

Digital Seal Policy

This policy was first drafted by the BCSLA in October 2017. It contains guidance and establishes professional standards on the use of digital certificate technology to sign, seal, and deliver documents electronically pursuant to the *BCSLA Bylaws* and *Standards of Professional Conduct and Practice*.

Prior to this policy, the BCSLA had not sanctioned the application of a digital image of a landscape architect's professional seal to documents requiring a signature and seal. The society's concerns related to public protection, regulatory requirements of the Architects (Landscape) Act, security of the seal, and document integrity. As a result, any document requiring a landscape architect's seal had to be physically printed out and then dated, signed and hand-sealed.

Modern legislation (the *Electronic Transactions Act*) is in place in British Columbia that makes electronic documents as enforceable as printed documents, and allows for digital production and electronic delivery of landscape architectural instruments of service. These modern concepts related to electronic documents and transactions can be applied, allowing "electronic signature, seal and delivery", as long as adequate measures are in place to ensure:

- the security and verification of electronic documents; and
- the regulation of use and revocation of a landscape architect's seal.

From the BCSLA Bylaws:

Use of Title and Stamp: Registered Landscape Architect

- 2.4** *Every person who is a Registered Member in good standing of the Society is entitled to use the designation "Registered Landscape Architect"; no person who is not a Member in good standing of the Society may assume or use that designation in any manner or represent that he or she is entitled to do so.*
- 2.5** *A Landscape Architect must apply to the Board to use the title "Registered Landscape Architect" or "Landscape Architect" or; "Landscape Architects" or "Landscape Architecture" in a firm or company name registered in British Columbia for a landscape architecture practice employing one or more Landscape Architects. The Board may allow such use of the title, subject to a written agreement of terms and conditions set by the Board, and duly entered into by the Landscape Architect. Use of the title by the subject firm or company may continue only on strict compliance with the terms and conditions of such agreement.*
- 2.6** *The Registrar will provide each Registered Landscape Architect with a professional stamp or seal, the impression of which will contain,*
- (a) *the name of the Registered Landscape Architect;*
 - (b) *the designation "Registered Member, British Columbia Society of Landscape Architects", and;*
 - (c) *the registration number of the Registered Landscape Architect, from the Registrar of Members.*
- 2.7** *The Registered Landscape Architect will use an original impression of the stamp or seal, together with the Registered Landscape Architect's signature and date, on all original drawings and specifications from his or her practice for use in the Province as documents of record, appeal permit or construction, or to evidence professional review or opinion, and as otherwise required or deemed prudent by the Registered Landscape Architect; no Registered Landscape Architect shall affix his or her stamp or seal, or sign, any drawings or specifications that:*
- (a) *the Registered Landscape Architect has not prepared; or*

(b) the Registered Landscape Architect's staff, contractors or consultants have not prepared under the Registered Landscape Architect's supervision.

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- 2.8** *All stamps issued by the Registrar remain property of the Society; and must be returned to the Registrar by registered mail when a Registered Landscape Architect ceases to be a Member of the Society.*
- 2.15** *A Member approved for Landscape Architect status will not represent himself or herself as a Registered Landscape Architect. A Landscape Architect will not use a stamp or seal of the profession.*
- 2.19** *A Member approved for retired status will represent himself or herself as a Retired Landscape Architect. A Retired Landscape Architect will not use a stamp or seal of the profession.*
- 2.45** *A person shall cease to be a Member of the Society:*
(a) on resigning by written notice to the Registrar and returning his/her stamp by registered mail to the address of the Society;

The Member must abide by all Use of Stamp matters as detailed in the BCSLA Bylaws. At the time that the physical stamp is returned to the society, the Member must also destroy the digital stamp file.

ADDENDA: Landscape Architects are increasingly using new technologies in their daily work. The documents they produce remain subject to high standards of reliability. Active Landscape Architects who wish to produce legally reliable digital documents in compliance with BCSLA's requirements, will be able to accomplish this task with CertifiO for Professionals – BC Landscape Architects Digital Signature (referred to as the "Digital Seal").

After extensive evaluation of the Digital Signature market, BCSLA has selected Notarius to provide a BC Landscape Architects Digital Seal to active members. On October 31, 2018 the BCSLA, in collaboration with Notarius, will launch the BCSLA Digital Seal. Please contact the BCSLA office for details.