

SCA document texts: it doesn't have to be all boilerplate or legal texts

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SCA award (illuminated) documents, often called scrolls are customarily given in some Kingdoms to almost any award recipient (some awards and honors call for a token instead of a scroll¹). Although what makes an award official is its publication in the Kingdom Newsletter these are still official documents, handed in a public ceremony and signed by the noble(s) bestowing the award to the recipient.

Often, in the East, the scribe assigned the scroll will be in charge of not only the calligraphy and illumination but also of devising the text. This is placing an unnecessary burden on one person, and potentially discouraging new scribes. Calligraphy, illumination and text writing are different specialties and not everybody is good at, or comfortable with, all. There is nothing preventing scribes from sharing work and sometimes people want to collaborate in making something for somebody they care about. Also, if drawing pens and brushes are unfriendly to you, but you are comfortable with words, then you could be the one alleviating the angst of a C&I person.

In any case, writing a text for a SCA follow simple rules and, at least in the East kingdom, is allowed much freedom.

Regarding the rules, there is some specific information that must appear on these documents. The kingdom-specific requirements can be found in your kingdom's scribe handbook or equivalent. I initially used the East Kingdom Scribes Handbook² but feel free to look around.

The short version *"Each scroll should have the following six (6) components. address, Intitulation, Notification and Exposition, Disposition, Corroboration with Date and space for their majesties to sign. You can write the six components in any or order that you wish, but make sure that all six components are present."*

Address³: who are you talking to? It addresses the audience (For example: Let all gentles and nobles know by these presents...)

Intitulation⁴: who is talking? It states the titles and names of the nobles issuing the award or edict (For example: Their Royal Majesties of the East Kenric and Avelina...)

Notification and Exposition⁵: who is the recipient, and what is it about? It can also be briefly expressed as "who did what?" (For example: Let all gentles and nobles know by these presents that [Recipient Name] has been a faithful servant of his Kingdom and Barony ...)

¹ East kingdom awards <http://www.sca.org/awards/east.html>

² East Kingdom Scribes Handbook http://sigmet.eastkingdom.org/wp/library/2011_scribeshb_vol4v1/

³ Examples of address from An Tir <http://scribes.antir.sca.org/Scribes/theaddress.php>

⁴ Examples of intitulation from An Tir <http://scribes.antir.sca.org/Scribes/theintitulation.php>

⁵ Examples of Notification/exposition from An Tir <http://scribes.antir.sca.org/Scribes/thenotification.php>

Disposition: what is happening to the recipient? (For example: do award [Name] Arms.../ do induct [Recipient Name] into the order of the mostly insane ...)

Corroboration with date⁶: this was done by these nobles on this date and at this place. (For example: witness by setting here Our hands and seal on this _____, day of _____, A.S. ____...)

Knowing that, where to start?

First, you need all the information about the required elements. Thankfully this comes in your assignment email. Typically the email sent by Signet to the scribe contains the name of the person, the event where the award is to be given and the names of the K&Q giving the award. When available, there is also a copy of the recommendation write-up, and often the contact information of the person who sent the recommendation.

Then, you need to decide what sort of text you want to write. There are some different approaches. In doubt, you can adapt some recommended texts/phrasings. It is a good learning approach to get comfortable with the elements that need to appear in the text. Aside from that, there is a range of possibilities. You can either use a period text for inspiration, or create your own text. Even using period texts as source, you do have some choices.

For some, the one true way is to adapt some legal documents. The reasoning is that the scroll is an official proclamation, and should be written in that tone. Although legal texts lend themselves very well to the requirements of a SCA award document, other approaches can be used. For example poetry can be found that matches the time and place of most SCA persona and can be very variable in length and style. Sometimes the favorite activities of the recipient or the nature of the award can lead you to the type of source to work from. Almost any type of text can be used as inspiration: letters (is it a "personal" award like a cypher, or a QOC?), recipes (is the award for a cook), etc... If a text was written and told something, it likely can be used. The text does not have to be in English (it can be in the language of the recipient's persona, or in the native language of the recipient, or in Latin like many texts were) but remember to provide a translation for court.

Finally be careful about the words you use. For example award, grant and patent have specific meanings in English, and different levels of award.

In any case, choose something that speaks to you. You are going to see it until either you put it on the scroll, or send it to the scribe. In doubt select a few potential texts: maybe you'll change your mind after trying to adapt it, or the best solution will end up being mixing portions of text.

The next step is to select what you want to (can) keep from the original text, and what needs to be replaced. This is where you need to figure out how to incorporate the 6 required components.

We're going to see how it works through some examples later.

Another thing to keep in mind is that you need to keep control of the length of the text. Although a lovely text is a good thing, longer texts take longer to read during court. A good average is for a 14 pts font text to cover ½ to 2/3 of a page but this is not a hard and fast rule. Just make sure to not drop a very long text on your C&I person(s) unexpectedly.

⁶ Examples of corroborations from An Tir <http://scribes.antir.sca.org/Scribes/thecorroboration.php>

Adapting a legal document

Berrick Grayveson's Silver Rapier

Rationale

While this was earlier than his persona, I knew that Berrick would love a letter of Mark

Original text⁷

The King to all and singular Admirals &c., Greeting. Know ye that we have granted and given to our well-beloved **John Wellys**, master of a certain ship **called the James of Bristol, and to Philip Taillour, master of another ship, called the Trinity of Bristol**, liberty to equip in the port of the town of **Bristol**, at their own charges, the aforesaid ships with as many mariners, men-at-arms, and bowmen as shall be necessary for **their** navigation and defence at sea against our enemies, whosoever they may be, and for subduing, capturing, and destroying the same; and liberty to set forth with the same ships, so equipped, upon the sea for the purpose aforesaid. And we will that whatsoever **they, John and Philip**, succeed in winning, gaining, and having by capture from our enemies aforesaid, **they** may have and keep for **their** own proper use, without claim or hindrance by or from us, or our heirs or ministers, or the ministers of any our heirs whatsoever. Provided always that under colour of this licence **they, John and Philip, their** mariners, men-at-arms, and bowmen aforesaid, neither do nor permit to be done any violence, hindrance, or hurt to any who are in friendship with us. Witness **the King at Westminster on the 4th day of February**.

Final text

The King and Queen to all and singular Admirals &c., Greeting. Know ye that we have granted and given to our well-beloved **Berrick Grayveson**, master of a certain ship, liberty to equip in the port of the city of **Tadcaster**, at their own charges, the aforesaid ship with as many mariners, men-at-arms, and bowmen as shall be necessary for **his** navigation and defence at sea against our enemies, whosoever they may be, and for subduing, capturing, and destroying the same; and liberty to set forth with the same ship, so equipped, upon the sea for the purpose aforesaid. And we will that whatsoever **he, Berrick**, succeeds in winning, gaining, and having by capture from our enemies aforesaid, **he** may have and keep for **his** own proper use, without claim or hindrance by or from us, or our heirs or ministers, or the ministers of any our heirs whatsoever. Provided always that under colour of this licence **he, Berrick, his** mariners, men-at-arms, and bowmen aforesaid, neither do nor permit to be done any violence, hindrance, or hurt to any who are in friendship with us. **Additionally, in compliance with the prayer of that Order, of our especial grace, we hereby decree that he will be induced in our order of the Silver Rapier and will be allowed to bear in perpetuity the emblem of this order.** Witness **King Edward and Queen Thyra at the 100 minutes War on the 17th day of November AS XLVII**.

⁷ English Letter of Marque issued by Henry IV, 1405 <http://www.constitution.org/mil/lmr/1405engl.htm>

Adapting poetry

Rationale: This one was actually my first scroll text. The award was a Manche and poetry seemed appropriate for an A&S award. The recipient has a late period English persona, which made a Shakespearean sonnet relevant.

Original text	Final text
<p>Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate: Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, And summer's lease hath all too short a date: Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, And often is his gold complexion dimmed, And every fair from fair sometime declines, By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed: But thy eternal summer shall not fade, Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st, Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade, When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st, So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see, So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.</p>	<p>Shall we compare thee to a summer's day? Elisabeth Underhill, so delicate: Their Fair Majesties on this Mudthaw day, Have this court decided to mark the date, And recognize Lissa, whose talent shines. The Order of the Manche members all chimed, And here as the Winter now declines, In Settmour Swamp a new Manche is acclaimed: Thou shall wear that badge, and it shall not fade, Not lose possession of that joy thou ow'st, And teach to all who wander in thou shade, For when teaching others, thou progress most. So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see, Their Majesties' decree gives this to thee.</p> <p>In Settmour Swamp, the 26th of March 2011, AS</p>

You'll note that there are much more changes here in the text, but the emphasis was put on keeping the rhymes and rhythm of the text.

Adapting an instruction book

Rationale: Tat'iana Negoshka Danilova had a Russian persona. She was to receive a King's cypher for her service to King Griffith. The author, Lady Elysabeth Underhill, chose a known Russian book on household governance, the Domostroy⁸ Below is what I received from her. Note that she thought about the space constraints

Final text

LONG VERSION: When instructing retainers in the performance of their duties it is important to impress upon them the qualities needed for successful service. A retainer should be attentive to her monarch's needs, always polite, and never intrusive. Discretion is likewise a necessary quality in a retainer, as is the ability to carry out tasks small and large in aid her king and country. Most important is a sense of humor, which will always be appreciated and considered a blessing during difficult times. A retainer who possesses these qualities will have achieved perfection, and perfection is to be found in Our most loyal subject and servant, Tat'iana Negoshka Danilova, who shall receive a King's Cypher for her work as retainer to His Majesty Gryffith FitzWilliam, during his rein AS _____.

SHORTER VERSION: When instructing retainers in the performance of their duties it is important to impress upon them the qualities needed for successful service. A retainer should be attentive to her monarch's needs, always polite, discrete in all matters, and never intrusive. Even more important is a sense of humor, which is considered a blessing and will always be appreciated. A retainer who possesses these qualities will have achieved perfection, and perfection is to be found in Our most loyal subject and servant, Tat'iana Negoshka Danilova, who shall receive a King's Cypher for her work as retainer to His Majesty Gryffith FitzWilliam. (AS _____).

EVEN SHORTER VERSION: When instructing retainers in the performance of their duties, remind them of the qualities needed for successful service. A retainer should be attentive, always polite, discrete in all matters, and never intrusive. Even more important is a sense of humor, which will always be appreciated. A retainer who possesses these qualities will have achieved perfection, and perfection is to be found in Our most loyal subject and servant, Tat'iana Negoshka Danilova, who shall receive a King's Cypher for her work as retainer to His Majesty Gryffith FitzWilliam. (AS _____)

IF YOU NEED TO USE THIS VERSION, LEARN TO WRITE SMALLER!

A retainer should be attentive, always polite, discrete in all matters, and never intrusive. Even more important is a sense of humor, which will always be appreciated. A retainer who possesses these qualities will have achieved perfection, and perfection is to be found in Our most loyal subject and servant, Tat'iana Negoshka Danilova, who shall receive a King's Cypher for her work as retainer to His Majesty Gryffith FitzWilliam. (AS _____)

p.s. if you use this version remove the source material note.

⁸ Source Material:Wiener, Leo. (1967). Anthology of Russian Literature. New York, Benjamin Blom.
Based very loosely off of ideas found in a section on instructing servants from "The Domostroy," a book on household governance from the time of Ivan the Terrible (XVI Century).

Adapting a recipe

Rationale: Juliana von Altenfeld got her Silver Crescent for her dedicated work as cook. She has a German persona and so going from German cookbooks for both the visual and the text seemed coherent.

C&I were based on Kuchemaistrey, Nuremberg, 1485. The text was by Mistress Katherine atte Wyshe de la Rye (at the time Lady Katryne Blak), based in part on Das Kochbuch der Sabrina Welserin, 1553.

Original text⁹

202 To make smoked tongue, recipe from Herr Jörg Fugger

Take fresh tongues and cut the throat completely from it. Then they should be well pounded or beaten, lengthwise, over a block or a chair, not too hard, so that they are not smashed or do not become mangled. One must beat them until they become soft underneath and also at the tip. They do not, however, become as soft at the tip as at the back on the thick end. When they are so beaten, then put them into a trough with salt for a good while. Then they should be salted like other meat and a nice red raw beet cut into cubes and also peas sprinkled under them and in between them and over the top of them, but not all too much, and let them stay thus for a day or overnight in a warm place. Then lay a small board over them and a good heavy stone and let it remain so for four weeks. If, after four or five days, they should not be covered with brine, finely chop some red beets and cook them in water and drain the water off the beets and pour a glassful of vinegar into the water. The water should be cool enough that one could just bear to dip a finger into it. One could also cook a few peas with the beets, if the broth would otherwise be too red, and put the red beets and the likewise red peas together with the salt on the bottom and in between and on the top. They can lie for five weeks or longer, and when they are hung, the thick ends should be turned to the top, poke a hole through them with a baling needle and hang them on a coarse thread in a kitchen, which has no chimney, and not over the fire in the thick smoke, so that the outsides become nicely brown, they become splendidly brown.

203 To prepare a meat aspic

If you would prepare approximately three seemly dishes, then take from a pig the ears, tail and hooves, which you already know are used for aspic. Chop veal bones into pieces, and take about four or five pieces of pork, whatever you consider right. The pork should be cooked separately in one quart or a little more of wine and a half-quart of vinegar. And the veal should also cook, but not as much as the pork. It needs one-half quart of wine, or a little more, mixed with two quarts of vinegar. Afterwards salt it a little. The pork needs more time to cook than the veal. And skim it well and watch out that it does not boil over. And when it has cooked a little it should be seasoned, also put some sugar into it, and when it is done, and it should be well-done, the fat is taken off and after that strain the both through a linen cloth into a clean pot and afterwards mixed with sugar and spices, however you think it is good, and put on the fire and allowed to boil again. One should also put some elecampane [21] into it, so that the broth becomes clear. The bowl should be sprinkled with cinnamon and raisins. Afterwards lay the pieces of meat in the bowl, however you think it right, and pour over them the broth, when it has come to a boil and before that shell about a half pound of almonds and put them into the bowl, as many as you like, then you have a good aspic

Final text

⁹ Recipes #202 and #203 (http://www.daviddfriedman.com/Medieval/Cookbooks/Sabrina_Welserin.html)

If you would prepare approximately three seemly feasts, then follow the example of Juliana von Altenfeld at a Bishop Geoffrey Tournament, a Runnymede dinner, and an Investiture for Our chosen Baron and Baroness of Bhakail; meals which you already know were wholesome and well-researched. Look further and you will hear of many more tables which this treasured lady has set with sumptuous food for hungry guests, and of how grateful they were for her service. With these stories in mind, study future feasts for a good while. Let these memories remind you that no one leaves hungry or unhappy from a feast of Juliana von Altenfeld, for she will work for two months or longer to plan a feast, and longer still to cook it until it is well-done and splendidly brown.

On this 27th day of September, Feast Day of Saint Elzearus, AS XLIII, at Our Coronation in the Barony of Carolingia, We, Darius Rex and Alethea Regina, see that Juliana is ready for induction into Our Order of the Silver Crescent, that when this matter is done, it is well-done, and blessed by the voices of many Companions.

A final note:

Once it is finished, read the text aloud to check its flow. Be ready to edit. Even if it sounds good at first, and if the deadline allows, wait at least a day then do that again. If you still like it, then it's done.

And for the final final note:

Be proud to be an author. The text is not a lesser part of the final document. As much as the C&I, it carries a message to the recipient. Keep in mind that if you enjoy writing these texts, others will enjoy hearing them.

References-useful places to use:

- Dictionaries
- Old English to Modern English Translator (translates both ways) <http://www.oldenglishtranslator.co.uk/>
- on-line Middle English Dictionary <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>
- Dictionnaire de l'Ancien français: In French. If you enter the (modern) word it gives you the meaning(s) and dated older forms http://www.lexilogos.com/francais_dictionnaire_ancien.htm
- Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (1330-1500) <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf/>
 - A thesaurus. They're your friends
 - Rhyming dictionaries. There are a lot of them online. Bookmark your favorite(s). Also keep in mind that you can find some for different languages.
 - Interest groups: the SCA has many interest groups for specific times and place, they can point you in the best direction for information

Some examples:

- Legal texts
 - Mostly based on legal texts, texts by Mistress Alys Mackyntoich: LiveJournal <http://lumineaux.livejournal.com/> and SCA projects blogspot <http://alysprojects.blogspot.com/>
 - "Towards a more period text", based on a class by Baron Adhemar de Villarquemada http://baronmorgan.gallowglass.org/articles/cna08_periodtext.html
 - Scroll Wordings Based on Period Texts by Maitresse Yvianne de Castel d'Avignon <http://www.angelfire.com/pa/allthat2/scriptorium/wordings.html>

- Poetry
 - Shiny things, texts by Mistress Katerine atte Wyshe de la Rye <http://shiny-thing.blogspot.com/>
 - Mistress Thora's Court Barony text http://www.eastkingdom.org/mediawiki/index.php/Kvithuhattr_for_Thora_Sharptooth
 - Maunche text for Magnus Hvalmagi <http://askaldsjourney.blogspot.com/2013/07/a-drottkvtt-for-poet-brewer.html>
 - Mistress Bess Darnley's texts <http://www.freewebs.com/bessdarnley/scrolltexts.htm>

- Based on various period texts
 - Yvianne de Castel d'Avignon's scribal Articles: check the class handout on scrolls wording based on period texts (in word format) <http://users.zoominternet.net/~yvianne/articles.html>
 - Ian Raven of Tadcaster's scrolls http://smidgeonink.com/made_stuff/?cat=10

- Some Kingdom mandated or recommended texts
 - Ansteorra approved scroll texts http://heraldry.ansteorra.org/docs/award_text.pdf
 - Drachenwald's sample scroll texts <http://www.drachenwald.sca.org/content/sample-scroll-texts>
 - East Kingdom Scribes Handbook p 18-29 http://signet.eastkingdom.org/wp/library/2011_scribeshb_vol4v1/
 - Outlands scribal handbook allows only "preapproved" custom text. The rest can be found here <http://www.rialto.org/scribes/>