



# ABFDE News

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## THE GAVEL

KIRSTEN SINGER

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

<i>The Gavel</i>	1
<i>ABFDE update at ASQDE AGM</i>	2
<i>New Diplomates</i>	3
<i>A Trainee's Perspective</i>	4
<i>Continuing Ed</i>	5
<i>MAFS upcoming workshops</i>	6
<i>2011-2012 EC&amp; Committees</i>	8

Greetings, Diplomates! Welcome to the beginning of another autumn and new school year.

As I write this, the 10th anniversary of 9/11 is coming to a close. Perhaps it is living at DC Ground Zero, but I have found it to be an especially emotional day of remembrance. I also, however, observe this day with an awareness of the importance of our professional discipline. And I am not alone. The Technical Support Working Group (TSWG) for Combating Terrorism recently completed funding for two research initiatives by Drexel University involving FDE proficiency in examining simulated writing, and whether FDE conclusions are influenced by cognitive biases. TSWG understands the critical need for FDEs to be able to examine and testify to their findings in cases that may involve terrorist acts. Dr. Moshe Kam presented the preliminary findings of both projects at the August 2011 ASQDE meeting.

**ACT** — Director Grant Sperry has taken the reins for the ACT Project. The updated written test questions are near completion, and as mentioned in the previous newsletter, ABFDE will be seeking Diplomates to participate in pilot testing of the new problems. Assisting Grant in this crucial project are Directors Marie Durina and Rosalind Spencer.

**ABFDE Newsletter Editor** — The Board is seeking a Diplomate to replace VP Lisa Hanson as the Newsletter Editor. The Newsletter is now electronic, and is issued 3 times per year so the task has become far less demanding than it has been historically. Plus it's fun! Please contact Lisa Hanson at [Lisa.Hanson@state.mn.us](mailto:Lisa.Hanson@state.mn.us) if you are interested.

"I'm all in favor of keeping dangerous weapons out of the hands of fools. Let's start with typewriters."

- Frank Lloyd Wright



# ABFDE Update at 2011 ASQDE Meeting

BY KIRSTEN SINGER

The annual ASQDE meeting, held in Philadelphia, was another example of the excellence we've come to expect from this organization. Site and program chairs Dennis Ryan and Lisa Hanson did a superlative job. I would also like to thank them for giving me some time on the busy agenda to provide the following ABFDE update.

**New Directors** — four new Directors elected by Diplomates are: Jim Green – Private Practice, Eugene, OR; Bonnie Beal – US Postal Service, Dulles, VA; Rosalind Spencer – Canada Border Services, Ottawa; and Bill Riordan – IRS Laboratory, Chicago, IL.

**ACT Update** — updated written test questions are almost completed. I had optimistically hoped to introduce the new written and practical tests by January 2012; however, the Board now plans to pilot test the updated written test questions at upcoming professional meetings. The timeline is contingent on reaching the minimum of 50 Diplomates participating in the pilot tests at professional meetings. Grant Sperry is the new ACT Project coordinator, replacing Carl McClary.

**Testing Committee** — ABFDE plans to schedule a series of Testing Workshops that describe the ABFDE Certification Process entitled Certification 101 – Demystifying ABFDE Board Certification. Attendees will be exposed to sample written and practical test questions, as well as learn what Test Evaluators are looking for when reviewing Candidates' work product and conclusions. The first workshop is scheduled for the September MAFS meeting in Chicago, with plans to offer future workshops at other regional and national forensic meetings. For more information contact Lisa Hanson or visit the MAFS website.

**Changes to RPGs** — Changes to RPGs are posted on the Website in a document called "Outline for Substantive Changes" located as a sub-menu under the CERTIFICATION button on the Home page. The most recent change has been the addition of a mentorship option. Those candidates who fail the Practical Test Phase a second time may have the option of receiving mentoring from a Diplomate for a period of at least 80 hours followed by retesting in 6 months, rather than the current 2 year waiting period.

**Impact Statement** — At last year's ASQDE meeting, I had reported that the Board wrote an Impact Statement for the penalty phase of a perjury trial involving Mark Halterman, a qualified fingerprint examiner with the Anchorage PD. Mr. Halterman had testified in a civil court case in Iowa as a FDE, though he had never received the proper training. He was sentenced to three years for perjury with two suspended. The judge said Halterman hurt confidence in the justice system by faking his credentials.

**Speakers Bureau** — established by the ABFDE Public Relations Committee, this Bureau is comprised of 18 Diplomates from regions across the US and Canada. They will provide a Presentation on Forensic Document Examination, types of exams we do, how to submit evidence, and how FDE meets Daubert Criteria. The PR Committee is looking for presentation venues,

*(continued on page 7)*



## WELCOME NEW DIPLOMATES!!



**Jeffrey Payne** has been a FDE with the US Secret Service since 2001. His duties include the examination and comparison of

handwriting; identification or elimination of typewriters and other mechanical impression devices; and developing and deciphering obliterated and eradicated writing and indented impressions. Jeff also conducts examinations to determine the authenticity of various documents such as credit cards, traveler's checks, driver's licenses, social security cards. Jeff is a member of the International Association of Financial Crimes Investigators, MAAFS, and ASQDE. He is a certified technical assessor for the ASCLD/ Laboratory Accreditation Board, and is currently serving as Vice-President of the Document Security Alliance. Jeff also co-authored a paper entitled "The Forensic Analysis of Thermal Transfer Printing," published in the September 2003 issue of the Journal of Forensic Sciences.



**Andrew Barton** was trained under John Walker of the New Zealand Police Forensic Document Examination Section beginning 21 August 2000. He continues his career in

FDE with the Canada Border Services Agency. His background is in chemistry (very useful in hobbies such as micro-brewing, cooking and coffee/scotch snobbery) and forensic science. His professional interests include print processes, nonsensical opinion scales, inter and intra FDE calibration and proficiency testing.



Canada Border  
Services Agency

## A TRAINEE'S PERSPECTIVE

BY KATIE SAVOIE



Throughout my FDE training program at the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the subject that I was most excited to learn about was how to identify or eliminate handwriting. It's downright fascinating. The study of the subconscious creation of such individual handwriting characteristics is amazing. Handwriting is such a beautiful gateway of human intelligence. Humans created a written language that is as fluid in its evolution as spoken language.

Unfortunately, I don't think there has ever been a time when such an intelligent expression has ever been so downgraded. "Indiana Public Schools to No Longer Require Handwriting", "Mourning the Death of Handwriting", and "A Nation of Adults Who Will Write Like Children" are just a few of the articles that have recently caught the eye of the FDE community.

The Digital Age is upon us and schools, parents, and future employers feel no need to "force" a dying skill onto children who fill in circles on tests nowadays instead of writing an intelligent answer or who type emails, text, and use computers to keep track of, well, everything. While forensic document examiners are certainly well-trained enough to deal with their case load burgeoning by the increase of documents created by other means besides handwriting (counterfeit documents, insertions, deletions, alterations, trash marks, etc.), I know it makes all of us sad to see less case work with the magnificence of handwriting involved. Not only because we spent time, effort, and money to be properly trained in handwriting examination, but because it lessens our services to the community.

One day, there may no longer be wills, receipts, death threats, suicide notes, prescriptions, and – gasp! – Thank you notes that are written with pen and ink. I am worried about the future of forensic document examination, and specifically of handwriting examinations. While paper fracture matching and finding indentations using the ESDA certainly have their respectful place among our examinations, handwriting is one of the few exams where our expert opinions have the weight of serious contemplation behind them instead of just a visual assessment where one can photograph the phenomenon of paper fibers matching or demonstrate whether or not two inks are similar. While my trainer has always told me that we, as experienced examiners, should consider it essential to look at the questioned document as a whole – staple holes, folds, opaqueness, et al. – it is the handwriting that really betrays the writer. And determination of authorship is one of the hardest tasks to accomplish because of the amount of competency, experience, and well-developed deliberation that must be involved in it. That time spent scrutinizing and weighing the handwriting characteristics is what sets us apart from some charlatan with too many mail-ordered degrees and a microscope. And that expertise is exactly what will be missing from our services to the community when handwriting examinations are no longer requested.

But what can we do? Stop the digital revolution? Highly unlikely. For those of us just entering the field, there are still plenty of people in the world who do handwrite. But in a few more generations, more and more schools may join

*(continued on page 7)*

*"Humans created a written language that is as fluid in its evolution as spoken language."*

## Continuing Education

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### September 2011

- 19-23**      **MAFS Annual Meeting  
Celebrating 40 years**  
Westin Hotel at Yorktown  
Chicago, IL  
Program Chair: Cynthia Torrisi  
Site Chair: Doug Saul  
[doug.saul@dupagesheriff.org](mailto: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](mailto:Vfornsic@yahoo.com)

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### February 2012

- 20-25**      **AAFS 64th Annual Meeting**  
Atlanta Marriott Marquis  
265 Peachtree Center Avenue  
Atlanta, Georgia  
Carl McClary  
(404) 417-2706  
[carl.mcclary@atf.gov](mailto:carl.mcclary@atf.gov)

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### May 2012

- 14-18**      **MAAFS Annual Meeting**  
Turf Valley Resort  
Ellicott City, Maryland



## **MAFS Workshop**

### ***Note Taking Techniques and Considerations for Document Examiners***

Coordinators: Larry Olson and TBD;

September 19 & 20, 2011, 8am – 5pm (both days); Cost = \$250 (Lunch Included)

The workshop will address how existing legislation and the requirements of accrediting bodies (ISO, ASCLD/LAB) may dictate how QD examination notes should be taken and stored. Legal aspects of testifying from notes will be presented. Attendees will then share and discuss note taking techniques and formats for various types of examinations (i.e., handwriting, indentations, ink/alterations, typewriting, photocopiers, printing processes, etc.).

Please check out the MAFS website for additional information and workshops available and we look forward to seeing you in Chicago in September!

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## **MAFS Workshop**

### ***Certification 101 – Demystifying ABFDE Board Certification***

Instructor: Lisa Hanson, D-ABFDE and various other ABFDE Diplomates

September 21st, 8am – 5pm; Cost: \$175 (Lunch included)

***(Please note, this workshop is not only for examiners who are interested in Board Certification; it is also a an instructional workshop for those looking for a workshop that focuses on how to work multifaceted, complex questioned document cases)***

Prior to coming to the workshop, all participants must engage in pre-attendance examinations of practice Practical Tests.

The morning session will describe the ABFDE Certification Process: from How to begin the Application Process through the final Oral Boards. Benefits of becoming Board Certified will be discussed, as well as the atmosphere that has developed in the courts concerning QD in this post-NAS Report world. The practical problems will be the basis for the second half of the day. Attendees will be divided into smaller groups to exchange observations regarding each of the problems.

**For more information on both workshops, visit  
[www.mafs.net/2011/workshops.html#Questioned-Documents-Workshops](http://www.mafs.net/2011/workshops.html#Questioned-Documents-Workshops)**

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*(ABFDE Update continued from page 2)*

Please contact PR Chair Marie Durina if you know of any judicial groups, law schools, bar associations, etc. who would be interested in a presentation.

**Legal Library** — formerly called the Resource Center, the PR Committee is in the process of posting a webpage on the ABFDE website to address legal issues confronting FDEs.

**Hilton Book Review** — The current issue of the Journal of Forensic Document Examination, which is the journal of the Association of Forensic Document Examiners, has published a review of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of the Hilton book, *Scientific Examination of Questioned Documents* (2006). The reviewers found little to like, and expended 21 pages primarily criticizing the book's lack of adequate detail and bibliography. They were particularly disturbed by the lack of Hilton's name on the cover and title page of the book. I contacted the authors of the book, Jan Kelly and Brian Lindblom, about writing a response, and they agreed that a response to the review would not be productive. Jan felt, however, that being aware of the review will allow FDEs to not be blindsided by it in court. Jan essentially believes that the book's criticisms stem from the established philosophical differences between groups of examiner and/or issues the editors could not control as the publisher was the ultimate authority of certain decisions. The authors strongly agree that they had never claimed that the *Scientific Examination of Questioned Documents*, 2nd Edition, was written to be the ultimate FDE resource, or as a stand-alone training manual.



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*(A Trainee's Perspective continued from page 4)*

Indiana in replacing their handwriting curriculum with keyboarding and tech companies will come out with more technology to ease us into laziness.

The survival of the Forensic Document Examination field will be through training in the examination of those documents produced by digital means. I think that as time goes on, the training programs will be less focused on handwriting examinations and more focused on printing processes, font identification, and discovering the origin of a digital document. I certainly think Albert Osborn would want us to persevere. Mr. Charles Darwin once wrote, "It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change." I think the future generations of FDEs will need to become more and more proficient in the study of digital technologies as well as learning about handwriting examinations for as long as they can. Although we are not there yet, handwriting *is* dying out leaving the almighty keyboard to rule. We must react now – reach out to the digital community and treat it with same fervor we now have for handwriting.

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

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***ABFDE Seeking Newsletter Editor***



**The Board is seeking a Diplomate to  
replace Lisa Hanson as the ABFDE**

**Newsletter Editor. The Newsletter is now  
electronic, and is issued 3 times per year so the  
task has become far less demanding than it has  
been historically. Plus it's fun!**

**If you are interested, contact Lisa  
at: [lisa.hanson@state.mn.us](mailto:lisa.hanson@state.mn.us)**

