



# ASSESSMENT COUNCIL

## NEWSLETTER

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## Presidential Message

**By Mary Ann Haskins, 2017 President**

Recognizing all of the accomplishments of the 41 years past, it truly is an honor to serve the membership of IPAC as your 2017 President. A big thank you to Martha Hennen, for her outstanding work as the 2016 IPAC President.

My personal thanks to each member of the 2017 Conference Planning Committee. The 2017 IPAC Conference in Birmingham exceeded expectations. Led by Rebecca Fraser, Committee Chair, the Conference Committee met the “Assessments of Steel” theme’s challenge.

Program Chair Emilee Tison did an outstanding job serving all 127 attendees by lining up pre-conference workshops, securing exceptional keynote speakers, and planning concurrent sessions.

In addition to covering all of the behind-the-scenes logistics and conference details, the Birmingham Host Committee led by Marty Alber planned wonderful activities to promote networking and informal learning.

During our Annual Membership Meeting in Birmingham, the members present voted that Minneapolis/St. Paul will be the conference site for 2019.

As is often stated, it is our members that make IPAC unique. We are a combination of professionals working in I/O, HR, legal, education, management, research, consulting, and other fields who are eager to promote the value and importance of assessment, seek learning opportunities for professional growth, and are always willing to share our experiences to help others. IPAC is for anyone who is an assessment professional in any capacity. I encourage all members to invite someone you know to join IPAC. This will strengthen our membership base and make us a better organization.

I hope all of you will plan to attend the 2018 IPAC Conference in the D.C. area. We have our site visit planned for early September, so watch for new information this fall.

*Mary Ann Haskins SPHR, IPMA-SCP is the HR & Support Services Director for the City of Johns Creek and the 2017 IPAC President.*

# Building Assessments of Steel: 2017 IPAC Conference Recap

By John Ford

On July 16-17, the 2017 International Personnel Assessment Council Conference was held in Birmingham, Alabama at the Birmingham Sheraton Hotel with the theme “Assessments of Steel.”

It was a great success thanks to the attendees, the organizers, and the sponsoring partner organizations, which included IPMA-HR, The Personnel Testing Council of Metropolitan Washington DC, Pearson VUE, Shaker, The Ohio State University Center on Education and Training for Employment, PAN, OPM HR Solutions, and ErgoMetrics.

We are particularly grateful for the sponsorship and support given by the Personnel Board of Jefferson County. They were welcoming hosts—to the extent of allowing IPAC to hold two days of the conference at their facility. Everyone traveling to Birmingham felt welcomed and well-informed about what the city had to offer.

Pre-conference workshops were approved for HRCI and SHRM continuing education credits. These included:

1. Web Scraping and Machine Learning for Employee Recruitment and Selection: A Hands-on Introduction by Richard Landon of Old Dominion University
2. Diversity Metrics and Workforce Analytics: Identifying Opportunities with Data

- by Keli Wilson, Samantha Holland, and Yesenia Avila of the DCI Consulting Group, Inc.
3. Bringing Biodata to Life: Developing and Implementing a Robust Biodata Instrument by Phil Walmsley and Jeff Cucina of U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Julia Bayless of Capital One
  4. Emergent Risk Areas: What is “Hot” In the Employment Legal Arena? by Richard Tonowski of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and Kayo Sady of the DCI Consulting Group, Inc.

The conference included five keynote sessions by noted

researchers and practitioners:

1. Talent Analytics: Why are We Not There Yet? by Wayne Cascio from the University of Colorado-Denver
2. Physical Jobs in a Digital World by Deborah Gebhardt of the Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO)
3. Cues in Hiring Processes: What are You Signaling to Underrepresented Groups? by Ann Marie Ryan from Michigan State University
4. Building a Culture of Employee Engagement? by Robert Lavigna from the Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement

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The IPAC 2017 conference planning committee worked diligently and with admirable coordination and teamwork to make IPAC 2017 a success. This year’s committee included:

Conference Chair:	Rebecca Fraser
Program Committee Chair:	Emilee Tison
Host Committee Chair:	Marty Alber
Vendor and Sponsor Committee Chair:	Liz Reed
Marketing Committee Chair:	Brooke Parker
Registration Chair:	Allysa Singer
Social Committee Chair:	Lauren McMahan
Speaker Gifts:	Kathlea Vaughn

This team was supported by the IPAC membership, who reviewed proposals, moderated conference sessions—and even ran a last-minute errand or two on behalf of our sometimes overstressed presenters. We thank you all.

5. Flaws in Selection Research that Create Defensibility Problems by Nancy Tippins from Gartner

Notable posters in the student poster session included:

1. Practice as a Method for Decreasing the Racial Divide in Scores on Cognitive Ability Tests by Derrick McDonald and Tilman Sheets of Louisiana Tech University
2. Determining the Effects of Item-Level Feedback on Automatic Item Generated Tests by Swadeep Patel and Tilman Sheets of Louisiana Tech University
3. Exploring the Discriminant and Convergent Validity of the Tripartite Proactive Personality Scale (TPPS) by Swadeep Patel, Wade Williams, Cody Cloud, Jason Davis, and Frank Igou of Louisiana Tech University

The remainder of the conference consisted of 30 presentations, panels, and discussions divided into four concurrent tracks. This year each session was labeled with the Session Content Level (Foundational—Basic, Practitioner/Researcher—Intermediate, or New Insights—Advanced) as well as the level of Audience Participation expected of attendees (Low—Informative, Medium—prompted, or High—Interactive/Collaborative). This was designed to help participants plan their conference agenda by identifying sessions that were a good match for their skills and participation preferences as well as their interests. If you missed the conference and would like to know more about the sessions, you can still access the conference program and additional conference information on the IPAC web site at <http://ipacweb.org/2017IPAC>.

Like other IPAC events, the conference was successful largely because of IPAC's focus on professional community. Some of the best value at each year's gathering comes from chance meetings and hallway discussions between attendees. This year that sense of community was felt at its strongest by those who dropped by one or more evenings at IPAC's Hospitality Suite. We have informal reports of great community-building and collegial fun. Although all participants assured us that the anecdotes, activities, and antics were entirely at the professional level, none of them gave permission for any of this to be described in the ACN. Apparently, what happens in the Hospitality Suite stays in the Hospitality Suite. Perhaps visiting the Hospitality Suite at next year's conference is the best way to understand its value to our IPAC community.

Next year's conference will be held in Washington, DC and is already in the planning stages. We can use your help to make it another IPAC-style success. If you would like to lend a hand, please contact the 2018 Conference Chair Kathy Stewart at [conference@ipacweb.org](mailto:conference@ipacweb.org).

*John Ford is a Senior Research Psychologist in the Office of Policy and Evaluation at the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, and serves on the IPAC Board of Directors.*

## **2017 Awards**

### **James C. Johnson Student Paper Award**

Chelsea Song, University of Illinois - Diversity Shrinkage: Cross-Validating Pareto-Optimal Weights to Enhance Diversity via Hiring Practices

### **Innovations in Assessment Award**

Siena Consulting and Jefferson County - Development of the Jefferson County Job Components Validity Study

- Dr. Charles Scherbaum
- Dr. Lorren Oliver
- Kenneth Yusko
- Brian Bellenger
- Marcus Dickson
- Tonya Dawson
- Juliet Aiken
- Jeff Crenshaw
- Paul Agnello
- Wyatt Stahl
- Elliott Larson

### **Stephen E. Bemis Memorial Award**

Elaine Pulakos

### **President's Recognition Award for Service to IPAC**

- Kathlea Vaughn
- Martha Hennen
- Rebecca Fraser
- Emilee Tison
- Marty Alber

# SIOP 2017 Shows What I/O Is and What It Needs to Become

By Levi Nieminen

I/O psychology is many things and even more things lately. In 2010, the U.S. Department of Labor predicted 26% job growth for I/O psychologists [through 2018](#) as compared to 14% for all other psychologists.

In 2014, they doubled down, ranking I/O as the fastest growing occupation and projecting 53% job growth [through 2022](#).

A lot can change in a little while. The most recent [USDL numbers](#) have cooled down, showing I/O psychologists comparable with clinical, counseling, and school psychologists (19.1% vs. 19.6% job growth through 2024), but still clearly ahead of our brothers and sisters in HR (8.8%) and Training & Development (7.0%). But these are just the numbers, and they don't tell the story.

A recent article in the profession's flagship journal suggests there is a story here that is worth paying attention to. The article titled, [Has Industrial-Organizational Psychology Lost its Way?](#) states "without a fundamental reorientation, the field is in danger of getting stuck in a minority status in organizations: technocrats who apply their trade when called upon but not really shaping the agenda or a part of the big decisions." The authors pointed out a number of problematic trends, such as a repression of innovation and less real-world influence than other fields.

Reading this in writing from highly-respected professionals

in our field had an impact on me.

I've always been aware that our discipline had its identity-challenges and complications. There are the I-side vs. O-side and scholar vs. practitioner debates, the continued discussions about re-naming our profession, and so on. There is the fact that despite I/Os being hired in droves, almost no one outside our still-small profession knows much about what we do. Sometimes this even includes those who seek to hire us into their organizations!

So, it's been in the water for a while. But, this also feels different to me now. I just returned from Orlando where SIOP hosted its 32nd Annual Conference and was expected to (and likely did) achieve record attendance with +4,500 I/Os. To me, the vibe was a little different than in the past. The future feels closer this year, and the cocktail discussions echoed the message:

- What will we do when IBM's Watson becomes a scalable solution for coaching? That's right, coaching?! Watson is already hosting a SIOP social!
- How will we compete with machine learning and data science? The data scientists are here, and they're already eating our lunch. Or at least, they're joining our SIOP sessions!

- Who will win the race to boost employees' experience of the workplace with meaningful application of wearables, VR, and whatever inventions follow these?

And while this was the flavor of the cocktail and coffee hours, some of the sessions I attended had a more sobering effect. For example, there were sessions about real and impactful things that I/Os do in organizations—such as managing engagement programs and doing 360-assessments—that struggled to get beyond issues of construct definition and measurement. To me, the problem is not that these are uninteresting debates. The problem is that they do little to "shape the agenda or [being] a part of the big decisions" in organizations, to steal a line from Ones et al.

It seems that quite often our collective instincts do not advance the discussion all that much, to a point of focus on practical impact and visibility. Less important, but perhaps emblematic, SIOP 2017 gets a mixed grade from me in terms of the conference experience. On the one hand, there were clear positives with the addition of several experimental sessions, most notably [Shaken & Stirred](#). The S&S format, which allowed 15 hand-picked speakers two minutes each to respond to a wide-open

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question, was modeled on [South by Southwest's 20x2](#).

At SIOP, the question was “what if...” and the answers ranged widely and sometimes wildly: What if...

...we could nail the perfect situational judgment test ~ Ben Hawkes

...we stayed woke ~ Derek Avery

...we could predict everything ~ Ben Taylor

...robots replaced workers who were given a universal basic income ~ Mike Morrison

...we ended gender inequity (SIOP awards included, mic drop) ~ Mikki Hebl

On the other hand, much of the rest of the conference made me need a session like this. Many if not most of us attend other HR-OD-Talent-Tech conferences, including SIOP's own Leading Edge Consortium. My best conference-going experiences—and when I talk with colleagues, theirs too—tend to be fewer people, shorter events, and more dynamic speakers and session formats. But the bigger issue to me is that the Annual SIOP meeting doesn't provide much of a common experience for attendees to talk about. It's a topical smorgasbord so big that the dialogue among attendees tends to be about “what did you see” instead of “what do you think.” One is a conversation, whereas the other isn't much of one.

Beyond some of these formulaic elements, there is also a SIOP culture to contend with. A colleague of mine said it well when we were splitting a cab back to the airport. “Were

the sessions you attended also smartest-guy in the room situations?”

I'm not sure, perhaps this dynamic is unavoidable with such a large constituency of graduate students in training, and mentors, bosses, and future bosses there to role model and critique, but perhaps it's worth a moment's thought... What would it take to create an experience that was 25%-more about learning and problem solving and 25%-less about being (and being seen as) the 'thought leader'? If these dynamics are real beyond my n of 2, certainly this too cuts to the heart of questions about our professional identity and future, right?

So, what can we do about these things?

When Eric O'Rourke and I were initially making plans for our Invited Session at the conference, What We Did Not Learn in Graduate School, we didn't anticipate just how timely this discussion would be. The point of the session was to look more closely at four key areas where I/Os can differentiate, but where formal graduate training today—think MA/PhD programs in I/O—seems to lag behind. Perhaps these are areas for graduate programs to rethink their approach, if not the curriculum, and/or for I/Os to take a more proactive and, if necessary, off-the-beaten path route to boosting their exposure and skills. And maybe, just maybe, these are part of the formula for increasing our relevance as a profession.

**Data science.** The robots are coming, and they are much

better than us at many things, most notably predictive analytics. David Morgan joined our session as an expert in data science from Facebook's People Analytics team to talk about how he built up skills in machine learning, data mining, and programming. He offered the following as data science learning resources for others to check out: [Coursera](#), [Udacity](#), iTunes U, as well as open courses and certificate programs by MIT and Stanford.

**Data viz.** It's less clear if the robots will be as good at drawing insight out of the data and wrapping visualizations (“viz”) and story-telling around it. Chantale Wilson described how building up her data viz skill set was permission-to-play within the diverse teams she works with at the Air Force Research Laboratory. Fundamentally, data viz is a matter of whether we can communicate the results of our work in a way that builds credibility and engages others in our findings and expertise. Chantale suggested brazenly that there's more to learn here than APA formatting :) and that, if we simply look for it, many of the core principles are right there and quite familiar based on our training in cognition and perception. To get started down this path, she encouraged people to visit Evan Sinar's comprehensive [resources](#) page.

**Brand-building.** Chris Cancialosi, co-founder of [Gotham-Culture](#), talked about the importance of building your brand, whether it's personal, firm, or

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better yet, both. Chris got ahead of the curve by writing on LinkedIn back when only “Influencers” could write and post articles and then stayed on the curve by writing a [column for Forbes](#). Both have been key ingredients to Chris’s brand-building strategy, but it’s more than just the visibility gained. The Forbes column in particular has given him a new level of access to meet and interview the executives and entrepreneurs who he wants to learn from. Beyond driving your own learning, he discussed just how essential it is becoming to craft a clear message about your “sweet spot”, that is, who you are and how you can add value. This is your signal in the noise, whether its about landing the next job or getting the next customer. He emphasized starting now because it takes time to build traction and get to the ROI. His firm’s continued growth and the number of in-bound leads are clear indicators that keep him on the path.

**Selling.** Wendy Mack from GrowthPlay joined our panel as an expert on selling I/O professional services and solutions. Interestingly, she said she never thought of herself as a sales expert until I asked her to join this panel and speak about it! Early on, she had the same reaction that others tend to have when we say “selling”—no doubt, this must be a dirty word. However, she was fortunate to be mentored by Neil Rackham, one of the first behavioral psychologists to study actual selling behaviors. This and subsequent experiences shifted her mindset about what selling was really about. She landed on a view that the role is actually “solutions architect”. This has to do with being genuinely curious and surfacing the real issue(s) that clients are facing. Clarifying the problems creates a natural space to sit alongside the client and co-design (“white-board”) the solutions. And that’s selling. Wendy called attention to two books as essential reads, Daniel Pink’s [To Sell is Human](#) and Michael McLaughlin’s [Winning the Professional Services Sale](#).

So, what can we do?

We have smart, passionate people in this profession. Let’s keep the dialogue going here and other places too (e.g., see Richard Landers [blog](#)), and continue to move toward solutions.

I’ll close by briefly mentioning that I am chairing the SIOP Special Sessions Committee for the 2018 conference. The purpose of the committee is to experiment with new ideas, topics, and formats not often seen at a SIOP event. With this in mind...

- Small question: What would you like to see at SIOP 2018?
- Big question: What should I/O become?

*Levi Nieminen, PhD, is a Senior Consultant and the Director of Research at [Denison Consulting](#). The views expressed in this article belong solely to the author.*

## IPAC Internal Updates

- The President authorized a new appointed role of Marketing Committee Chair. If you or someone you know would love to be part of this committee or are willing to serve as its chair, please email Mary Ann Haskins: [president@ipacweb.org](mailto:president@ipacweb.org)
- Join the GLEAN Fall Event about Structured Interviews on September 29, 2017 in Milwaukee featuring Harry Brull.
- Welcome 2018 Conference Chair, Kathy Stewart! The 2018 IPAC Conference will be in the D.C. area.
- 2019 Conference Location Site Announced: Minneapolis/St. Paul area.
- The ACN will now be available two times per year, in February and August.

# 2017 IPAC Officers

## **President**

Mary Ann Haskins

HR & Support Services Director  
City of Johns Creek  
678.630.0196  
President@ipacweb.org

## **Secretary**

Melissa Buford

Personnel Research  
Psychologist  
Leadership & Workforce  
Development Assessment  
U.S. Office of Personnel  
Management  
Melissa.Buford@opm.gov

## **President-Elect**

Matisha Montgomery

Lead Personnel Research  
Psychologist  
U.S. Office of Personnel  
Management  
Matisha.Montgomery@opm.gov

## **Past-President**

Martha E. Hennen

Management and Program  
Analyst  
U.S. Securities and Exchange  
Commission,  
Office of Equal Employment  
Opportunity  
MEHennen@juno.com

## **Financial Officer**

Natasha Riley

Director of Assessment and  
Testing Services  
Human Capital Management  
Division  
financial@ipacweb.org

# 2017 IPAC Directors

Kathlea Vaughn  
(Term: 2015-2017)

Personnel Research  
Psychologist  
U.S. Customs and Border  
Protection  
kathlea.vaughn@cbp.dhs.gov

Frank Igou  
(Term: 2016-2018)

Associate Professor of  
Industrial/Organizational  
Psychology  
Department of Psychology and  
Behavioral Sciences,  
Louisiana Tech University  
Ruston  
frankigou@gmail.com

John Ford  
(Term: 2017-2019)

Senior Research Psychologist  
U.S. Merit Systems Protection  
Board  
John.Ford@mspb.gov

# 2017 IPAC Committees

## Membership

Lilly Lin  
lilly.lin@kornferry.com

## Assessment Council

## Newsletter Editor

Ted Hayes  
tlh2006@gmail.com

## Electronic Communications Network (ECN)

Ben Porr  
elcomnet@ipacweb.org

## Accreditation Chair

OPEN

## Innovations in Assessment Award

Martha Hennen  
MEHennen@juno.com

## Student Paper Committee

Christopher D. Nye, Ph.D.  
nyechris@msu.edu

## Professional and Scientific Affairs

Dennis Doverspike  
dd1@uakron.edu

## Bemis Memorial Award Nomination

Dennis A. Joiner  
joinerda@pacbell.net

## Continuity, Policy, and Procedures

Matisha Montgomery  
Matisha.Montgomery@opm.gov

## Personnel Assessment and Decisions

Scott Highhouse  
shighho@bgsu.edu

## Nominations

OPEN

## Marketing

OPEN