



# Specifacts

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www.csinashville.org

## Etched in Stone *by Sheldon Wolfe, RA, FCSI, CCS, CCCA, CSC*

**W**hat is the value of a signature? More to the point, what is the value of a "wet" signature? Although some states have taken steps to modernize the requirements for certification of construction documents and other legal documents, others are mired in practices that haven't made sense for a long time.

Of those states that allow something other than a manual signature to certify documents, some allow only software encryption, while others allow a facsimile of a signature. The result is a mix of methods, requiring design professionals to verify requirements for each state. To make things more interesting, states and local agencies are inconsistent in the way they interpret or use state statutes.

What really makes sense? Is a wet signature

necessary? What does it prove?

The history of wet signatures is nearly as old as writing. Centuries ago, when few people could read or write, laws allowed a person to sign a contract merely by making an "X" or other mark. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that many documents were explained in terms not used in the documents, then used against those who "signed" them, the argument being that they agreed to the terms, even though they could not read them. Those laws are still with us, and remain subject to abuse.

Despite what is permitted by statutes, many architects and engineers refuse to make use of alternative methods of certification, and insist on manually signing documents. If wet-signed documents are required by statute there is no point in arguing, but

when facsimile signatures are acceptable, there is no reason to continue using wet signatures.

With today's technology, I can go to the builders exchange, get a certification page, create an image of a signature, and put that signature into another document. After copying or printing, it will be virtually impossible to tell if copies of the new documents were produced from an original with a wet signature. Heck, I could have done the same thing years ago with old-fashioned cut-and-paste.

Consider a document that has a wet signature. Unless you were present when the document was signed, you can't tell if it had been signed by the person whose signature you see, or by someone else. So what does it prove? Should we take it a step further, and require notarization? Then we would have a signature,

and a notary seal. But does that really prove anything? Not really; all it would prove is that a person with proper credentials - which might have been forged - signed the document.

It reminds me of a M\*A\*S\*H episode, when Radar asked the colonel to sign a document, then initial his signature to show that he signed it.

### ***Electronic and Digital Signatures***

The terms electronic signature and digital signature often are used interchangeably, but there is a difference. To make it interesting, each state has its own definitions, and rules for how they are used, while the federal government has definitions and rules that apply to interstate commerce.

In general, an electronic signature is any electronic thing that is used to show

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that the intent the person who uses it is to sign a document. In common definitions, it can be a symbol, a process, or even a sound. In many cases, the symbol is a facsimile of the person's signature, reproduced as an electronic image, typically a jpg image or an electronically reproduced document bearing a "real" signature. Most of us use a form of electronic signature without thinking about it; any time you use an ATM or pay a bill online, you are using a process that indicates you agree to making that particular transaction.

In contrast, a digital signature is a form of encryption that can be used not only to verify the origin of a document, but to indicate if the contents have been changed. In

practice, it is more "real" than a wet signature. For example, someone could alter the content of a fifty page paper document without much trouble, and with little chance of detection, as long as the page with the signature was left intact. Although technically possible, it is extremely difficult to break the encryption and alter a digital document. Digital signatures would appear to be the best certification method, but I doubt that many firms have the necessary software. Even if encryption were used, it's likely that many recipients would be unfamiliar with it, and would insist on "real" signatures.

Use of both electronic and digital signatures is essential for today's commerce. If we still relied on wet signatures, there would be no ATMs, eBay, or credit cards. We

would be required either to appear in person, or to send paper documents with wet signatures (which are easily forged) for every purchase and bank deposit. Not quite what we've become accustomed to!

Federal and state governments not only approve, but encourage the use of both electronic and digital signatures. The Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act (ESIGN) states that "electronic" means form, and that a contract or signature "may not be denied legal effect, validity, or enforceability solely because it is in electronic form".

The Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA) required federal agencies to use electronic forms, electronic filing, and electronic signatures to conduct official business with the public whenever possible. A practical result many of us enjoy is electronic filing of our income tax returns, if anything related to the IRS can be considered enjoyable.

#### ***Certification of construction documents***

Given the widespread acceptance of electronic signatures, requiring wet signatures for

construction documents simply doesn't make sense. Beyond that, the statutes that govern certification of construction documents vary widely from one state to another.

Of the states I have worked in, most have a single licensing board for all design professionals, but one has one board for architects and another for engineers and surveyors. In that state, the governing statutes are similar, but not identical.

Some states require the use of a seal, while others allow an electronic image of the seal. Some require wet signatures, others do not. Some require that all drawings be signed, while others allow signatures to appear on only the cover page. All accept a single certification page for project manuals. When wet signatures are required, the number of copies required, and the purposes for which they are required vary. As if that weren't confusing enough, interpretation can vary within a state.

I think we're making progress, but until you know what is required, find the applicable statutes, and then ask the agencies you're working with what they require.

## **Nashville Chapter CSI**

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Construction Specifications Institute

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# June President's Message

In this, my final address as Chapter President, I would like to say thank you to the Nashville Chapter for allowing me the opportunity to serve. It's really hard to believe how quickly time flies when you're having fun, and I am looking forward to working with the Chapter in other roles for many years to come. I am also very excited about what the future holds as Tim Yoko begins his term. As I've said before, I know we are in very capable hands as Tim begins to execute his exciting plans for our Chapter's growth.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Louis Medcalf for presenting a very interesting program at our May Chapter meeting. Louis provided us with insight into the concept of Preliminary Project Description based on Uniformat Organization.

Please make plans now to attend our annual awards banquet, which this year will be held on June 28th at Mere



Randy Huffman  
CSI CDT

Bulles in Brentwood. This annual event is always a fun time to come together to have a few laughs, celebrate the years successes, and say thank you to those who give their time selflessly for the betterment of our Chapter.

The Nashville Chapter has a great history of furthering the mission of CSI "to advance building information management and education of project

teams to improve facility performance" and I believe this year has been no exception to this longstanding tradition.

Respectfully,  
Randy Huffman

*Thank you for  
all your hard  
work Randy!  
The Nashville  
CSI chapter is  
grateful for your  
year of service as  
president.*

## June Chapter Meeting Awards Banquet

When: Tuesday, June 28th

\*\* (not our normal meeting day or time) \*\*

5:30pm-6:30pm - socialize (open bar); 6:30pm -  
dinner; 7:00-8:00pm -awards program

What: 2010-2011 Chapter Awards Banquet

Relax, unwind, and socialize at this year's CSI Awards Banquet. As a gesture of "Thanks" to our CSI Chapter Members, we invite you to join us for dinner at one of Middle Tennessee's finest restaurants.




Mere Bulles Restaurant  
5201 Maryland Way, Brentwood, TN

CSI Chapter Members, No Charge; Non-Members, \$45.  
RSVPs are REQUIRED. Contact Tiffany Goulet, [tiffanyannwil@aol.com](mailto:tiffanyannwil@aol.com)

# June Member Anniversaries

Kathy Pedigo, CSI 31 Years	Kevin Corkern, RA, FCSI, CCS, CCCA, LEED AP, NCARB	Randy Huffman, CSI, CDT	David Johnson, CSI
Boyd Jacoway, CSI, CDT Jacoway Sales 30 Years	TLP Architects, LLC 22 Years	Alley-Cassey Brick 9 Years	Johnson Johnson Crabtree Architects 6 Years
Jack Potter, CSI	Don Williams, CSI Williams Restoration 19 Years	Wendell Leisinger, CSI Schneider Electric 7 Years	Michael Plunk, CSI, RA Metro Airport Authority 4 Years
Hart Freeland Roberts 30 Years	James Bell, CSI, CDT	Nena Bowling, CSI, CDT	Randy Campbell, CSI
Wallace Hutcherson, CSI, CDT, AIA	ASSA ABLOY 10 Years	Metro Nashville Airport Authority 6 Years	ParexUSA NEW MEMBER
Wallace J. Hutcherson Construction Co. 28 Years			



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# Member Spotlight

by Tiffany Goulet CSI, CDT

Take this opportunity to get to know your new CSI Nashville Chapter President, Tim Yoko.

Tim grew up in a small town near Aliquippa, PA about 35 miles northwest of Pittsburgh. For you football fans to get a better idea of where this is on the map it is also the home of Mike Ditka, Tony Dorsett, Ty Law and Darrelle Revis.

Tim is not related to Yoko Ono, although some people think so. Yoko is actually Hungarian (Joko) but thanks to the workers at Ellis Island, Tim is now of Asian decent.

His wife Pamela is a freelance writer and they have one daughter who is on her way into teenagehood.

During the good ol' days before computers were around Tim loved to play Lincoln logs and tinker toys but really what got him hooked on Architecture was a hand

drafting class he took in 7th grade.

Tim graduated from University of Cincinnati with a bachelor of Architecture. He spent a combined 13 years with two different firms in Pittsburgh and the last 10 years with Thomas Miller and Partners in Brentwood.

Tim and his wife got tired of the long winters and snow and decided to look south closer to Pamela's family in Memphis. Tim was finally convinced when he discovered Tennessee did not have an income tax. He received a call from Al Thomas of Thomas Miller and Partners for an interview and has been with them since.

Tim enjoys sports, classic cars, classic rock (his favorites are the Beatles and Doo Wop), gardening and some politics.

His co-worker was involved in CSI in

Pittsburgh and attended many "free" lunches so when Tim moved to Nashville he figured that joining CSI would be the quickest way to learn who he needed to know (like reputable product reps). Not too long after joining Larry Hart of Thomas Miller and Partners asked Tim if he would take over the Secretary position and how could he say no to his boss? That was the start of his involvement in the Nashville Chapter. Tim joined in 2002 and was Secretary from 2003 to 2009. He has chaired the Product show, 2nd Vice President, 1st Vice President, along with always being willing to help with any committee or CSI function.

When asked "what do you like about CSI and what do you believe you get out of being a member" Tim responded with "I've gotten more out of it than expected, mainly because I never

expected to be Secretary (Thanks Larry!), let alone Chapter President. But once involved, I enjoyed meeting so many people from all aspects of the construction industry in Nashville. And, while having held officers' positions and attending Region events, the friendships have extended beyond Nashville. You truly get out of CSI what you put in. Beyond the friendships though, the educational opportunities, which are so important to Architects, have also been invaluable. While yes, spec writing can be boring, knowing how to do it—correctly—is oh so important in these litigious times we live."

Last but not least if there was one thing Tim would like to see the chapter or national organization offer to the members it would be "free beer"!

## 2011 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Purpose: To encourage and assist qualified students who wish to pursue post secondary education in the field of engineering, architecture, or other construction-related field so they, in turn, might further the goals and exemplify the ideals of the Construction Specification Institute.

Terms: Scholarship amount for the academic year 2011-2012 to be determined.

Deadline for submission of applications is July 31, 2011.

For the full list of requirements and application please visit [www.csinashville.org](http://www.csinashville.org)



## The Construction Specifications Institute – Nashville Chapter

### Board of Directors Meeting

**Meeting Date:** May 17, 2011

**Present:** Randy Huffman, Kevin Russell, Matthew Russell, Jerry Curtis, Kevin Corkern, Mike Leonard, Woody Bruhn, Kent Kile, Tom Parshall, Troy Williams, Michael Gober, Dan Cress.

### Call To Order and Officers' Reports

1. Randy Huffman called the meeting to order and passed out the Agenda.

### Committee Reports

#### 1. **Academic Affairs:** Kevin Russell, Matthew Russell

- a. The MTSU CSI Student Chapter application has been submitted to the Institute for approval, and official recognition is anticipated in the fall.
- b. Matthew has spread the word, and a lot of people are interested in a tour of the MTSU Student Union currently under construction.
- c. AGC gives away hard hats with their logo stickers on them at some of their student tours. CSI MTSU could possibly do something similar to this.

#### 2. **Technical:** Jerry Curtis

- a. The June Specheads meeting will feature LED lighting presented by SESCO.
- b. There will not be a Specheads meeting in July.

#### 3. **Planning:** Tom Parshall

- a. No current calendar updates.
- b. Regarding the coming Leadership Meeting we will be hosting here in August, flyers were passed out at the recent Region Conference in Mobile, AL to raise awareness and interest. In general people seemed excited about coming to Nashville. After May's meeting, there won't be any other chapter meetings prior to the Leadership Conference (June meeting is the awards banquet and there is no meeting in July), therefore the chapter needs to find ways to keep people interested and aware of it during the next months.
- c. Tim Yoko will probably be arranging for a planning meeting in July with the 2011/2012 Officers and Directors.

#### 4. **Programs:**

- a. Next program won't be until August.

- b. The Awards Banquet will be the meeting for June. Randy has begun to look into options for a banquet room location to reserve for this. The Hilton has a room available June 21<sup>st</sup> and charges \$50.00 per person. Other options will be looked at that may have a better rate, and this could determine the date. The Sheraton was mentioned as a possibility, since the Chapter will utilize their facilities for the Leadership Meeting and this relationship may possibly generate a better rate.

## 5. Electrical Communications

- a. Information regarding the Leadership Meeting and the sponsorship form are now on the website.


## 6. Awards: Troy Williams

- a. Tim Yoko has completed the chapter "Outstanding Accommodations" award package.  
b. Troy and Randy will meet to coordinate the awards banquet.

## 7. Other:

- a. The current CSI Chapter Logo signs and banners, used for product shows etc., are ragged and unimpressive. New banners are needed. The cost is around \$240 each. A graphic designer would be helpful to design the new banners. They need to include the Institute motto on them.

Meeting adjourned.



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## About Us...

Founded in 1948, CSI is a non-profit technical organization dedicated to the advancement of construction technology through communication, research, education, and service. CSI serves the interests of architects, engineers, specifiers, contractors, product manufacturers, and others in the construction industry.

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