



# ABFDE News

May 2011  
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Number 2



## THE GAVEL

KIRSTEN SINGER

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*"Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there."*

— Will Rogers

Greetings, Diplomates, and welcome to your new ABFDE Newsletter! You voted for an electronic newsletter and asked that it be issued 3 times per year, and voila! Here is the first issue. Please feel free to provide feedback to Editor Lisa Hanson regarding the new format and media.

**New Directors** — You also voted for four new Directors to replace four outgoing Directors, and the final results were Rosalind Spencer, CBSA; Bill Riordan, IRS; Bonnie Beal, USPS; and Jim Green, Private. Please welcome them officially ABOARD as of July 1, 2011.

**Annual Board Meeting** — The Board of Directors annual meeting was held April 29 through May 2, 2011 in Atlanta, GA. The meeting minutes may be found elsewhere in this newsletter, but in summary it was a very productive meeting. The 2011-2012 Executive Committee was voted in as follows: President: Kirsten Singer; Vice President: Lisa Hanson; Secretary: Kathy Annunziata Nicolaidis; and Treasurer: Jim Green.

**FSAB** — Outgoing Secretary Carl McClary submitted ABFDE's application for reaccreditation to FSAB in April. Now we await questions and feedback, and look forward to the outcome sometime early next year when ABFDE's 5-year Accreditation period expires.

**ACT** — With the ACT contract ending, and Carl McClary stepping down as ACT coordinator, the Board wants to ensure that the project's momentum does not stall. Grant Sperry has agreed to head the ACT Project and finalize the process of updating the written and practical test problems. ABFDE will be seeking Diplomates to participate in pilot testing of the new problems. Please watch for announcements at upcoming professional meetings and consider participating in these critical pilot tests.

**Formal Complaints** — it is the President's responsibility to annually publish the number of formal complaints filed against ABFDE. One complaint was filed during the 2010-2011 period. This complaint was filed with FSAB in May 2010, ABFDE responded in October 2010, and FSAB concluded in November 2010 that ABFDE was once again fully compliant with FSAB requirements.



# Minutes of the 2011 BOD Annual Meeting

BY CARL MCCLARY

The Board of Directors for the ABFDE met for the annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, April 29 through May 2, 2011. In attendance were Jeff Taylor, Carl McClary, Marie Durina, Kathleen Nicolaides, Kirsten Singer, Frank Hicks, Lisa Hanson, and Jim Josey. Jim Green joined the meeting on Saturday, May 1.

**Treasurer's Report - Jeff Taylor** As of April 1<sup>st</sup> 2011, there was \$2,337.31 in the Savings Account, \$287.70 in the checking account and \$32,516.74 in the CD. We withdrew \$20,000 from the CD this past year to help cover the cost of the ACT Validation Project. The ABFDE received \$47.81 in interest as part of this withdrawal and this has been put towards the AMES Fund which is currently at \$4,510.07. Once the CD is completely withdrawn all of the interest accrued will be put toward the Ames fund. As reflected in the Profit and Loss Statement, the ABFDE operated in the red last year. The main reason for this is the ACT Validation Project which cost the ABFDE \$59,239.68. Without this cost, the ABFDE would have been slightly in the black this year. The Board however has long sought to get the testing process validated. In fact, the annual dues were increased from \$100 to \$250 in 2003 in-part to help cover the cost of a validation project. The ACT Validation Project is important and helping to improve the overall testing process of the ABFDE. Another increase in this past year was the cost of Accountant Fees. After an unauthorized withdrawal of funds occurred in 2007, the Board changed the Treasurer's SOP's so that a periodic audit is required. The audit that was conducted this past year cost \$3,000.00. No major findings were discovered by the auditors. The next audit will be conducted in 2012. In closing, I would like to thank you of the opportunity to serve on the Board. It has been a very interesting six years and a privilege to work with many very talented Forensic Document Examiners.

**Credentials Committee - Carl McClary** Only one person applied and was accepted into the testing program. This person is retesting.

**Continuing Education - Frank Hicks** A list of workshops that have been approved were reported, for a total of 35 recertification points. One was not approved because it was not related to Questioned Documents.

**FSAB Report - Carl McClary** The FSAB Committee submitted the Application for Reaccreditation in April of this year with appropriate supporting documentation/references. The FSAB Annual report was also submitted in April of this year. President Singer had recommended a Diplomat nominee to a position on the FSAB board to replace Dennis Mooney, but that nominee was not selected by FSAB.

**Public Relations/Website - Kathy Nicolaides** Speaker's Bureau - Grant Sperry and Jim Josey recruited 18 diplomates from various regions to become speakers for the bureau. One of them, Ellen Scheutzner, suggested law schools as speaking venues. The Resource Center has been renamed the Legal Library and will include synopses of landmark QD studies and cases prepared by Marie Durina. It was suggested that eventually the syllabus should be included.

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## A TRAINEE'S PERSPECTIVE

BY HILLARY M. HOOVER



Hillary Hoover

It is quite amazing how much knowledge I have acquired in the past two years. I vividly remember sitting down with the Chief Forensic Document Examiner on my first day at the ICE laboratory feeling very excited, overwhelmed and anxious about what was to come. I started my career as a Forensic Document Examiner in February 2009 working with the U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) Forensic Document Laboratory (FDL). The ICE FDL has a rigorous, 2+ year training program that is designed to expose trainees to every facet of the field, from security documents to handwriting examination. The training program also offered ample opportunity to experiment with new methods and use cutting edge equipment, all the while supported by some of the best examiners in the field.

*"...Daubert is not a malevolent force to be feared, but rather an opportunity for us..."*

In addition to the expected rigors of the training program, I was also able to attend several tours of security printing and ink facilities which has greatly broadened my understanding of, and appreciation for, these specialties. I have also been extremely fortunate to have attended the AAFS conference in Seattle and the ASQDE conference in Victoria.

One of the most challenging components of my training has been moot court. Of the nine moot court cases, the one involving the *Daubert* hearing taught me the most. After all of the research and preparation, I can honestly say that I believe in what we do. *Daubert* is not the enemy. In fact, it is a great opportunity to demonstrate how much research has gone into handwriting and to have the opportunity to educate the general public on this aspect of our profession. As one of the first disciplines in forensic science to endure the brunt of *Daubert* challenges, this has given us an advantage. This has fortified us with the necessary tools, knowledge and research to overcome these challenges. As long as we are prepared to confidently answer to the five prongs, *Daubert* is not a malevolent force to be feared, but rather an opportunity for us to demonstrate the intrinsic value of our work and to shed light on handwriting examination.

As my official training period comes to a close, I feel a great sense of pride and accomplishment. I am fully aware that the rapid advancement of technology will continue to challenge us all. Collaboration and continual training (strengths in our community) will remain vital in our field. I am thrilled to be part of such a unique and specialized group of individuals, and I look forward to the future of forensic document examination.



## Continuing Education

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### May 2011

**23-27**     **MAAFS Annual Meeting**  
Founders' Inn and Spa  
Virginia Beach, VA  
Scott Walters, USSS  
(202) 406-5288  
*Scott.Walters@uss.s.dhs.gov*

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### August 2011

**7-13**     **IAI Annual International  
Educational Conference**  
Frontier Airlines Center  
Downtown Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
Jim Gettemy Education Coordinator  
(651)-681-8566

**20-25**     **ASQDE Annual Meeting**  
Hyatt Regency at Philadelphia  
Penn's Landing  
Philadelphia, PA  
Program Chair: Lisa Hanson  
*Lisa.Hanson@state.mn.us*  
Site Chair: Dennis Ryan  
*djryan@appliedforensics.com*

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### September 2011

**19-23**     **MAFS Annual Meeting  
Celebrating 40 years**  
Westin Hotel at Yorktown  
Chicago, IL  
Program Chair: Cynthia Torrissi  
Site Chair: Doug Saul  
*doug.saul@dupagesheriff.org*

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### November 2011

**1-5**     **NEAFS Annual Meeting**  
Hyatt Regency Hotel and Spa  
Newport, Rhode Island  
Vinny Desiderio  
*Vfornsic@yahoo.com*



## ABFDE Workshop

ABFDE is sponsoring the workshop entitled “**Multi-Faceted Document Examinations**” in conjunction with the **69<sup>th</sup> Annual ASQDE Conference; “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Science”** in beautiful downtown Philadelphia. The workshop is open to ABFDE Diplomates, members of ASQDE, SWAFDE, SAFDE, AAFS (QD-section), CSFS, MAAFS, and MAFS. Requests from applicants not meeting these listed requirements will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Date:** *Saturday, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011 (all day)*

**Location:** *Hyatt Regency Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA*

**Workshop Presenters:** *Dennis Ryan and Dave Oleksow*

**Registration Info:** *\$150\*/person - Class is limited to 25 participants*

*\*Price includes box lunch*




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## NIJ Research Project

### ***Validity, Reliability and Accuracy in Forensic Signature Identification***

**Agency:** Kentucky State University  
**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Mara Merlino  
**Project Consultants:** Dr. Adrian Dyer and Dr. Bryan Found  
 FDEs Derek Hammond and Jan Seaman Kelly  
**Funding:** \$466,710 for 2 years  
**Participants:** ASQDE, ABFDE, SWAFDE, SAFDE, MAAFS, or similar professional organizations

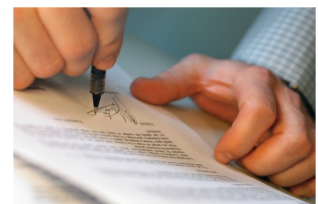
The proposed research will use eye-tracking methodology and interviews to quantitatively analyze the visual and cognitive steps that FDEs and laypeople employ to render decisions related to the examination of signature specimens. 120 FDEs will be asked to participate in a survey assessing their education, training, and experience, and to share their views about the present methods of FDE education and training. This research will address several important areas of forensic document examination, such as the development of standardized training and proficiency testing, measures of reliability in signature identification, and method transparency.

The initial telephone/web survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The next phase will require FDEs to schedule two or three days to travel to Kentucky State University to participate. Airfare, meals, lodging, and ground transportation will be paid for by the university.

Please contact a principal investigator if you have any questions:

Dr. Mara Merlino: (502) 597-5053, [mara.merlino@kysu.edu](mailto:mara.merlino@kysu.edu)

Dr. Veronica Dahir: (775) 784-1056, [veronicad@crda.unr.edu](mailto:veronicad@crda.unr.edu)



## ASQDE 2011 Annual Meeting "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Science"

### ***The Program***

ASQDE's annual meeting will be held August 20-25, 2011, in Philadelphia, PA. The theme of the meeting is "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Science." Several exciting presentations are anticipated, as well as the following workshops/technical sessions:

- ***Signature Examination Workshop - Complex Issues and Common Problems***  
ABFDE full-day workshop, 1 day prior to ASQDE AGM (see page 5 for details)
- ***Printing Processes***, Scott Walters and Jeffrey Payne of USSS
- ***Photoshop CS5***, George Reis from Adobe
- ***Statistics and Forensic Evidence***, Nicholas Petraco
- ***Likelihood Ratios of Individual Handwriting Characteristics***, Tom Vastrick
- ***Ethics and Forensics***, Joe Bono
- ***Human Factors***, Scott Shappell

The ever-popular trainee breakout session, an event that began in 2008, will continue this year with a highly instructive (and entertaining) session by Grant Sperry, Dan Purdy and Bob Muehlberger.

Papers and posters are also anticipated on a variety of interesting topics, including the use of statistics and Bayesian theory in document examination.

If you have questions about the program, please contact **Program Co-Chairs** Lisa Hanson (Lisa.Hanson@state.mn.us), Todd Welch (WelchT@michigan.gov), or **Site Chair** Dennis Ryan (djryan@appliedforensics.com).

### ***The Meeting Site***

This year's meeting will be held at the Hyatt Regency Philadelphia at Penn's Landing. The hotel contact information is:

Hyatt Regency Philadelphia at Penn's Landing  
201 South Columbus Boulevard, Philadelphia, PA 19106  
Tel: 215/521-6565



*Room rates for this meeting at the Hyatt Regency are as follows:*

Single/Double Occupancy: \$149.00    Triple Occupancy: \$174.00    Quadruple Occupancy: \$199.00

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An SOP has been written for the ABFDE website. Recently added to the website: a color logo, Study Guide, and upcoming test dates and locations. A Board of Directors-only area will be developed. The Board purchased the domains "ABFDE.info" and "ABFDE.us." Marie Durina took lead on writing the impact statement on the Alaska case; the impact statement will be posted on the website also. Brent Ostrum wrote an entry for ABFDE on Wikipedia, as more attorneys are using Wikipedia for information. Kathleen suggested an Op Ed piece for a couple of newspapers. An ABFDE Blog was also suggested as well as a Facebook page. Recognition and thanks were given to Laureen and Bill Leaver for their job as Webmasters! *Ed. Note - a Facebook page has already been established by Mr. Ostrum.*

**Recertification—Rick Horton** There are currently 119 ABFDE certified diplomates, and no new diplomates were certified this past calendar year. Fourteen diplomates were recertified and six are currently due for recertification and are pending recertification applications and acceptance. Four diplomates let their certification lapse for non payment of dues.

**Test Prep & Validation - Carl McClary** A review of the progress made during the previous year with the American College Testing International (ACT) panel, consisting of a group of Diplomates and ACT staff, was given as well as a review of the remaining tasks by the panel, which consists of writing additional test items and editing the ones selected to be retained. A new test blueprint has also been developed.

**Workshop Committee - Jim Josey** There were no ABFDE workshops held during this reporting period. On March 2, 2011 I updated our information with Grants.Gov to allow ABFDE to remain registered and qualified to apply for federal grants. Around the end of February I received notice from NFSTC that this year NIJ would only consider applications for programs that were already in place, but was advised that the Mid-West Regional Forensic Science Training Center might be another option to consider for next year. I am in the process of contacting them to see if they would be interested. An ABFDE sponsored all expenses paid four week training workshop, funded by a grant, remains my goal. Thus, I will continue to monitor the grant offerings in hopes eventually finding what we need.

**Historian - Carl McClary** Few issues of major concern were brought to the board during the past year. One complaint against the Board was submitted to FSAB regarding no appeal options for testing candidates. Appeal procedures were re-implemented in the RPG and additional changes were added. The majority of the ABFDE SOPs were updated in recent months. Great strides have been made regarding validation of our testing program and this will continue possibly into 2012.

**Testing - Lisa Hanson** One candidate was terminated and one candidate voluntarily resigned from the program for not completing the testing within the allotted time period. There are currently seven candidates in the testing process.

**Secretary - Carl McClary** One application was processed and forwarded to the testing committee. This applicant had previously been in the testing process.

**Nominations - Frank Hicks** Dave Oleksow and Sandy Lines produced 6 candidates. There was a 38% vote return. Those nominees elected were: Bonnie Beal, Jim Green, Rosalind Spencer, and Bill Riordan.

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## OLD BUSINESS

**ABFDE Workshops - (Josey)** Long range goal: develop a week-long program for ABFDE certification preparation and expose participants to government and private examiner cases. BOD agreed that an ABFDE update presentation be given at meetings, if possible. Breakout session with trainees suggested for ASQDE meeting to describe the Board process, etc. Lisa Hanson will give a workshop at MAFS regarding ABFDE certification. Kathleen offered a similar presentation to SWAFDE.

## NEW BUSINESS

**ACT Panel Update (McClary)** Review of what the ACT panel did in November of 2010 was given. The panel is in the process of developing a bank of 250 questions that will be pilot tested at professional meetings, and possibly beginning at the ASQDE meeting in Philadelphia in August 2011.

**Raise in annual dues and/or certification fees - (Singer/Taylor)** Raising testing fees vs. annual dues was discussed. Comparisons were made with other certification organizations; although ABFDE charges higher annual dues fees than most, there is no fee for testing, unlike most certification organizations. Incremental test fees were suggested for each phase of testing with a partial refund if a failure occurs. Discussion was tabled until next year without objection.

**Certification/accreditation for private laboratories - (Nicolaides)** In view of NAS, should ABFDE consider accrediting private laboratories? Currently, accreditation is directed at labs receiving Federal funding. Kathleen will check with the three major accrediting organizations - FQS, ASCLD, and A2LA - to see if they accredit private laboratories. Suggestion made that accreditation may be contrary to ABFDE's mission.

**Biannual audit to triennial audit - (Taylor)** The BOD voted to change the professional audit period from every 2 years to every three years.

**Test Failures, Complaints and Appeals - (Hanson/Singer)** The test cited in the FSAB complaint was pulled temporarily for review. The Testing Committee suggests that people are being trained well, but some kinds of exams are not being trained as intently as others. Also labs may not be giving applicants enough time to work the practical tests, since results appear rushed. Suggestion that sample written and practical tests could be available to applicants. Workshop proposal by Jim Josey will be implemented at the fall MAFS meeting in Chicago.

**Proposed change to RPG - (Hicks)** An old procedure was reactivated in response to testing failures. If a candidate fails any phase of testing a second time, s/he may agree to spend 6 months with a mentor to address the identified areas of deficiency. Volunteer mentors willing to devote a minimum of 80 hours in assistance to the candidate will be sought by the ABFDE. The mentor can certify progress of candidate after 6 months, for issuance of 5 new practical examinations.

**Recognition of departing Directors - (Singer)** Plaques were awarded to Jeff Taylor and Carl McClary. Plaques will be also sent to former Directors Jan Johnson and Dennis Ryan.

**Elections** Elections were held by the BOD to fill open positions on the Board with the following results —President: Kirsten Singer, Vice President: Lisa Hanson, Secretary: Kathy Nicolaides, and Treasurer: Jim Green.





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Deadline for the next  
issue:

**September 15th**

[www.abfde.org](http://www.abfde.org)

**2011-2012 Board Officers**

PRESIDENT.....Kirsten A. Singer  
VICE PRESIDENT.....Lisa M. Hanson  
SECRETARY.....Kathleen Annunziata Nicolaides  
TREASURER.....Jim Green

**2011-2012 Committee Chairs**

CONTINUING EDUCATION.....A. Frank Hicks  
CREDENTIALS.....Kathleen Annunziata Nicolaides  
HISTORIAN.....Kathleen Annunziata Nicolaides  
NEWSLETTER EDITOR.....Lisa M. Hanson  
NOMINATIONS.....A. Frank Hicks  
PUBLIC RELATIONS..... Marie Durina  
RECERTIFICATION.....Rick Horton  
RULES & PROCEDURES.....A. Frank Hicks  
TEST PREP & VALIDATION.....Rosalind Spencer  
TESTING.....Lisa M. Hanson  
WEBMASTER.....William Leaver  
WORKSHOP COORDINATOR.....L. Jim Josey

**ABFDE Workshop  
MAFS Annual Meeting September 19-23, 2011  
Chicago, IL**

The ABFDE is pleased to announce a full-day introductory workshop to the Certification Process, entitled ***Certification 101: Demystifying ABFDE Board Certification***.

The morning session will summarize the certification process, from ***How to begin the Application Process*** through the ***Oral Boards***. This will include a walk through the ABFDE website; the benefits of becoming Board Certified; and discussions concerning Questioned Document Examinations in the post-NAS Report world. The morning session concludes with a review of the ABFDE Certification Study Syllabus, as well as examples of sample written test questions.

During the afternoon session, participants will be divided into small groups (3-5 participants per group) and review the sample practical tests received prior to the workshop. An ABFDE Diplomate will be assigned to each group to discuss what ABFDE Practical Test Evaluators look for, as well as explain criteria used by every Evaluator when they evaluate a Candidate’s work product.

Participants must engage in pre-attendance examinations of sample Practical Tests. These are representative of actual Practical Tests offered by ABFDE during the Certification Process. **Min/Max Attendees: 15/ 25**

*For more information, contact Lisa Hanson at [Lisa.Hanson@state.mn.us](mailto:Lisa.Hanson@state.mn.us)*