

Foreword

Throughout time, quality assurance standards have been pursued by many professions. Today, the emphasis on quality assurance is paramount to the examination of documents involved in criminal and civil investigations. The examination of handwriting, hand printing, and modern business machines offers the Forensic Document Examiner (FDE) the challenge and the responsibility of quality assurance for the work product. The FDE must constantly assure that the analysis of a questioned document problem maintains the highest level of ethical and quality assurance standards. The procedures used and the results of the examination presented in Courts of Law must uphold the quality assurance demanded by the Judicial System.

Over the past several years, the Scientific Working Group on Document Examination (SWGDOC) has met and has published draft guidelines for various procedures within the field of document examination. Concurrently, scientific working groups for other forensic disciplines have been meeting to develop guidelines for their respective fields. The model for the various Forensic Science committees emerged based upon the requirements for establishing procedures under the Congressional DNA Act of 1994. The DNA Scientific Working Group and the DNA Advisory Board emerged as a result of the original congressional legislation. The advisory board has published standards for review of DNA requirements for quality assurance and proficiency testing. This format is similar to that followed by SWGDOC, and the publishing of standards by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) is currently being pursued. The standardization of procedures by SWGDOC further defines quality assurance for FDEs. Additionally, research studies conducted strengthen the quality assurance process. Paramount to all of this is the basic and continuing training of the FDE. The basic structured FDE training program is two or three years in duration and is usually conducted in a forensic laboratory. The certifying organization for FDEs is the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners (ABFDE). Certification is granted to qualified individuals upon completion of education, training, and comprehensive testing requirements.

Published research continues to strengthen quality assurance. It is the goal of the *Journal of the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners* to offer scientific and peer-reviewed research for the Forensic Science Community, the Legal Profession, and FDEs. Historically, research involving questioned documents and the writing process was presented at scientific meetings. The need for published articles documenting the research is paramount today. The significance of published research assists the Judge and the Jury when FDEs present expert testimony involving the results of examinations. Research findings add to the overall weight of the reliability of the expert and assist with "good science." In response to *Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals, Inc.* (1993), the term "good science" may be described as the quality control, the publication, replication and verification used before the science is relied upon. Thus, the education of the FDE, the quality assurance processes used in the examination of questioned documents, and results of research add to the weight of the FDE's expert opinion testimony.

The *Journal of the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners* developed with the assistance of many individuals. Special thanks are extended to ASQDE Past President Roy A. Huber, whose wisdom encouraged the direction of the *Journal*, to the ASQDE Board of Directors, the Editorial Board, and other ASQDE members who helped with the foundation of the *Journal*. Most importantly, the diligence, knowledge and skill of the authors helped the *Journal* flourish. I mention these thanks as I welcome Jerry Brown as the incoming Editor of the *Journal*. He brings a wealth of expertise in the field of Forensic Document Examination and will continue to guide the development of the *Journal*. I will remain active on the Editorial Board and help ensure a smooth transition. I hope that my volunteer efforts as Editor in some way strengthened the profession of Forensic Document Examination, and I look forward to encouraging others to develop research proposals, conduct meaningful studies, and publish the results.

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Editor