



ASCLD President's News

May 2008

The ASCLD Board of Directors realizes that we must provide more regular and accessible information to members about our activities. To that end, we'll be publishing periodic news bulletins under the title of ***President's News*** and this inaugural edition will summarize our major activities for the past six months. We welcome your input and encourage you to become involved in issues and committees that stir your interest.

Interpol's 15th International Forensic Science Symposium

ASCLD is a member of two new international forensic science organizations, the International Forensic Strategic Alliance (IFSA) and The International Forensic Summit (TIFS). The former is a consortium of management associations and the latter includes educators and the medico-legal community, as well as managers.

International Liaison Susan Johns and I attended meetings for both groups at the Interpol Symposium last October. The IFSA partners, including ASCLD, SMANZFL (Australia and New Zealand), ENFSI (Europe) and AICEF (Spain and Latin America), signed a memorandum of understanding to work together in a collaborative way and began scoping out bylaws to govern our activities. We hope to encourage other forensic science management groups from around the world to join us. TIFS is at a more preliminary level of development and we spent time discussing organizational models and topical areas for collaboration.

Barbara Remberg, a representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, addressed both groups. She outlined the UNODC's

efforts to establish forensic science services in developing nations and appealed for our assistance. This is an area where ASCLD and our partners can have a significant impact by sharing our experiences and learning about viable forensic services and quality assurance. Ms Remberg has been invited to speak at the ASCLD Symposium in September and she has contributed an article that immediately follows this newsletter.

NIJ's Policy Forum

In December, NIJ invited forensic science stakeholders to participate in a preliminary meeting aimed at initiating a national forensic science strategy. Representatives from laboratories, client groups, the medico-legal community, victims groups, academia and advocates were in attendance for two days of presentations and intense discussions. I was invited to attend and make a presentation on priorities and issues from ASCLD's perspective. Unfortunately, an early winter blizzard kept me in Toronto, but President Elect, Dean Gialamas graciously stepped in to ably present our views. Our Powerpoint presentation can be accessed separately through the Crime Lab Minute. The necessary components of a national strategy, as presented by ASCLD were:

- *Reinforcement of the value of forensic science to the criminal justice community*
- *A plan to ensure that labs demonstrate quality and accountability through accreditation, use of the scientific method and ethical behaviour*
- *A national plan for adequate, dedicated, and stable funding for crime labs.*

Presenters representing other forensic science organizations (e.g. AAFS, NAME, CFSO) delivered similar messages and it was heartening to know that we were all speaking with one voice.

NIJ recorded the meeting discussion and will be creating a memorialized document to summarize the forum. To date, the summary has not been made available. A follow-up meeting was discussed but has not been set. This will likely occur after the National Academy of Sciences Committee presents its findings.

Meeting with Staff of the Innocence Project

Earlier this year, the Innocence Project requested a meeting with ASCLD. Both parties agreed that we wanted to open channels of communication and establish official linkages so that we could talk to, rather than about each other on issues of concern or mutual interest. Past President Bill Marbaker arranged the meeting to coincide with the ASCLD Board meeting in February.

Ultimately, three forensic science organizations were at the table, with ASCLD being represented by the four board officers and Past President, ASCLD/LAB by President Frank Dolejsi, and CFSO by lobbyist Beth Lavach. The IP sent a delegation of four, including Director Peter Neufeld, Policy Director Stephen Saloom, Gabe Oberfield and Eric Ferrero.

The meeting was productive and cordial. We established points of liaison with each other (Stephanie Reilander and Dean Gialamas for ASCLD and Stephen Saloom for IP) and initiated discussions on a number of topics including the use of language and messaging in public communications and the elements and role of forensic science oversight bodies.

We agreed to meet when opportunities arose at other events and to communicate through our liaison officers if there are pressing issues of concern between meetings. The next face-to-face meeting is tentatively set for July in conjunction with the NIJ Conference.

Strategic Planning

The ASCLD Board of Directors is engaging in a process to update our strategic plan. This will be sent out to members when ready and will include goals directed at areas such as:

- Continuing financial independence and possible sponsorship;
- Developing position statements and papers;
- Continuing advocacy on forensic science issues;
- Ensuring continuity of knowledge;
- Updating of the website; and,
- Attracting new members.

Symposium Planning

We are embarking on a new era of independence without the generous financial support of our partners at NIJ. The next ASCLD Workshop and Symposium will be held on September 14 - 18, 2008, in Salt Lake City at the Downtown Marriott. Meeting costs are a primary concern for the organization, but rest assured that the content will not suffer.

Dean Gialamas and his symposium team are working with our vendors to increase our vendor support and have created new sponsorship levels to help increase our financial base for meeting costs. They have also selected venues in less costly cities and are already working on booking the 2009 meeting to take advantage of today's contract prices to reduce the overall costs to the association. For more information about this year's symposium, please visit:

<https://www.blueskyz.com/asclid/welcome.asp>

On a final note, I would like to encourage our members to consider running for the Board of Directors at our Annual Meeting in September. I would be happy to speak with anyone needing more information about this important role, as would any of the other Directors. Serving on the ASCLD Board has truly been one of the most interesting and rewarding things that I've done in my professional life. We need active and committed members to keep the organization viable, especially with all of today's challenges in forensic science.

Stephanie Reilander
President
ASCLD

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime **– By Barbara Remberg**

For more than 50 years, scientific expertise has played a critical role in United Nations drug control efforts. The main purpose of the Laboratory and Scientific Section of the United Nations Office on Drugs

and Crime (UNODC)* is to assist countries in developing national scientific capacity and expertise. It provides training opportunities for scientists, runs proficiency tests, and provides quality assurance support, including reference samples, as well as laboratory equipment and materials. Drawing on a pool of internationally recognized experts, UNODC's Laboratory and Scientific Section also develops recommended method manuals and guidelines, thus contributing to the standardization of approaches worldwide.

Over the years, UNODC has assisted 175 laboratories in 120 countries, and trained almost 800 drug analysts. It also provides, for a nominal fee, drug and precursor field test kits for quick and simple preliminary identification by police officers. Around 10,000 kits have been distributed so far.

In its series of recommended method manuals, UNODC has published more than 20 manuals and guidelines, extending from recommended analytical methods for the analysis of different drugs, to guidelines for testing biological matrices, quality assurance matters and the disposal of chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of drugs. Two new manuals are currently under preparation, on staff skill requirements and recommended equipment for forensic science laboratories, and on crime scene and physical evidence awareness for non-forensic personnel.

UNODC also actively supports global information exchange and the networking of laboratories around the world. It typically acts as a catalyst and interface to laboratories that are not part of the traditional, Northern hemisphere / Western' / methodologically advanced scientific community. As a result, the community benefits from access to new information, data and trends, including global and emerging trends from countries to which they may not have direct access.

Working with UNODC as part of a global network, as reference laboratory for proficiency tests, or as individual expert, therefore, means reaching out beyond national and regional borders to the benefit of the scientific community at large. Since UNODC is currently expanding its work by moving beyond drugs into other fields of forensic science, opportunities for "building international cooperation in

* UNODC is headquartered in Vienna, Austria. Web: www.unodc.org/unodc/en/scientific_support.html

the science-based fight against crime”^{**} and “promoting the effectiveness of crime laboratory leaders throughout the world”^{**} are increasing as well.

In 2007, UNODC started work on the design of a forensic science work program focused on strengthening the worldwide availability of quality forensic science services, from the crime scene to the forensic science laboratory. Such services will ensure accurate and timely provision of information to criminal justice systems and consequently will support effective and fair criminal investigations and trials.

Specific activities will continue to raise forensic awareness – from the crime scene to the courtroom – and to explore partnerships with international bodies and associations of forensic science institutes to create areas of synergy in the development of standards and best practices and to help streamline the coordination of technical assistances activities worldwide. Activities are expected to include a needs assessment for the development of tailored projects addressing regional and thematic issues.

^{**} Quotes from the goals and objectives of the International Forensic Strategic Alliance (IFSA) and the ASCLD mission statement, respectively.