

# ATP C&L Division Quarterly Newsletter

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**Top:** Anna (Bridgette Herd's daughter), Stephanie Dille, Ada Woo, Lisa Collins, Neil Wilkinson, Rachel Schoenig, and Erin Highlander

**Bottom:** Ashok Sarathy, Donna McPartland, and Rachel Schoenig

Smiles from E-ATP



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## Want to get involved in the C&L division? Join us!

- Monthly online coffee chat—just for social time as a community. To be added to the list, contact Bill West. [bill.west@cornerstonestrategies.org](mailto:bill.west@cornerstonestrategies.org)
- Accessibility committee—reach out to John Hosterman or Heather Case [john@paradigmtesting.com](mailto:john@paradigmtesting.com) or [hcase@icva.net](mailto:hcase@icva.net)
- Healthcare SIG—reach out to Kimberly A. Swygert, Jessica Anderson, or Christine Mills [kswygert@NBME.org](mailto:kswygert@NBME.org) or [jesanderson@datarecognitioncorp.com](mailto:jesanderson@datarecognitioncorp.com) or [Christine.Mills@ascendlearning.com](mailto:Christine.Mills@ascendlearning.com)
- Small volume program committee—reach out to Jessica Dangles [jdangles@cbic.org](mailto:jdangles@cbic.org)
- Submit articles & photos for the monthly newsletters—reach out to Bill West or Maria Incrocci [bill.west@cornerstonestrategies.org](mailto:bill.west@cornerstonestrategies.org) or [mincrocci@measurelearning.com](mailto:mincrocci@measurelearning.com)

## Spotlight on Laura Coons

National Inspection Testing and Certification Corporation (NITC)



**Q: How long have you been involved in the ATP community?**

A: I joined the ATP community in 2018 after hearing about it from a Certification Network Group member in Chicago. She'd attended the Innovations Conference and highly recommended that I join since I wanted to learn more about exam development and psychometrics. At that time, I was very new to the certification industry. Reading ATP newsletters and updates helped me to gain more of a holistic understanding of testing, certification, and licensure industries in general.

**Q: Tell us about your career path to become an examination developer/technical writer.**

A: I compare it to a labyrinth. When I was getting my master's degree in industrial organizational psychology, the world of certifications wasn't on my radar. Prior to working at NITC, I lived in the world of health care. I've had experience in orthopedic guideline development, research, medical education program accreditation, and performance improvement. This made a difference as I transitioned from health care to certification development, but it wasn't planned.

My formal education served me well, despite it taking me 10 years to find a job in our industry.

“Be proactive about your own development, even if your learning isn't on anyone else's radar. Look for ways to address gaps and bring expertise to the table.”

I never imagined I would find myself in exam development and certifications, had I not remained committed to learning more about the different aspects of industrial organizational psychology and the industries I/O psychologists serve. I was wedded to health care. However, when I was let go during a health-care system reorganization, for a second time, I was given the advice, “Get out of health care if you want to stay in Illinois.” Luckily, an acquaintance was retiring from her role with NITC, and my employer was looking for someone with my degree as well as someone with experience in guideline development, accreditation, performance improvement, job task analysis, statistics, and health care. Timing was everything.

**Q: What advice would you give to someone interested in the field?**

A: I'm a firm believer in the adage “No experience is wasted.” I worked in hospitals and outpatient clinics, recorded surgical conferences, was present in surgery, worked very briefly for the Joint Commission, and was on the hospital Safety Committee. It all mattered, though I didn't think so at the time.

Take advantage of all ways to educate yourself and continue adding value to your employer. Be proactive about your own development, even if your learning isn't on anyone else's radar. Look for ways to address gaps and bring expertise to the table. Be “scrappy” and be open to opportunities. Continue learning. In my role, I'm still being “plumberized.” I learn from subject matter experts in the piping industry as well as the exam development and certification industry.

*Spotlight on Laura Coons, cont'd***Q: Can you tell us about a current project you are working on at NICT?**

A: We are currently developing an exam with the Seattle Pipe Trades. New legislation opened the door to an opportunity for the development of a certification in HVAC Fire Safety auditing—or more specifically—fire damper auditing. This legislation essentially allows only sheet metal workers to perform audits where HVAC technicians were previously qualified to do so. It's critical to have qualified fire damper auditors doing this work—particularly in Washington state where there are so many fires and so many trees. In an HVAC system, a functioning damper helps stop fire from traveling throughout a heating and ventilation system. If you own a building that isn't audited by a “certified” auditor, and your building is damaged by fire, insurance will not pay for your loss. HB 2701 essentially created a workforce skill deficit in an area of the country where this skill impacts life and safety for individuals, organizations, and communities.

In the development of this exam, working with SMEs and stakeholders is different. There is a coalition composed of fire marshals, politicians, and HVAC technicians. The bill requires ANAB/ANSI accreditation for certification of Fire Damper auditors, which I find very interesting.

We're beginning talks with apprentice and journeymen training centers to develop a Hand Rigging (hand signals for crane hoisting) Qualification exam, a Variable Refrigerant Flow (VFR) Qualification exam, and a Forklift Operation Qualification exam. These are wonderful opportunities for National ITC because we've established partnerships with many organizations in our trade industries.

NITC, a for-profit, third-party test administrator, started in 1999 by serving mostly southern California union locals. Today, we're administering exams in Panama and Guatemala. We've given over 15,000 exams to date this year.

**Q: What has been a highlight of your career?**

A: Most people, within ten years of receiving their graduate degree, are working in industries unrelated to their field of study. That isn't true for me. I've found work more related to my degree ten years post-graduation.

It amazes me still that having graduated right before the recession, with little relevant work experience, passing the PHR, obtaining certificates in Human Resources, Lean Six Sigma for Health Care, and project management in addition to receiving designations such as the ICE-CPP, and ISO internal auditor, the world of certification and exam development continues to open.

**Q. What do you enjoy doing in your free time?**

I sing in a university choir. I sing with professionally trained singers who understand music, composition, and vocal technique. They're very talented, and I'm a better singer because of it. I sing occasionally with a jazz band. I am amazed by what musicians can do. It's an entirely different experience singing with a big band than singing in a choir. But I've learned to really appreciate musicians.

I really like being in my garden. It's a great stress reliever. I find being out in nature very soothing. I love traveling and seeing beautiful landscapes. It's great for my soul. I love reading historical novels and watching historically based movies. I also love refinishing old furniture.

And I volunteer... a lot.



Thanks so much, Laura! It has been great getting to know you in our spotlight!



**E-ATP Photo Fun**

**Above:** Rachel Schoenig, Alina von Davier, Nikki Eatchel, Donna McPartland

**Right:** Ada Woo, Steve Dept, Isabelle Gonthier (check out Steve’s article on page 6!)

**Below:** The effervescent Brodie Wise



## SURVEYS! SURVEYS! GET YOUR SURVEYS HERE!

### Health Sector Special Interest Group Survey: Let Your Voice Be Heard!

The Health Sector SIG is an engaging, dynamic, and supportive community of testing professionals that values exchanging information, sharing expertise, and collaboratively solving problems relating to testing in the health professions. Access the SIG page at <https://www.testpublishers.org/healthsector-sig> to learn more.

The leadership team of the Health Sector SIG is reaching out to the ATP community to solicit your opinions, suggestions, and recommendations for how the SIG can continue to meet the needs of its members. Please click this [link](#) to open a brief, 9-item survey that will inform our activities for the coming year, including events that you would like to see at the ATP Innovations Conference in Anaheim, California, from March 3 to March 6, 2024. We look forward to hearing from you!

Questions? Please contact Christine Mills, SIG Vice Chair, at [Christine.mills@ascendlearning.com](mailto:Christine.mills@ascendlearning.com).

### Testing Accommodations Survey

The ATP Committee on Disability Accommodations & Accessibility is conducting a survey of test sponsors to obtain information about current disability accommodation policies and processes. The purpose of this study, and our broader research project, is to investigate the intersection of disability access and diversity. Specifically, we would like to identify more inclusive accommodations policies that can ensure fair access to our test takers with disabilities, while minimizing requirements that may pose barriers to historically underrepresented populations.

We ask that the person in your organization most familiar with requests for disability-related testing accommodations complete this survey. The survey is anonymous. Questions will include information about current accommodations policies and practices such as the types of documentation requested, who is considered appropriate to provide such documentation, and collaboration between teams working on diversity and disability issues.

In early 2024, we anticipate folding the survey results into our larger study of accommodations policies for high-stakes testing. At the end of the survey, participants will have an opportunity to learn more about this ATP committee's work.

[https://icva.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eIDf3hjJ0AO3Eb4](https://icva.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eIDf3hjJ0AO3Eb4)

John Hosterman, PhD, Chair  
Paradigm Testing

Heather Case, DVM, Co-Chair  
International Council for Veterinary Assessment

### November's C&L Coffee Chat

Join the fun on the last Tuesday of every month!

The image shows a grid of 11 video call participants. The top row includes Susan Davis-Becker, Jessica Dangles, Don Balasa, and Doug Viehland. The middle row includes Frank Williams, PSI, Megan Cannon, Sandy Hogg, and Bill West. The bottom row includes MariaIncrocci, Melanie Graw, and a participant with the karihodge logo. Logos for CBIC, MEASURE LEARNING, and karihodge are also visible in the background of some participants.

## Do Multilingual, Multiregional and Multicultural Assessment Contexts Add Value to a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Exercise?

~ A post written by Steve Dept from cApStAn for the ATP newsletter

Standardized tests are used in a variety of contexts, including certification, accreditation and licensure. Fairness, validity, and reliability are objectives that every test sponsor and testing organisation strive to address. To that effect, they apply a variety of steps such as bias review committees, SME reviews, focus groups, and DIF analyses. These processes need to be dynamic because, as cultures and societies change, awareness of social justice issues evolve. Theoretical and practical approaches to fairness in testing need to follow suit.

It is already a tall order to make assessment content inclusive in a monolingual context. Choices need to be made, and these are not limited to identifying and reducing stereotypes, to gender mainstreaming, or to using the singular 'they' as a pronoun. A stimulus that contains a reference to *mowing the lawn*, for example, has a stronger social marker than one that contains a reference to *cutting the grass*. In fact, the broader your pool of candidates, the more factors you need to take into account, and when adding multilingual and multicultural dimensions to the mix, the challenge grows exponentially.

Acknowledging that language is at the core of inclusivity, integrating the multicultural and multilingual perspective in a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Review will often help identify potential issues that hide behind elements that one might otherwise take for granted. The weekend starts on Thursday in some places, on Saturday in others, and the week may begin on a Sunday or on a Monday.

Screening source content (master versions of assessments) for potential issues—such as sensitive content, relevance for the target audience, portability of constructs, translatability, ambiguity, gender inclusiveness, racialized stereotypes, or potential cultural bias—will considerably mitigate the risk.

Working definitions to inform the screening could be:

- **Diversity:** the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders and sexual orientation;
- **Equity:** the quality of being fair and impartial;
- **Inclusion:** the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized;
- **Bias:** a prejudice in favor of, or against, a person or a group; and
- **Fairness:** impartial and just treatment or behavior without favoritism or discrimination.

To scrutinize a mature draft of a master version of an assessment using a multilingual and multicultural lens covers an important segment of the DEI spectrum. Bias in assessment content can originate from many sources, and language-related sources include the use of content-irrelevant language, cultural nuances, and regional differences. This needs to be embedded in a structured process: a formal DEI review creates a virtuous circle that help item developers learn about their own inherent biases.

To conclude, it is useful to mention that the IT Certification Council (ITCC) has just released a DE&I Maturity Model for Certification Programs. Other initiatives are bound to follow, and all test takers and stakeholders will ultimately reap the benefits of higher awareness of DEI frameworks.

## Mark Your Calendars

### ATP Innovations in Testing

March 3-6  
Anaheim, California

### C&L Coffee Chats

Last Tuesday of every month  
12:00-12:30 EDT  
Contact Bill West for Zoom link



## Acronym Soup

A quick key to some of the acronyms you may have come across in the newsletter

**C&L:** Certification and Licensure

**ATP:** Association of Test Publishers

**SIG:** Special Interest Group

**ANSI:** American National Standards  
Institute

## POLLING CORNER

Each issue, we will share the results of a polling question asked in the previous issue—and ask another. Last issue we asked, “[What are the top three topics relating to your testing program\(s\) that your organization is prioritizing in terms of acquiring more knowledge, taking action, or establishing policy?](#)”

The results are in (there is one topic clearly top of mind), and responses include:

- **AI**-generated content
- Reimagining assessment content to include generative **AI** skill sets
- Testing skills in relation to C&L
- Automatic essay scoring
- Essay requirements in the world of **ChatGPT**
- Effective marketing of a credentialing program
- **AI**/Natural Language Processing (NLP)
- Test security
- Improving the customer experience
- **AI**: learning, exploring, considering policy



And here is our next question: [How do you promote certification/licensure at events you attend?](#)

Click on this link to participate.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Z89BF5D>

We always want to hear from you! Be it a spotlight piece, some important information to add to the calendar, or something of interest happening in your world, please share!

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