



Organization of Scientific Area Committees
for Forensic Science

Newsletter

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Feature Article:

OSAC is Recruiting Applicants for New Crime Scene Subcommittee and Other Vacancies

The OSAC is currently recruiting applicants for a new subcommittee, the Crime Scene Investigation Subcommittee.

The Crime Scene Investigation Subcommittee will focus on the standards and guidelines related to the investigation of crime scenes including the search for, documentation of, collection of, and preservation of evidence associated with a crime scene. The Subcommittee will report to the Crime Scene/Death Investigation Scientific Area Committee.

Prospective members should complete the [OSAC Application Form](#). Existing OSAC applicants or members who would like to be considered for this Subcommittee should email forensics@nist.gov.

The initial application period will be open until November 30, 2015 and all non-selected applicants will remain in the application pool and be eligible to fill future membership vacancies and to serve as an affiliate on OSAC Task Groups.

A vacancy also opened on the [Chemistry SAC](#), and the [Footwear and Tire Subcommittee](#) has noted a need for additional applicants to fill member and affiliate positions. Prospective members should complete the OSAC Application Form.





SAC members stand during Q&A session so that attendees can approach them for questions after the meeting

The Biology/DNA SAC Provides Public Updates and Solicits Input at the 2015 International Symposium on Human Identification (ISHI) Meeting

The annual International Symposium on Human Identification (ISHI) conference is specifically focused on DNA applications in forensic settings. Organizers of the 26th Annual ISHI conference indicated that it was one of the most well-attended conferences they've hosted to date.

The conference began with an evocative key-note presentation by Kirk Bloodsworth, a death row inmate who was exonerated by post-conviction DNA testing. Kirk concluded his presentation calling for forensic science practitioners to acknowledge their "phenomenal responsibilities" and called for practitioners to "do the tests right" and with integrity.

On October 14, 2015, Dr. George Herrin, who is the Deputy Director of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation-Division of Forensic Sciences, and also the chair of the Biology/DNA Scientific Area Committee (SAC), provided an update which included a snapshot of the SAC's intended standards and guidelines that they hope will help practitioners to perform these responsibilities in that vein. The Biology/DNA SAC is working on approximately 51 standard and guideline projects, in various stages of completion.

During a morning workshop on October 15, 2015, the Biology/DNA SAC Subcommittee chairs hosted a public Question and Answer (Q&A) Session. Each chair first provided an update on the subcommittee's priorities, and then solicited any

comments or questions. Kim Murga, of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, and chair of the Biological Methods Subcommittee reported that the subcommittee is focusing on establishing standards and guidelines that support molecular and biochemical methods used to analyze evidence and reference items. This encompasses everything from serology through loading samples on a genetic analyzer. This subcommittee does not cover anything related to interpretation (serology interpretation or DNA interpretation). Robyn Ragsdale, Ph.D., of FDLE, provided the Biological Data Interpretation and Reporting Subcommittee update, and noted they will focus on standards and guidelines related to scientifically valid methods of interpretation, statistical analysis and reporting of biological results.

Katherine Moore, Wildlife subcommittee chair, who also works with the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Northwest Fisheries Science Center Forensic Laboratory, reported that the Wildlife Forensics Subcommittee will focus on standards and guidelines related to taxonomic identification, individualization, and geographic origin of non-human biological evidence based on morphological and genetic analyses. She noted there is approximately \$53 billion of illegal activity that is of interest to this stakeholder group.

In addition to the public engagement, the OSAC also held a series of internal meetings. These meetings focused on facilitating related standard and guideline projects through OSAC processes.



Robyn Ragsdale, Ph.D., discusses key challenges identified by the Biological Methods Subcommittee



Standards/Guidelines Currently Under Consideration for OSAC Registry

The Organization of Scientific Area Committees for Forensic Science (OSAC) Materials (Trace) Subcommittee, Seized Drugs Subcommittee, and Fire Debris and Explosives Subcommittee are in the process of reviewing and adjudicating public comments regarding potential inclusion of the following five standards to the *OSAC Registry of Approved Standards*:

ASTM: E2329-14 Standard Practice for Identification of Seized Drugs

ASTM: E2330-12 Standard Test Method for Determination of Concentrations of Elements in Glass Samples Using Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometry (ICP-MS) for Forensic Comparisons

ASTM: E2548-11e1 Standard Guide for Sampling Seized Drugs for Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

ASTM: E2881 - 13e1 Standard Test Method for Extraction and Derivatization of Vegetable Oils and Fats from Fire Debris and Liquid Samples with Analysis by Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry

ASTM: E2926-13 Standard Test Method for Forensic Comparison of Glass Using Micro X-ray Fluorescence (μ -XRF) Spectrometry

Following subcommittee comment adjudication and deliberation, the Chemistry/Instrumental Analysis Scientific Area Committee (the SAC, which is the unit that oversees those subcommittees) and the Forensic Science Standards Board (FSSB) will further deliberate on whether to post the standards to the registry.

Please contact forensics@nist.gov with any questions or feedback.

Upcoming OSAC Meetings

- (Internal OSAC Meeting) Forensic Science Standards Board (FSSB) at DEA Special Testing Laboratory in Sterling, VA on December 3-4, 2015
- (Internal OSAC Meeting) Full OSAC Subcommittee Meeting in Leesburg, VA on January 25-29, 2016
- (Open to the Public) OSAC public reporting occurs at American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) in Las Vegas, NV on February 22-23, 2016. (5 SAC Chairs & 24 subcommittee chairs or their designee will present)

OSAC “Working with an SDO Process” Released, Facilitating Broader Movement on the Majority of OSAC Projects

As tallied from the 2015 Priority Action Reports published by the Organization of Scientific Area Committees for Forensic Science (OSAC) subcommittees, the OSAC is working on at least 364 individual standards projects. The OSAC units are working to design these projects with OSAC’s mission in mind—which is to develop and promote technically sound, consensus-based documentary standards and guidelines for widespread adoption throughout the forensic science community.

Although the promotion of existing published standards and guidelines is only a small portion of the 364 standards projects in the OSAC queue, to date, subcommittees have had to primarily focus on promoting existing published standards as written (which in some cases required a tradeoff analysis of perfection versus timeliness) for consideration for the *OSAC Standards/Guidelines Registry Approval Process*. Five standards are currently under consideration, however it is expected that that number will double or triple in the coming months. (It is unknown how many of these submissions will ultimately be placed on the registries as reviews are still pending). Subcommittees have also been corresponding with a number of Standards Developing Organizations (SDOs) to make changes to a number of existing published standards. If the implemented changes are agreeable to the subcommittees, they will submit the new versions through the OSAC Registry Approval process.

The majority of OSAC projects consist of documents or work items that have not yet been published by an SDO or consensus body, but are ready for next steps. Recently, the Forensic Science Standards Board (FSSB) issued a nuanced map for the OSAC—the *OSAC Working with an SDO Process*—to help subcommittees initiate the next step for these projects. This release formally incentivizes the subcommittees to introduce draft standards (or even initial concepts) to SDOs, and outlines the steps that should help facilitate this activity. The FSSB is hopeful that this will allow units to meet a new, important OSAC milestone—the introduction of a

new or revised forensic science work item to an SDO, who will then see it through to its final ballot approval and publication.

This newly published process is not without some potential challenges. Some subcommittees are concerned that some documents or concepts might “lose their way” in an SDO and the published output might not look at all like what the OSAC originally envisioned. Dr. George Herrin, who is the Deputy Director of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation-Division of Forensic Sciences, and also

stakeholders. Subcommittees are hoping for this outcome, as well as for prompt publishing, so that standards/guidelines can quickly be submitted for approval to the OSAC registry.

Now that the *OSAC Working with an SDO Process* is complete, the Quality Infrastructure Committee (QIC) has turned its focus to the development of the *OSAC Canvass Process*, which will be another avenue for publishing documents for the OSAC subcommittees. The anticipated timeframe for release of this process is early 2016.

The OSAC is working on at least 364 individual standards projects.

the chair of the Biology/DNA SAC is encouraging DNA Technical Leaders to apply to the OSAC to participate as OSAC affiliates in a DNA Technical Leader task group so that the community will have expanded opportunities to provide feedback on documents before they are sent to the SDO. This should help mitigate the potential for major changes in documents within the SDO process. Focus will also be placed on having OSAC representatives collaboratively work with and participate in SDO working groups.

Another potential beneficial outcome of this process is that the end-product will remain close to the OSAC’s original vision but will also have incorporated improvements introduced by additional

Continued feedback on this and other processes will be critical to OSAC’s mission achievement. Please contact forensics@nist.gov with any feedback or program questions.