



# The NIRCL Update

Winter 2018

## Director's Message

I consider myself very lucky to be able to address you as the new Executive Director of your crime lab. Everyone has made me feel very welcome. Thank you.

A little background about me: my wife Melissa and I moved here from Missoula, MT to be near our daughter and her young family. We're excited that our son plans on moving to the area from California next year so our entire family can be together. I've been in forensics since 1998. After many years in molecular genetic research, I began as a DNA analyst with the Oregon State Police Crime Lab in Portland. I moved to Missoula, Montana in 2005 to work at the State Crime Lab where I served for 8 years as the DNA section supervisor and then was appointed by the Attorney General to serve as Laboratory Administrator for the last four years.

As I've moved from agency to agency over the years, I've had the great opportunity to work with outstanding people throughout the criminal justice system. I've visited many lab operations nation-wide and am happy to report that you have, in this lab, the most dedicated and most highly productive staff I've encountered. The quality of the work continues to meet very stringent international standards for forensic testing laboratories. This all speaks well to the management and leadership provided by Garth Glassburg and Mark Milford over the years, but primarily to the quality of the staff.

The lab will be providing Member agencies with a quarterly report to provide up-to-date information about lab operations. There will be some regular features such as Casework Data and Trends as well as ad hoc topics. This update is likely more extensive than future updates as we have a lot of information to share in this update.

I look forward to carrying on the rich NIRCL tradition of providing accurate, objective and timely forensic analysis to our member organizations.

Philip T. Kinsey, Ph.D.  
Executive Director



**NIRCL Staff Members.** From left to right: **Chrissy Weathers** (Forensic Biology), **Barry Adams** (Latent Prints), **Kelly Lawrence** (DNA, CODIS), **Phil Kinsey** (Executive Director), **Karen Duquette** (Latent Prints), **Lisa Ramos** (DNA), **Gary Lind** (Firearms/Impression Evidence), **Sherry Fleischhauer** (Evidence Technician), **Nancy Keel** (Latent Prints), **Mark Milford** (Assistant Lab Director), **Maria Salazar** (DNA), **Tony Spadafora** (Latent Prints/Firearms/Impression Evidence), **Michelle Thomas** (DNA Tech Lead), **Sarah Owen** (DNA/Chemistry), **Gina Romano** (Chemistry/Toxicology), not pictured: **Lindsay Simpson** (Toxicology/ Chemistry).



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## Staffing Updates

September 15<sup>th</sup> saw the retirement of long time Executive Director Garth Glassburg. Garth led the laboratory for 17 years after working as a chemist and chemistry supervisor at the ISP forensic lab in Chicago. Garth and his wife Danelle will be retiring to the Las Vegas area where he can more fully enjoy pursuing his hobby of bug collecting.

The lab held a nice going away day for Garth during which many colleagues stopped by the lab to say fare well!

Garth spent a couple of weeks helping his replacement Phil Kinsey learn the ropes. That indoctrination continues with the help of Assistant Lab Director Mark Milford, the lab staff and of the NIRCL Executive Board.

After years of addressing latent print casework with over-time, the addition of new member agencies necessitated the hiring of a new Latent Print trainee. Karen Duquette joined the NIRCL in August 2017. Karen graduated from Marian University in Fond du Lac, WI in 2015 with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Forensic Science. With mentoring by Latent Print Examiner Tony Spadafora, she has been progressing very well through her training program and we expect her to be producing casework early this year.

Earlier this year, experienced DNA Analyst Lisa Ramos joined the NIRCL team from the Michigan State Police Lab System. Lisa's former boss let us know that we got "one of their good ones". Lisa has been a great contributor to the group already!



*Lisa Ramos and Karen Duquette pictured with the original lab logo.*



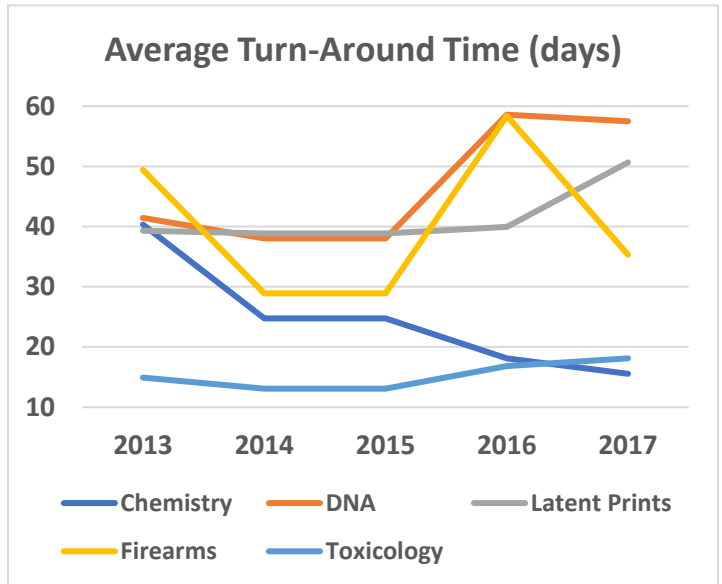
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## Casework Trends

For our first quarterly report, long term trends are presented for historical context. The parameters discussed involve backlogs, turn-around times and requests for analysis. Given that the quality of our work product must meet stringent national and international standards for forensic testing, the most important metric to our customers is Turn-Around Time (TAT). This is defined as the time it takes to provide the laboratory report after the evidence is received by the lab. It is most readily measured for each section individually which means that some complicated cases requiring testing in multiple lab disciplines will take longer than our average TATs per lab section as depicted below.

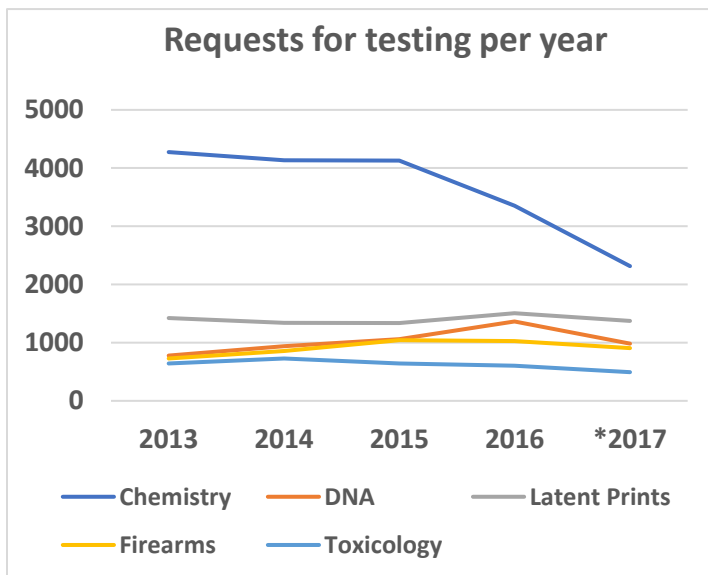
Please see brief explanations of the data presented for each of the lab sections below.



outstanding personnel and recent legislation regarding cannabis. Our current staffing of this section includes one primary analyst and one secondary analyst who assists as needed. Up until his retirement, Garth would also have been considered a secondary analyst.

DNA - The doubling of requests between 2013 and 2016 point, in part, to the success of our DNA section. Experienced personnel were hired in 2016 and 2017 helping to address the additional caseload. Updated submission guidelines were also implemented in 2016 to address submissions of low-success, touch evidence.

Latent Prints - While the requests for latent print examination increased slightly in 2016, it seems to have leveled off. Increases in backlogs and TATs increased in 2017 which were related to the hiring of our new examiner and the effort it takes for our other examiners to train the new examiner. We expect this trend to continue into early next year when our trainee becomes competent to produce casework of



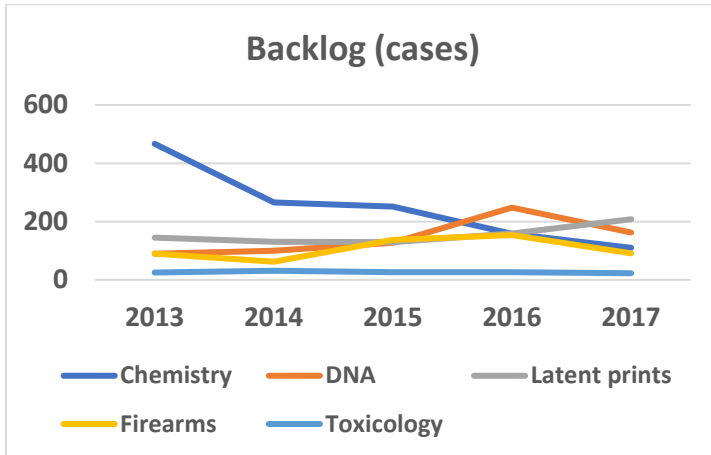
Chemistry - Although the complexity of designer drugs cases increases the work associated with these submissions, we have seen steady decreases in backlogs and turn-around times for the chemistry section that correlate with



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her own at which time improvements in both these measures will be realized.



Firearms - Increases in backlogs and turn-around times, peaking in 2016 were addressed with adding the part-time help from an experienced firearms examiner from WI. With the addition of 10 hours of work each week, the Firearms group has made big improvements in these measures this year.

Toxicology - While submissions have remained fairly stable over the last 5 years, slight increases in turn-around times in 2016 and 2017 were related to the effort expended in updating our procedures and testing parameters.

The lab continues to excel at keeping turn-around times low, often significantly lower than turn-around times (TATs) of laboratories nationwide. For example, an ongoing project showed an average TATs for DNA casework at 108 days vs NIRCL's TAT of 58 days and an average TAT for drug analysis of 46 days vs NIRCL's TAT of 15 days!

## Training Corner

After receiving requests for a variety of trainings to be provided by the laboratory, the following list of training opportunities is under development. The laboratory will coordinate with member agencies to host trainings in a few regional locales within our service area. Please look for further announcements about training opportunities in this Quarterly Update.

Lab Capabilities and Capacity – A two-hour presentation intended for investigators and attorneys that will cover the types of testing performed at the lab and how the scientists testify to their results. Additional topics may include evidence packaging and submission, lab capacity, legislative updates impacting evidence and the lab as well as other current topics of interest. Recommended class size: 25-50. Offered three times per year, upon request.

Detection, Collection and Preservation of Footwear and Tire Impression Evidence – A one-day presentation intended for personnel responding to crime scenes including lectures and practical exercises in electrostatic lifting, proper photographic technique and evidence packaging and submission. Prerequisite: some work-related photography experience. Recommended class size: 25-30. Offered once per year in the fall.

Detection, Collection and Preservation of Latent Print Evidence – A two-day presentation intended for personnel responding to crime scenes including lectures and practical exercises in dusting, lifting and other developmental techniques, documentation, evidence packaging and submission. Prerequisite: None. Recommended class size 25-30. Offered once per year in the summer.





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## Laboratory Communication

The laboratory is implementing updated methods for improved communication between the lab and member agencies.

### Non-emergency Requests for Information

Many of the calls taken by our staff scientists involve fairly-simple requests for reports and for case status updates. We understand that in some instances the need for this information can be immediate and if so, please continue to contact the lab directly at (847) 362-0676. However, if the need for this information is not immediate, the lab is requesting you use a new lab email address to forward your requests for this information: [clerical@nircl.org](mailto:clerical@nircl.org).

When using this address, your request for information will be answered within one business day. Please include the NIRCL case number and any other information that will help us answer your questions.

This process will allow the front office to address your needs in a timely fashion and allow our scientists to stay focused on their production of high-quality casework. Thank you for your support.

### Customer Survey Link

We have established a Survey Monkey NIRCL Customer Service Survey. The link for the survey is <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5T57K55>. Please also look for this link in lab emails, on our lab website and in these quarterly reports. There are 8 questions that will take a few minutes to complete. Your responses will help us understand what is working well for you and what needs to work better. Please provide your contact information so we can address any concerns with you directly.

Most surveys come back with positive comments and that is a nice way of letting the staff know they're appreciated. However, when occasional negative comments come back, the survey gives us real time information allowing concerns to be addressed in a timely fashion. In my experience, most negative comments are a result of a simple miscommunication or misunderstanding and are readily resolved to the customer's satisfaction.

Receiving feedback from you is a requirement of our accreditation program but more importantly, it helps us continuously improve our customer service to you. If our questions do not cover your particular concern, please contact Phil Kinsey [pkinsey@nircl.org](mailto:pkinsey@nircl.org) or Mark Milford [mmilford@nircl.org](mailto:mmilford@nircl.org) at your earliest convenience.

### Access to laboratory reports

The laboratory has completed an implementation project for Office 365 which enables, among other benefits, access to a CJIS compliant (see below), secure web portal from which laboratory reports can be downloaded. Several member agencies have been working with the lab to test this process.

For your agency to begin accessing reports, we need the email addresses for those individuals you would like to have access to the portal. A variety of approaches have been taken by the agencies we've been working with. Email notifications have been sent to: a general email address (e.g., [nirclreports@agency.org](mailto:nirclreports@agency.org)) or to property managers, administrative personnel or to management personnel. If you would like to allow State's Attorneys or Village prosecutors access to your reports, please provide us that authorization by email; listing the contact information for the office you would like to



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provide access. Please email Mark Milford ([mmilford@nircl.org](mailto:mmilford@nircl.org)) at the lab with this information.

Once the email addresses are received and entered into our system, your agency representatives will be sent instructions on how to set up a User ID and password. Agency representatives will then begin receiving emails from [Noreply@nircl.org](mailto:Noreply@nircl.org) notifying them when reports are available and how to access the reports.

Microsoft has a vendor agreement in place with the State of Illinois to allow for the transmission and storage of CJIS information (<https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/cjis-security-policy-resource-center> and <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/TrustCenter/Compliance/CJIS>).

## Impactful Evidence

As sometimes happens, when member agencies hear from the crime lab on the topics of evidence submission or packaging, it is to make improvements of one sort or another to these processes. The cases in which improvements are needed however are in the extreme minority of those received by the lab. Below, and in the future, we would like to highlight some examples of how excellent evidence collection and prudent submission have enabled the lab to provide timely analyses critical to the criminal justice system.

### Cook County Sheriff's Department Investigator John Riggio

In 2017 alone, he submitted over 5300 tablets of MDMA, over 2000 g of plant-like material determined to contain synthetic marijuana, and over 120 g of crystal MDMA!

Similar amounts of drugs have been submitted in recent years as well. Investigator Riggio's submissions are always clearly and completely documented, evidence packaging is always properly sealed and labeled. This effort on his part helps make our work more efficient to the benefit of ALL member agencies. More importantly, he is appreciated for his kindness and for the good working relationship he has established with the lab's Chemistry section. As a small token of appreciation, John was presented with a NIRCL Challenge Coin by Chemist Gina Romano during a recent visit to the laboratory.





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## Lab Anniversary

The laboratory will be celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary later this year! The lab was incorporated on August 23, 1968 and opened its doors for business on October 1 of that year. This summer, the lab will host an open house in appreciation for the support of our member agencies over the years as well as for the contributions of current and former laboratory staff.

## “WHAT BUGS Andrew Principe is that

Kojak can solve a crime in an hour and still have time to work his way through a couple of lollipops and half a dozen insights into the Meaning of Life.”

Look for more details about the celebration plans in future updates from the NIRCL.



In an initial search for historical documentation at the lab, the following article from the Chicago Tribune was found. It was published March 4, 1976. *The opening sentence is oddly familiar.* For people not around in 1976, Kojak was the name of the detective on the eponymous TV show. The article begins...

Thanks to **Sherry Fleischhauer** for formatting this update!

**Stay safe and thanks for reading!**