements of Style. New York: Penguin Press, 2005. This is a classic with the fundamental rules in a concise package. The newer enhanced edition features humorous art by a popular book illustrator and New Yorker cover artist.

This is a sampling of the many resources available in our library. You are welcome to browse our collection and choose your own favorites. Be sure to check your local library as they may offer writing tools as e-books which can be accessed from home.