



Idaho State Police Forensic Services

FORENSIC DOCUMENT EXAMINATION ANALYTICAL METHODS

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Table of Contents

Revision History	5
Revision #.....	5
Description of Changes	5
Analytical Method #1 Handwriting.....	6
1.0 Background/References	6
2.0 Scope	6
3.0 Equipment/Reagents	6
4.0 Procedure	6
Analytical Method #2 Document Indentations	12
1.0 Background/References	12
2.0 Scope	12
3.0 Equipment/Reagents	12
4.0 Procedure	12
Analytical Method #3: Typewriting	16
1.0 Background/References	16
2.0 Scope	16
3.0 Equipment/Reagents	16
4.0 Procedure	17
Analytical Method #4: Non-Impact Printing Processes	24
1.0 Background/References	24
2.0 Scope	24
3.0 Equipment/Reagents	24
4.0 Procedure	25
Analytical Method #5: Altered Documents	31
1.0 Background/References	31
2.0 Scope	31
3.0 Equipment/Reagents	31
4.0 Procedure	32
Analytical Method #6: Writing Inks	36
1.0 Background/References	36
2.0 Scope	36
3.0 Equipment/Reagents	36
4.0 Procedure	37

5.0	Comments.....	39
Analytical Method #7: Paper Examination		40
1.0	Background/References	40
2.0	Scope	40
3.0	Equipment/Reagents	40
4.0	Procedure	41
Analytical Method #8: Physical Match		43
1.0	Background/References	43
2.0	Scope	43
3.0	Equipment/Reagents	43
4.0	Procedure	44
Analytical Method #9: Stamping Device Impressions		46
1.0	Background/References	46
2.0	Scope	46
3.0	Equipment/Reagents	46
4.0	Procedure	47
Analytical Method #10: Checkwriter Impressions.....		50
1.0	Background/References	50
2.0	Scope	50
3.0	Equipment/Reagents	50
4.0	Procedure	51
Analytical Method #11: Dry-Seal Impressions.....		53
1.0	Background/References	53
2.0	Scope	53
3.0	Equipment/Reagents.....	53
4.0	Procedure	53
Analytical Method #12: Charred Documents		56
1.0	Background/References	56
2.0	Scope	56
3.0	Equipment/Reagents	56
4.0	Procedure	57
Analytical Method #13: Liquid Soaked Documents.....		58
1.0	Background/References	58
2.0	Scope	58

3.0	Equipment/Reagents	58
4.0	Procedure	59
Analytical Method #14: Reporting.....		60
1.0	Background/References	60
2.0	Scope	60
3.0	Equipment/Reagents	60
4.0	Procedure	60

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Revision History

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Analytical Method #1 Handwriting

1.0 Background/References

1.1 This method is a guideline to assist in the examination and comparison of handwritten items, to include hand printing, signatures, and cursive writing. The forensic document examiner may be further assisted by published standards and by appropriate commercial and private references.

1.2 References:

- SWGDOC E01-13: SWGDOC Standard for the Examination of Handwritten Items
- ANSI/ASB Standard 011: Scope of Expertise in Forensic Document Examination
- SWGDOC G02-13: SWGDOC Standard for Minimum Training Requirements for Forensic Document Examiners
- SWGDOC Standard Terminology for Expressing Conclusions of Forensic Document Examiners

2.0 Scope

2.1 This analytical method provides procedures used by forensic document examiners for examinations and comparisons of handwritten items. This method includes the comparison of questioned and known items or of exclusively questioned items. The method is dictated by the objectives and by the case-specific material available of the items for examination.

3.0 Equipment/Reagents

- Stereomicroscope
- Handheld magnifier
- Incident, side, and transmitted light sources
- Imaging equipment

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Type of examinations, observations, and notes to be recorded in iLIMS.

4.2 At various points in these procedures, a determination that a particular feature is not present or that an item is lacking in quality or comparability may indicate that the examiner should discontinue or limit the procedure(s).

4.2.1 It is at the discretion of the examiner to discontinue the procedure at that point and report accordingly or to continue with the applicable procedures to the extent possible.

4.2.2 The reasons for such a decision shall be documented.

4.3 Determine whether the type of examination is a comparison between questioned to known writing or a comparison of questioned to questioned writing.

4.4 Evaluation of questioned written items:

4.4.1 Determine whether the questioned handwritten item is original writing. If it is not original, request the original.

4.4.2 If the available questioned handwritten item is not original, assess the quality of the reproduction to determine if the writing details have sufficient clarity suitable for comparison purposes.

4.4.3 It is at the discretion of the examiner to discontinue the method at this point and report accordingly or continue with the procedures to the extent possible.

4.5 Determine whether the questioned handwritten item is distorted writing. If it appears unnatural, determine whether the distorted writing is naturally prepared writing.

4.5.1 If a questioned handwritten item is not naturally prepared writing, or it is not possible to assess the spontaneity of the writing, the examiner is to determine if the apparently distorted writing is suitable for comparison and continue with the applicable procedures to the extent possible.

4.5.2 If it is determined that the questioned writing is not suitable for comparison, then the examiner is to discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.6 Evaluation of questioned handwritten item:

4.6.1 **Writing Type:** Note if there is more than one type of writing, then separate and group the single types of writing.

4.6.2 **Internal Consistency:** Note if there are inconsistencies within any one of the groups of writing type as separated in 4.6.1 (e.g. suggestive of multiple writers), then separate into another group, with each group containing an internally consistent type of writing.

4.6.3 Determine the range of variation of the writing for each group or sub-group that were separated by writing type and internal consistency of writing features.

4.6.4 Determine if individualizing characteristics are present or absent in the questioned writing.

4.7 Evaluation of known written items:

- 4.7.1 Determine whether the known handwritten item is original writing. If it is not original, request the original.
- 4.7.2 If the available known handwritten item is not original, assess the quality of the reproduction to determine if the writing details have sufficient clarity suitable for comparison purposes.
- 4.7.3 It is at the discretion of the examiner to discontinue the method at this point and report accordingly or continue with the procedures to the extent possible.

4.8 Evaluation for Distortion:

- 4.8.1 Determine whether the known writing is distorted writing. If it appears unnatural, determine whether the distorted writing is naturally prepared writing.
- 4.8.2 If a known handwritten item is not naturally prepared writing, or it is not possible to assess the spontaneity of the writing, the examiner is to determine if the apparently distorted writing is suitable for comparison and continue with the applicable procedures to the extent possible. If additional known writing would be of assistance, the examiner should request additional known writing.
- 4.8.3 If it is determined that the available known writing is not suitable for comparison purposes, then the examiner is to discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.9 Evaluation of known writing:

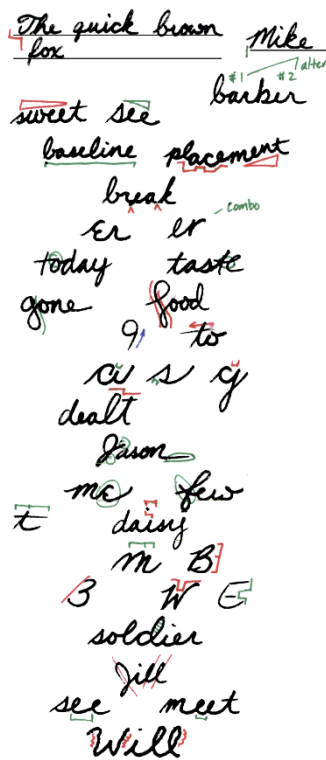
- 4.9.1 **Writing Type:** Note if there is more than one type of writing, then separate and group the single types of writing.
- 4.9.2 **Internal Consistency:** Note if there are inconsistencies within any one of the groups of writing type (e.g. suggestive of multiple writers), then the examiner is to contact the submitting agency for authentication of the group of known writing. If inconsistencies have not been resolved, then the examiner is to discontinue the procedures for the affected group(s) of known writing and report accordingly.
- 4.9.3 Determine the range of variation of the writing for each group or sub-group that were separated by writing type and internal consistency writing features using sections 4.9.1 and 4.9.2.
- 4.9.4 Determine if individualizing characteristics are present or absent in the known writing.

4.10 Evaluation of Comparability:

Depending on the type of examination, the examiner will determine the comparability of the bodies of writing (questioned writing compared to known writing or questioned writing compared to questioned writing).

- 4.10.1 If the bodies of the writing are not comparable for a questioned to questioned writing comparison, then discontinue the comparison procedure

- 4.10.1.1 Report reasoning for discontinuation of comparisons accordingly.
- 4.10.2 If the bodies of writing are not comparable for a questioned to known writing comparison, then discontinue the procedure and request comparable known writing.
 - 4.10.2.1 If comparable known writing is made available, then proceed with evaluating the known writing with procedure 4.8.
 - 4.10.2.2 If comparable known writing is not made available, then discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.
- 4.11 Side by Side Comparison of available or applicable portions of the bodies of writing.
 - 4.11.1 Whether the type of examination is questioned to questioned writing or questioned to known writing, and the defined handwritten items have comparable bodies of writing, then the examiner will perform a side-by-side comparison of the comparable portions of the bodies of writing.
 - 4.11.2 Determine whether there are differences, similarities, and absent characters between the comparable portions of the bodies of writing and evaluate the writing characteristics individually and in combination.
 - 4.11.3 The examiner will determine if the quantity of questioned writing or known writing is sufficient for a complete comparison.
 - 4.11.3.1 If the quantity of the questioned writing, or known writing, or both is a limitation for a complete comparison, the examiner will continue with the comparison to the extent possible.
 - 4.11.3.2 The examiner may request additional known writing if available. If additional known writing is made available, then proceed with evaluating the known writing with procedure 4.8.
- 4.12 Based on the handwritten items available for submission and interpretation, the examiner will analyze, compare, and evaluate the comparable portions of the bodies of writing for individualizing writing features.
 - 4.12.1 The writing features and other elements considered include the following notations: Markings in green signify similarities, red indicate differences, and blue are neutral (e.g. clarification of construction, missing letter, direction).



Alignment
 Alternative construction / form
 Ascending / Descending
 Baseline placement
 Break
 Combination
 Connections
 Curvature
 Direction
 Gap / Opening
 Height relationship
 Introductory / Terminal strokes
 Letter construction
 Placement
 Proportions
 Relative lengths
 Shape / Volume
 Slope
 Spacing
 Tremor

4.12 Determine the significance of the similarities, differences, and limitations of the comparison and evaluate the writing characteristics individually and in combination. Record the finding in the notes.

4.13 Interpretation and Documentation of Results

4.13.1 Results will reflect the scope of the examination(s), strength or shortcomings of the evidence, and limitations of the findings.

4.13.2 Reported conclusions as to writer authorship will refer to the SWGDOC Standard Terminology for Expressing Conclusions of Forensic Document Examiners as follows:

- Identification
- Strong probability (qualified conclusion)
- Probable (qualified conclusion)
- Indications (qualified conclusion)
- No conclusion
- Indications did not (qualified conclusion)
- Probably did not (qualified conclusion)
- Strong probability did not (qualified conclusion)
- Elimination

Qualified conclusions shall include an explanation as to the portions of the examinations being reported as relating to the conclusion.

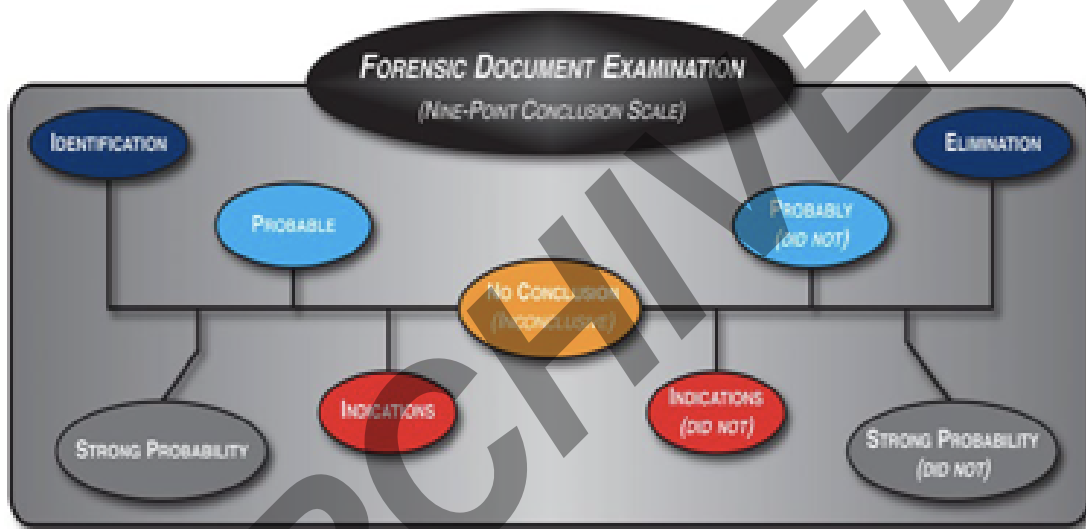
4.13.3 Documentation of results and conclusions:

4.13.3.1 When reporting conclusions and interpretations of examination and/or comparisons between one or more items, detailed descriptions of the examinations performed, and how the conclusions were reached must be documented in the analytical notes.

4.14 Electronic Documentation (Electronic comparisons and Photographs)

4.14.1 Electronic renditions and notes will be stored in the case file.

4.14.2 Photographs shall be digitally retained by the laboratory.



Analytical Method #2 Document Indentations

1.0 Background/References

1.1 This procedure is a guideline to assist in the examination of documents or other substrates for indentations and other substrate disturbances. Impression evidence often results from the incidental transfer of handwriting pressure or mechanical action of a device impressed from one document or other substrate to another document or other substrate.

1.2 Nondestructive optical and electrostatic techniques are used for the detection of indentations and can reveal sources of documents, page substitutions, additions and alterations, sequence of writing, and other evidence significant to the source or creation of documents. The forensic document examiner may be further assisted by published standards and by appropriate commercial and private references.

1.3 References:

- ANSI/ASB Standard 44: Standard for Examination of Documents for Indentations
- ANSI/ASB Standard 011: Scope of Expertise in Forensic Document Examination
- SWGDOC G02-13: SWGDOC Standard for Minimum Training Requirements for Forensic Document Examiners

2.0 Scope

2.1 This analytical method provides procedures used by forensic document examiners for examination of indentations on documents.

3.0 Equipment/Reagents

- Stereomicroscope
- Handheld magnifier
- Incident, side, and transmitted light sources
- Electrostatic Detection Device (EDD) and related processing equipment
- Imaging equipment and software

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Type of examinations, observations, and notes to be recorded in iLIMS.

- 4.1.1 Prior to the application of examination methods, capture the image of the document.
- 4.1.2 The examiner will assess each document to determine course of examination method.
- 4.1.3 If it is necessary to remove staples, post-it notes, or other attached documents, then permission from the submitter must be obtained and the original condition of the evidence documented.

4.2 Prior to examination capture image of the entire document(s).

4.3 Assess each item to determine course of action. Limiting factors which can affect the suitability of a document for an indentation examination include prior destructive processing, copy versus original, printing process, writing instrument, and substrate.

4.4 No required order for examination using the following procedures.

4.5 Care should be taken to avoid degrading, changing or addition of new indentations.

4.6 Optical Examination

- 4.6.1 Both sides of the document are examined with various angles of lighting sources and magnification to determine if indentations or other fiber disturbances are visualized. The examiner may research peer reviewed literature for other appropriate optical techniques.
- 4.6.2 If indentations or other fiber disturbances are visualized, the examiner will evaluate and preserve.
 - 4.6.2.1 If readable, the examiner can preserve the visualized evidence by transcription. If visualized impressions are faint and not readable, then image capture is necessary.
 - 4.6.2.2 If indentations or other fiber disturbances are not visualized, the examiner will document the lack of visible impressions.
- 4.6.3 Determine if the item is suitable for EDD examination. If item is not suitable for EDD examination and the examiner has used appropriate optical examination techniques to the extent possible, then report accordingly.

4.7 EDD examination

4.7.1 The examiner will follow the EDD operating manual for proper equipment operation.

4.7.2 A function verification of the EDD equipment will be performed with a control indentation test on day of item examination.

4.7.2.1 The control results will be recorded in the EDD equipment log and case file.

4.7.3 If the control does not demonstrate proper function, then troubleshoot and correct EDD. Corrective action of the EDD will be documented in the equipment log.

4.7.4 Process both sides of the document or other suitable substrate. Various EDD processing techniques are available for the examiner.

4.7.5 After proper processing technique(s), the examiner can preserve the test result by fixing film (lifts), image capture or both.

4.7.5.1 EDD results will be created as a sub-item and treated as evidence. New EDD sub-items will be maintained according to laboratory policy.

4.8 Evaluation of Indentation evidence

4.8.1 Study and evaluate both optical images and EDD lift results.

4.8.2 Evaluate and attempt to decipher the EDD lifts and images.

4.8.3 Image enhancements as well as overlaying multiple lifts are additional peer reviewed techniques used for decipherment purposes.

4.8.4 Indentation evidence may provide information for subsequent document examinations. Such follow up examinations may include the determination of:

- Source document
- Source writer
- Source device
- Sequence of indentation and entries
- Date of indentation

4.9 Limitations

4.9.1 Certain items can introduce limitations for examination. The size, shape, density, or condition of an item might make it less suitable for the EDD portion of the procedure.

4.9.2 Conditions relating to prior storage, handling, or analysis can potentially interfere with the examination.

4.9.2.1 Minimize handling of items prior to EDD examination to avoid contamination.

4.9.2.2 Improper handling may also impact the EDD examination results.

4.9.3 Prior to examination documents should remain in their found state (do not remove debris, flatten a folded document, or develop latent prints). Dusting or other acts of friction applied to the document can negate the electrostatic effect and can introduce new paper fiber disturbances.

- 4.9.4 Chemical or other potentially destructive processing should be completed after examination by the Document examination unit (eg Latent print or biological processing)
- 4.9.5 Humidity may affect EDD examination
- 4.9.6 Degradation of images may occur with repeated EDD processing

4.10 Interpretation of Results and Reporting:

4.10.1 Results will reflect the scope of the examination(s), strength or shortcomings of the evidence, and limitations of the findings.

4.10.2 The following may be reported:

- Whether or not indentations were detected
- Whether detected indentations were deciphered
- An attachment(s) of developed indentations and decipherment(s)
- Other observations, interpretations, and conclusions, such as the source, date, or sequence of the developed indentations
- If no results are obtained or detected, reporting should use phrases such as “...no indentations were detected using the following methods.”
- Limitations to examinations, interpretations or results of examination

4.10.3 Documentation of results and conclusions:

4.10.3.1 When reporting conclusions and interpretations of examination and/or comparisons between one or more items, detailed descriptions of the examinations performed, and how the conclusions were reached must be documented in the analytical notes.

4.11 Electronic Evidence (Electronic comparisons and Photographs)

4.11.1 Electronic renditions and notes will be stored in the case file

4.11.2 Photographs shall be digitally retained by the laboratory.

4.12 Safety Considerations

This procedure involves hazardous materials, operations, and equipment. This procedure does not purport to address all the safety issues associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this procedure to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use. Proper caution must be exercised, and the use of personal protective equipment must be considered to avoid exposure to hazardous conditions.

Analytical Method #3: Typewriting

1.0 Background/References

1.1 This impact/mechanical printing process method is a guideline to assist in the examination and comparison of typewritten items. There are wide range of forensic examination that can be conducted as they relate typewriting. Typewriter examination items include typed documents, typewriters, type elements, and associated components. The forensic document examiner may be further assisted by published standards and by appropriate commercial and private references.

1.2 References:

- SWGDOC E04-13: SWGDOC Standard for the Examination of Typewritten Items
- SWGDOC E11-13: SWGDOC Standard for the Examination of Fractured Patterns and Paper Fiber Impressions on Single-Strike Film Ribbons and Typed Text
- ANSI/ASB Standard 011: Scope of Expertise in Forensic Document Examination
- SWGDOC G02-13: SWGDOC Standard for Minimum Training Requirements for Forensic Document Examiners
- Bouffard typewriter classification program
- Wintype typewriter classification program
- Haas Atlas reference collection

2.0 Scope

2.1 This analytical method provides procedures used by forensic document examiners for examination and comparison of typewritten items. This method includes the comparison of questioned and known items or of exclusively questioned items. The method is dictated by the objectives and by the case-specific material available of the items for examination.

3.0 Equipment/Reagents

- Stereomicroscope
- Handheld magnifier
- Incident, side, and transmitted light sources
- Spacing and alignment grids
- Ruler
- Imaging equipment

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Type of examinations, observations, and notes to be recorded in iLIMS.

4.2 Determine whether the type of examination is a comparison between questioned and known items or only questioned items.

4.3 The examiner will conduct a general, visual, and physical examination of the document to determine whether it contains original typed text, non original text, or both. If the typed text is not original, inquire if the original is available. Examination of the original typed text on the document is preferable.

4.3.1 If the available typed text document is not original, the examiner will assess the quality of the item to determine if:

- the details have sufficient clarity suitable for examination
- the text is a reproduction of original typewriting
- the text is not a reproduction from original typed text

4.3.1.1 Care must be taken for the potential computer-generated copy of a typestyle design.

4.4 Determination of Document Type and Classification:

4.4.1 If the questioned item is not original and not suitable for examination, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.4.1.1 If the non original questioned document is suitable for a limited examination, the examiner will proceed with the procedure to the extent possible.

4.4.2 The submission of a known document will be assessed for quality and suitability for examination and comparison purposes. Like a questioned document submission, original typed text on the known document is preferable. If not suitable, the examiner should inquire and request additional known available items.

4.4.2.1 If the known document is not original and not suitable for examination and no other knowns are available, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.4.2.2 If the non original known document is suitable for a limited examination, the examiner will proceed with the procedure to the extent possible.

4.4.3 Examination of the text on the typewritten documents include the following class characteristics:

- Typewriter mechanism (e.g. typebar, type wheel, ball element, or thimble)
- Character pitch (e.g. horizontal, vertical, and proportional spacings)
- Longest typewritten line on the document
- Typestyle family (e.g. monotone, courier, and prestige)
- Type character size (e.g. pica and elite)

- Type of ribbon (e.g. fabric, single or multi strike films)
- Correction features (e.g. lift-off, strike-over, or erasure)
- Continuity of typed text

4.4.4 It is best practice for the examiner utilize a typewriter classification program and reference library to determine, if possible, typed text observations and manufacturer information. Resulting search and reference materials during this phase of the procedure will enable the examiner to obtain additional information regarding preparation of the submitted typewritten item.

4.4.4.1 *Care must be taken and consideration given for the potential interchangeability of elements between compatible machines. For example, if the examiner determines a single element machine is potentially involved, different typestyle design elements, such as courier and prestige, can be used on the same single element machine.*

4.5 Typestyle Classification

4.5.1 If the examination is only for a typestyle classification of a questioned document for investigative purposes, the examiner will report the classification results accordingly and may include the following:

- Typestyle family (e.g. monotone, courier, and prestige)
- Character pitch (e.g. horizontal, vertical, and proportional spacings)
- Type character size (e.g. pica and elite)
- Typewriter mechanism (e.g. typebar, type wheel, ball element, or thimble)
- Type of ribbon (e.g. fabric, single or multi strike films)
- Correction features (e.g. lift-off, strike-over, or erasure)
- Typestyle manufacturer
- Possible make and model of typewriters

4.5.1.1 *Care must be taken and consideration given for the completeness of information from a typestyle library. Even with access to a comprehensive reference collection, the examiner will remain cautious with the reporting of results. If non original typed text is examined, there may be limitations for the interpretation of the classification results.*

4.5.2 Examination of the text on the typewritten documents include the following individualizing characteristics:

- Typed character alignment defects (e.g. horizontal, vertical, or rotational)
- If a typebar machine, upper and lower case motion defects
- If a single element ball machine, tilt and rotate defects
- Individual typeface character defects

4.5.2.1 *Care must be taken and consideration given when determining whether the nature of the noted defects are fixed, transient, progressive, and that they can exhibit impression variation.*

4.5.3 Whether the type of examination is questioned to questioned typed text or questioned to known typed text, the examiner will next perform a side by side comparison.

4.5.4 Analyzed, compare, and evaluate the individualizing characteristics in the comparable portions of the typed texts.

4.5.4.1 The examiner will determine whether there are differences, similarities, and limitations between the comparable portions of the typed texts and evaluate the typewritten characteristics individually and in combination.

4.5.5 Interpretation and Documentation of Results

4.11.5.1 Results will reflect the scope of the examination(s), strength or shortcomings of the evidence, and limitations of the findings.

- **Identification** - There is agreement in all class and individual characteristics, no significant and inexplicable differences, no limitations, and there is no probability of a duplicate checkwriter.
- **Elimination** - There are substantial inexplicable differences at any level of the examination and comparison.
- **Qualified conclusion** - There are limitations to the examination and there are noted similarities or differences. Such a conclusion can be appropriate and requires an explanation of the limitations, as they relate to the weight of the findings.
- **No conclusion** - There are significant limitations and the examination reveals no significant differences. Such a conclusion can be appropriate and requires an explanation of the limitations.

4.5.11.2 *Examiners may use similar reporting language referred in the SWGDOC Standard Terminology for Expressing Conclusions of Forensic Document Examiners.*

4.5.12.3 Documentation of results and conclusions:

4.5.12.1 When reporting conclusions and interpretations of examination and/or comparisons between one or more items, detailed descriptions of the examinations performed, and how the conclusions were reached must be documented in the analytical notes.

4.6 Typewrite Examination (Known Exemplar Creations)

If a typewriter is submitted, appropriate known exemplars might be obtained.

4.6.1 If a known typewriter is submitted for examination, the examiner will document the following:

- The manufacturer make, model, and serial number
- Condition and any damage of the typewriter and associated components
- Settings of the typewriter (e.g. spacing, margins, seating of single element)
- Ribbon (e.g. fabric, single or multi strike films) and correction media, if equipped
- Typeface defects (single element should be removed for examination)
- Platen impressions or defects
- Any related service records

Care must be taken if the machine is electronic. The examiner will need to become familiar with the machine model for data storage features.

4.6.2 If the submitted typewriter is operable, the examiner will be able to obtain appropriate exemplars as follows:

- Utilize a new comparable ribbon, if possible, for the collection of exemplars
- Carbon paper may be used in place of ribbon
- If the ribbon as submitted with the typewriter must be used, clearly designate the start and finish of the exemplar on that portion of the ribbon
- Label all typewritten exemplars to include machine (serial number), examiner, and location information
- Exemplars should be taken of typewriter with settings as submitted
- The collection of exemplars will be comprehensive as possible
- Exemplars will be created as a sub-item and treated as evidence. New exemplar sub-items will be maintained according to laboratory policy.

4.6.3 If the submitted typewriter is not operable, the examiner may seek permission to correct malfunction, document, and then obtain appropriate exemplars.

4.6.3.1 If available, original normal course-of-business documents produced by the submitted machine at around the same time period of the questioned item would supplement the collection of exemplars.

4.7 Typewritten Document Examination:

A forensic document examiner may be called upon to examine a questioned typewritten document and its purported date of preparation. The question asked is: "Was the typewriter used to prepare the document available prior to the date on the document?" Examination of the questioned typewritten text and other observable features may provide information as to the earliest introduction date of the kind of typewriter as a whole and or related components. The following examinations should serve as a guideline.

- 4.7.1 Typewriter classification program and reference library to determine, if possible, typed text observations and manufacturer information. Resulting search and reference materials during this phase of the procedure will enable the examiner to obtain additional information regarding preparation of the submitted typewritten item.
- 4.7.2 If a known typewriter machine and known documents are available for comparison, ribbon condition and typeface cleanliness can be compared between the questioned and known items.

4.8 Examination of Typewriter Ribbon:

A forensic document examiner may be called upon to carefully handle and examine a typewriter ribbon.

- Single-strike film and paper ribbons and correction components are most commonly readable for decipherment purposes and potentially to associate a used ribbon to typed text on a document.
- It may be possible for a new fabric ribbon with limited usage to contain readable text.

4.9 Fracture Pattern Examination:

A forensic document examiner may also be called upon to examine the fracture patterns and paper fiber impressions on single-strike typewriter ribbon or lift-off correction tape compared to typed texts on a document. The examiner may be asked: "Can this particular ribbon from the recovered typewriter be associated to the typed text on the questioned document?" The following should serve as a guideline.

- 4.9.1 Examine the typed text on the document to determine if original.
 - If not original typed text, determine if the non original text is suitable for a limited examination, the examiner will proceed with the procedure to the extent possible.
 - If not original typed text, and not suitable for examination, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.9.2 Examine the original typed text on the document to determine if consistent with ribbon class.

4.9.2.1 If the ribbon is multi-strike or fabric, then the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.9.3 Examine the typed text on the document to determine if the typestyle is present on the ribbon.

4.9.3.1 Consideration must be given that a ribbon can contain more than one style of type.

4.9.4 Examine the typed text on the document to determine if the text is present on the ribbon.

4.9.5 Examine and determine whether the typed text on the document and the ribbon correspond in all details and corrections.

4.9.6 Examine the typed text on the document and ribbon and determine if fracture patterns of the comparable text are in agreement.

4.9.7 Examine the typed text on the document and ribbon and determine if non transferred print film and void areas of the comparable text are in agreement.

4.9.8 Examine the typed text on the document and ribbon and determine whether impressions of paper fibers on the document and void areas on the ribbon of comparable text are in agreement.

4.9.9 Evaluate the fracture pattern characteristics and limitations both individually and in combination.

4.9.10 Interpretation and Documentation of Results

4.9.10.1 Results will reflect the scope of the examination(s), strength or shortcomings of the evidence, and limitations of the findings.

- **Identification** - There is agreement in all class and individual characteristics, no significant and inexplicable differences, no limitations, and there is no probability of a duplicate checkwriter.
- **Elimination** - There are substantial inexplicable differences at any level of the examination and comparison.
- **Qualified conclusion** - There are limitations to the examination and there are noted similarities or differences. Such a conclusion can be appropriate and also requires an explanation of the limitations as they relate to the weight of the findings.
- **No conclusion** - There are significant limitations, and the examination reveals no significant differences. Such a conclusion can be appropriate and requires an explanation of the limitations.

4.9.10.2 *Examiners may use similar reporting language referred in the SWGDOC Standard Terminology for Expressing Conclusions of Forensic Document Examiners.*

4.9.10.3 Documentation of results and conclusions:

4.9.10.1 When reporting conclusions and interpretations of examination and/or comparisons between one or more items, detailed descriptions of the examinations performed, and how the conclusions were reached must be documented in the analytical notes.

4.10 Limitations of Examination

4.10.1 Items submitted for examination can have inherent limitations that can interfere with the procedures in this standard. Limitations should be noted and recorded.

4.10.2 Limitations can be due to submission of nonoriginal documents or condition of the items submitted for examination. Other limitations can come from the quantity or comparability of the material submitted, or from limited individualizing characteristics. Such features are taken into account in this standard.

4.10.3 The results of prior storage, handling, testing, or chemical processing (for example, for latent prints) can interfere with the ability of the examiner to see certain characteristics. Whenever possible, document examinations should be conducted prior to any chemical processing. Items should be handled appropriately to avoid compromising subsequent examinations.

4.10.4 Consideration should be given to the possibility that various forms of simulations, imitations, and duplications of typewriting can be generated by computer and other means.

4.11 Electronic Documentation (Electronic comparisons and Photographs)

4.11.1 Electronic renditions and notes will be stored in the case file.

4.11.2 Photographs shall be digitally retained by the laboratory.

4.12 Safety Considerations

4.12.1 This procedure involves hazardous materials, operations, and equipment. This procedure does not purport to address all the safety issues associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this procedure to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.

4.12.2 Proper caution must be exercised, and the use of personal protective equipment must be considered to avoid exposure to hazardous conditions.

Analytical Method #4: Non-Impact Printing Processes

1.0 Background/References

1.1 This analytical method is a guideline to assist in the examination and comparison of items primarily related to toner and liquid ink jet technology. There are wide range of forensic examination that can be conducted as they relate to toner and liquid ink jet technology. Applicable examination items include non-impact printed documents and related items involving printers, copiers, facsimile machines, and multi-function devices. The procedures within this analytical method may be applicable to documents created by other printing processes. The forensic document examiner may be further assisted by published standards and by appropriate commercial and private references.

1.2 References:

- SWGDOC E05-13: SWGDOC Standard for the Examination of Documents Produced with Toner Technology
- SWGDOC E06-13: SWGDOC Standard for the Examination of Documents Produced with Liquid Ink Jet Technology
- ANSI/ASB Standard 011: Scope of Expertise in Forensic Document Examination
- SWGDOC G02-13: SWGDOC Standard for Minimum Training Requirements for Forensic Document Examiners

2.0 Scope

2.1 This analytical method provides procedures used by forensic document examiners for examination and comparison of items primarily related to toner and liquid ink jet technology. This method includes the comparison of questioned and known items or of exclusively questioned items. The method is dictated by the objectives and by the case-specific material available of the items for examination.

3.0 Equipment/Reagents

- Stereomicroscope
- Handheld magnifier
- Incident, side, and transmitted light sources
- Graphic/font ruler and spacing grids
- Ruler

- Magnetic detector
- Electrostatic Detection Device (EDD) and related processing equipment
- Imaging equipment

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Toner Technology Document Examination

Examinations of documents produced with toner technology, observations, and notes to be recorded in iLIMS.

4.1.1 Determine the type of examination and whether the analysis is a comparison between questioned and known items or only questioned items.

4.1.2 The examiner will conduct a general, visual, and physical examination of the questioned document to determine whether it is produced by toner technology.

4.1.2.1 If not, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.1.3 The examiner will determine whether the questioned document is suitable for examination, comparison, or both. If the document is not suitable, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.1.4 Known Document Examination:

4.1.4.1 If a known document is submitted, the examiner will conduct a general, visual, and physical examination of the document to determine if it is suitable for examination, comparison, or both.

4.1.4.2 Care must be taken if the known document is non original. The examiner will need to evaluate the reproduction for sufficient clarity before proceeding.

4.1.4.3 If the known document is not suitable, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.1.5 Known Toner technology Device Examination:

If a known toner technology device is submitted, the examiner will examine the device for the submitted condition. The condition of the device can include the following:

- Device capability, features and settings, such as internal memory
- Device platen such as marks or scratches
- Mechanism features
- Paper supply
- Debris and obstructions
- Physical trace evidence such as torn paper fragments within the device mechanisms

4.1.6 Creation of Exemplars:

4.6.1.1 The examiner can proceed to obtain exemplars from the device. Exemplars obtained can include the following:

- Test page printouts
- If multi-function device, photocopy printouts
- Exemplars should be comprehensive given the device capabilities and nature of the questioned document
- Exemplars will be created as a sub-item and treated as evidence. New exemplar sub-items will be maintained according to laboratory policy.

4.6.1.2 If available, original normal course-of-business documents produced by the submitted machine at around the same time period of the questioned item would supplement the collection of exemplars.

4.1.6.3 The examiner will conduct a general, visual, and physical examination of the exemplars to determine suitability for comparison purposes.

4.1.7 Comparison of Toner Technology Documents:

4.1.7.1 Whether the type of examination is a comparison between questioned and known items or only a questioned item(s), the following will serve as a guideline for class and individualizing features:

- Paper and toner characteristics
- Indentations from the paper transport mechanism
- Font classification (for dating information)
- Device classification of questioned document for potential manufacture information
- Security features
- Individualizing characteristics such as wear, damage, or defects

4.1.7.2 Examine/analyze, compare, and evaluate individualizing characteristics.

4.1.7.3 Determine whether there are differences, similarities, and limitations and evaluate the characteristics individually and in combination.

4.1.8 Interpretation of Results

4.1.8.1 Results will reflect the scope of the examination(s), strength or shortcomings of the evidence, and limitations of the findings.

- **Identification** - There is agreement in all class and individual characteristics, no significant and inexplicable differences, no limitations, and there is no probability of a duplicate checkwriter.
- **Elimination** - There are substantial inexplicable differences at any level of the examination and comparison.

- **Qualified conclusion** - There are limitations to the examination and there are noted similarities or differences. Such a conclusion can be appropriate and also requires an explanation of the limitations as they relate to the weight of the findings.
- **No conclusion** - There are significant limitations and the examination reveals no significant differences. Such a conclusion can be appropriate and also requires an explanation of the limitations.

4.1.8.2 Examiners may use similar reporting language referred in the SWGDOC Standard Terminology for Expressing Conclusions of Forensic Document Examiners.

4.2 Liquid Ink Jet Documents

Examinations of documents produced with liquid ink jet technology, observations, and notes to be recorded in iLIMS.

4.2.1 Determine the type of examination and whether the analysis is a comparison between questioned and known items or only questioned items.

4.2.2 The examiner will conduct a general, visual, and physical examination of the questioned document to determine whether it is produced by liquid ink jet technology. If not, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.2.3 The examiner will determine whether the questioned document is suitable for examination, comparison, or both. If the document is not suitable, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.2.3 Known Document Examination:

If a known document is submitted, the examiner will conduct a general, visual, and physical examination of the document to determine if it is suitable for examination, comparison, or both.

4.2.3.1 Care must be taken if the known document is non original. The examiner will need to evaluate the reproduction for sufficient clarity before proceeding.

4.2.3.2 If the known document is not suitable, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.2.4 Known Liquid Ink Jet Technology Device:

4.2.4.1 If a known liquid ink jet technology device is submitted, the examiner will examine the device for the submitted condition. The condition of the device can include the following:

- Device capability, features and settings, such as internal memory
- Device platen such as marks or scratches
- Mechanism features
- Paper supply

- Debris and obstructions
- Physical trace evidence such as torn paper fragments within the device mechanisms

4.2.4.2 The examiner can proceed to obtain exemplars from the device. Exemplars obtained can include the following:

- Test page printouts
- If multi-function device, photocopy printouts
- Exemplars should be comprehensive given the device capabilities and nature of the questioned document
- Exemplars will be created as a sub-item and treated as evidence. New exemplar sub-items will be maintained according to laboratory policy.

4.2.4.3 If available, original normal course-of-business documents produced by the submitted machine at around the same time period of the questioned item would supplement the collection of exemplars.

4.2.4.4 The examiner will conduct a general, visual, and physical examination of the exemplars to determine suitability for comparison purposes.

4.2.5 Comparison of Liquid Ink Jet Technology Documents:

4.2.5.1 Whether the type of examination is a comparison between questioned and known items or only a questioned item(s), the following will serve as a guideline for class and individualizing features:

- Paper and liquid ink jet characteristics
- Indentations from the paper transport mechanism
- Font classification (for dating information)
- Device classification of questioned document for potential manufacture information
- Security features
- Individualizing characteristics such as wear, damage, or defects

4.2.5.2 Examine/analyze, compare, and evaluate individualizing characteristics.

4.2.5.3 The examiner will determine whether there are differences, similarities, and limitations and evaluate the characteristics individually and in combination.

4.2.6 Interpretation of Results

4.2.6.1 Results will reflect the scope of the examination(s), strength or shortcomings of the evidence, and limitations of the findings.

- **Identification** - There is agreement in all class and individual characteristics, no significant and inexplicable differences, no limitations, and there is no probability of a duplicate checkwriter.
- **Elimination** - There are substantial inexplicable differences at any level of the examination and comparison.
- **Qualified conclusion** - There are limitations to the examination and there are noted similarities or differences. Such a conclusion can be appropriate and also requires an explanation of the limitations as they relate to the weight of the findings.
- **No conclusion** - There are significant limitations and the examination reveals no significant differences. Such a conclusion can be appropriate and also requires an explanation of the limitations.

4.2.6.2 Examiners may use similar reporting language referred in the SWGDOC Standard Terminology for Expressing Conclusions of Forensic Document Examiners.

4.3 Limitations

4.3.1 Items submitted for examination may have inherent limitations that can interfere with the procedures in this standard. Limitations should be noted and recorded. Limitations can be due to the generation of the document(s) limited quantity or comparability, or condition of the items submitted for examination. Such features are taken into account in this standard.

4.3.2 Prior storage, handling, testing, or chemical processing (for example, for latent prints) may interfere with the ability of the examiner to see certain characteristics. The effects can include, but are not limited to, partial destruction of the paper, stains, and deterioration of the toner.

4.3.2.1 Whenever possible, document examinations should be conducted prior to any chemical processing. Items should be handled appropriately to avoid compromising subsequent examinations.

4.3.2.2 Consideration should be given to the possibility that various forms of manipulation and duplication of toner-produced items can be generated by computer or other means.

4.3.2.3 Some toner supply units are interchangeable between different brands or models of machines. Some toner units are refillable and toner from suppliers other than the original manufacturer may be used.

4.3.3 Some multifunction devices using toner technology can operate in either printing or copying mode, at different resolutions and can produce both multi-color (for example, CYMK) black or monochrome (for example, one color black). These various outputs from one machine have many significant differences among them.

4.4 Electronic Documentation (Electronic comparisons and Photographs)

4.4.1 Electronic renditions and notes will be stored in the case file.

4.4.2 Photographs shall be digitally retained by the laboratory.

4.5 Safety Considerations

4.5.1 This procedure involves hazardous materials, operations, and equipment. This procedure does not purport to address all the safety issues associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this procedure to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.

4.5.2 Proper caution must be exercised, and the use of personal protective equipment must be considered to avoid exposure to hazardous conditions. Consult the appropriate MSDS/SDS for each chemical prior to use.

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Analytical Method #5: Altered Documents

1.0 Background/References

1.1 This procedure is a guideline to assist in the examination of documents suspected of containing alterations. An alteration is a change or modification to a document to include physical, mechanical, chemical or electronic activities. Non-destructive examination techniques are the preferred procedures used for the detection of an addition, obliteration, substitutions, and other evidence significant to the altered document. The forensic document examiner may be further assisted by published standards and by appropriate commercial and private references.

1.2 References:

- ANSI/ASB Standard 35: Standard for Examination of Documents for Alterations
- ANSI/ASB Standard 011: Scope of Expertise in Forensic Document Examination
- ANSI/ASB Standard 44: Standard for Examination of Documents for Indentations
- SWGDOC G02-13: SWGDOC Standard for Minimum Training Requirements for Forensic Document Examiners

2.0 Scope

2.1 This analytical method provides non-destructive procedures used by forensic document examiners for examination of documents for alterations.

3.0 Equipment/Reagents

- Stereomicroscope
- Hand held magnifier
- Incident, side, transmitted, and filtered light sources
- Graphic/font ruler and spacing grids
- Ruler
- Magnetic detector
- Electrostatic Detection Device (EDD) and related processing equipment
- Imaging equipment
- Ethanol
- Methanol
- Petroleum ether

- Liquid fluorocarbons
- Hexane
- Glycerine

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Examinations, observations, and notes to be recorded in iLIMS.

4.2 The examiner will assess to determine the type and sequence of appropriate document examinations.

4.2.1 The submission of the original document(s) is preferable.

4.2.2 Care must be taken if the document is not an original. The examiner will need to evaluate the reproduction for sufficient clarity before proceeding.

4.3 The examiner will conduct applicable non-destructive general, visual, and physical examination of the document(s) to include observations of the following:

4.3.1 Handwriting:

- Obliteration of entries or overwritten entries
- Crowded spacing of written entries
- Inconsistent written entries
- Inconsistent or variation of writing instruments

4.3.2 **Printing processes:**

- Different class of printing processes
- Variation of printing characteristics within printing process
- Physical characteristics such as trash, roller, and picker bar marks
- Variation of fonts, typestyles, spacing, sizes, and formatting
- Irregular placement of printed text
- Other artifacts

4.3.3 **Paper:**

- Physical characteristics such as color changes and optical features
- Folds, perforations, fiber disturbances, and cuts
- Indentations
- Variation of size, opacity, and watermarks

4.3.4 Fastener characteristics:

- Different or varying binder techniques
- Staple amount and hole alignment
- Use of adhesives, if removed or absent
- Use and placement of paper clips
- Hole punch and perforation alignment

4.3.5 Miscellaneous features:

- Obscuring substances
- Writing or printout smudging
- Document sequence of preparation
- Cut, paste, and substitutions of pages or entries

The examiner will ensure that any material(s) removed to facilitate document examination techniques are authorized with prior permission(s) and fully documented with image capture of the item.

4.4 Non-Destructive Examinations

The forensic document examiner will conduct applicable non-destructive examination(s) of the questioned document and known (if available) that include the following techniques:

4.4.1 Microscopic and optical examinations with various light sources that include transmitted light, side lighting, filtered light, ultraviolet (UV), reflected infrared (RIR), and infrared luminescence (IRL)

- Image capture and processing
- Magnetic detection of print process
- Examination for Indentations

4.4.2 Other appropriate forensic document examinations (e.g. handwriting comparison) shall be performed subsequent to the resulting non-destructive testing and processing

4.4.3 The forensic document examiner will analyze, compare, and evaluate the observed characteristics and findings.

4.4.4 Interpretation of Results

4.4.4.1 Results will reflect the scope of the examination(s), strength or shortcomings of the evidence, and limitations of the findings.

- Whether or not there are characteristics of an alteration
- Alteration method or sequence
- Whether or not altered entries are decipherable
- Description of altered and original entries
- Images of altered and original entries

4.4.4.2 Care must be taken if apparent alterations may be the result of normal or legitimate preparation of a document.

4.5 Destructive Examination:

4.5.1 The forensic document examiner may consider the need for additional destructive testing of the document(s). Presence of obscuring substances may require destructive testing. If not necessary, the forensic document examiner will report the results of the non-destructive findings accordingly.

4.5.2 Destructive examination techniques are damaging and will change the document. Such techniques may consume the item and may limit subsequent examinations. They should be considered and performed only after all non-destructive techniques have been completed.

4.5.2.1 The submitting agency will be consulted regarding the potential value and consequences of such techniques.

4.5.2.2 Authorization must be received from the agency in writing prior to use of Destructive techniques.

4.5.3 Use of Solvents

Exposure to solvents, in an attempt to counteract the obscuring substance, can have a deleterious effect on inks, toner, or the substrate.

4.5.3.1 Prior to application of a liquid to the item submitted for examination, initial testing should be performed on non-casework items, that are made of similar materials.

4.5.3.2 Apply a solvent or other visualization substance to make paper translucent for visualization of the obscured entry.

4.5.3.3 Apply a solvent capable of counteracting the obscuring substance.

4.5.4 Physical Removal of obscuring substance

4.5.4.1 Physically removal includes abrade, scraping, lifting, or peeling

4.5.4.2 Synthetic or biological substances (such as blood, grease, tape, or gum) may be recovered by removal of the substance after freezing.

4.5.5 The FDE shall analyze and compare the observed features and characteristics of the document to known items (if available) and evaluate the findings.

4.5.7 The FDE shall conduct other forensic document examinations as appropriate (e.g., handwriting comparison, typewriter comparison), resulting from observations made during or after destructive processing.

4.5.8 The conclusions or opinions based on the results of the above examinations, comparisons, and evaluations shall be reported accordingly.

4.6 Limitations

4.6.1 Items submitted for examination can have limitations that interfere with the procedures in this standard. Limitations can be due to the submission of non-original documents; the condition, quantity, or comparability of the material submitted; or from limited discriminating characteristics.

4.6.2 Prior storage, handling, testing, or chemical processing (for example, for latent prints) may interfere with the ability of the examiner to see certain characteristics. The effects can include, but are not limited to, partial destruction of the paper, stains, and deterioration of the toner.

4.6.2.1 Whenever possible, document examinations should be conducted prior to any chemical processing. Items should be handled appropriately to avoid compromising subsequent examinations.

4.7 Electronic Documentation (Electronic comparisons and Photographs)

4.7.1 Electronic renditions and notes will be stored in the case file.

4.7.2 Photographs shall be digitally retained by the laboratory.

4.8 Safety Considerations

4.8.1 This procedure involves hazardous materials, operations, and equipment. This procedure does not purport to address all the safety issues associated with its use.

4.8.2 It is the responsibility of the user of this procedure to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.

4.8.3 Proper caution must be exercised and the use of personal protective equipment must be considered to avoid exposure to hazardous conditions. Consult the appropriate MSDS/SDS for each chemical prior to use.

Analytical Method #6: Writing Inks

1.0 Background/References

1.1 This method is a guideline to assist in the non-destructive optical examination and comparison of writing ink. While the forensic document examiner will not be able to state whether one ink sample is the same as another ink sample, the examiner may be able to differentiate one ink sample compared to another ink sample at this level of analysis. The forensic document examiner may be further assisted by published standards and by appropriate commercial and private references.

1.2 References:

- SWGDOC M01-13: SWGDOC Standard for Test Methods for Writing Ink Comparison
- ANSI/ASB Standard 011: Scope of Expertise in Forensic Document Examination
- SWGDOC G02-13: SWGDOC Standard for Minimum Training Requirements for Forensic Document Examiners

2.0 Scope

2.1 This analytical method provides non-destructive optical examination techniques used by forensic document examiners for writing ink comparisons. The method is dictated by the objectives and by the case-specific material available of the items for examination.

3.0 Equipment/Reagents

- Stereomicroscope
- Incident, side, transmitted, and filtered light sources
- Imaging equipment

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Examinations, observations, and notes to be recorded in iLIMS. Photographs and digital records will be electronically stored.

4.1.1 Care must be taken to consider the potential effects and variables of ink interaction on document items. The examiner will need to evaluate how ink interacts with substrates and whether the document was affected by prior handling or storage conditions.

4.2 Visual examination of the ink

This is performed using natural, artificial, and other various light sources with or without magnification.

4.2.1 Determine ink classification as to whether the ink is ballpoint or non-ballpoint pen and note the following:

- Overall appearance
- Information that might provide the type of writing or marking instrument
- Reference examples when describing the physical characteristics

4.2.2 Determine the condition of the ink as to whether anything may have caused a change in appearance. The following are some examples:

- Stains
- Fading
- Burns
- Discoloring
- Mechanical erasure
- Destruction by means of a chemical(s)

4.3 Assisted Examination of Ink

- *Examination of the ink using imaging equipment and other various light sources with or without magnification.*
- The examiner will follow the imaging equipment operating manual for proper equipment operation.
- A function verification of the imaging equipment will be performed with a control test on day of item examination. The control results will be recorded in the equipment log and case file.
- If the control does not demonstrate proper function, then troubleshoot and correct imaging equipment. Corrective action of the imaging equipment to satisfy laboratory policy will be documented in the equipment log.

4.3.1 Ultraviolet (UV) examination:

- Ink fluorescence
- Substrate fluorescence
- Affects to the ink by stains or chemicals
- Detection of other materials such as tapes, adhesives or other opaquing substances
- *Care must be taken to consider the potential effects on the substrate that may affect the ink comparison.*

4.3.5 Infrared (IR) examination:

- Function checks of imaging equipment with controls sample
- Reflected infrared (RIR) - Characteristics are observed by ink opacity or transparency. A four point scoring scale of -3 (opaque) to 0 (transparent) will be used by the examiner for recording the observations.
- Infrared Luminescence (IRL) - Characteristics are observed of the ink relative to the substrate as being darker, similar, or lighter. A seven point scoring scale of -3 (dark) to 0 (similar) to +3 (lighter) will be used by the examiner for recording the observations.
- It is useful for the examiner to use a range of different light sources, filters, and filter combinations when using imaging equipment.
- *Care must be taken to consider the amount of ink on the substrate and the appearance of luminescence and non-luminescence of the same ink.*

4.3.6 The forensic document examiner will analyze, compare, and evaluate the observed characteristics.

4.3.7 Interpretation of Results

4.3.7.1 Results will reflect the scope of the non-destructive examination(s), strength or shortcomings of the evidence, and limitations of the findings.

- If significant, reproducible, inexplicable differences are found at **this level of optical analysis**, then it may be concluded the inks compared do not have a common origin.
- If no significant, reproducible, inexplicable differences are found at **this level of optical analysis**, then it may be concluded the inks compared *indicate* a common origin. It is not a definitive conclusion. Although not conclusive result, the results may indicate ...
- *The reporting of conclusions should never state that two ink samples are identical or the same ink.*

4.4 Destructive Examination:

4.4.1 The forensic document examiner may consider the need for additional destructive testing of the document(s). If not necessary, the forensic document examiner will report the results of the non-destructive findings accordingly.

4.4.2 Destructive examination techniques are damaging and will change the document. Such techniques may consume the item and may limit subsequent examinations. They should be considered and performed only after all non-destructive techniques have been completed.

4.4.2.1 The submitting agency will be consulted regarding the potential value and consequences of such techniques.

4.4.2.2 Approval to conduct destructive testing must be documented in writing prior to destructive examination and attached in the case record

4.5 Electronic Documentation (Electronic comparisons and Photographs)

4.5.1 Electronic renditions and notes will be stored in the case file.

4.5.2 Photographs shall be digitally retained by the laboratory.

4.6 Safety Considerations

4.6.1 This procedure involves hazardous materials, operations, and equipment. This procedure does not purport to address all the safety issues associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this procedure to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use. Proper caution must be exercised and the use of personal protective equipment must be considered to avoid exposure to hazardous conditions.

Analytical Method #7: Paper Examination

1.0 Background/References

1.1 This method is a guideline to assist in the non-destructive examination and comparison of paper items to determine whether paper samples originated from the same source. The forensic document examiner will physically examine and compare paper samples for similarities and differences at this level of analysis. The forensic document examiner may be further assisted by published standards and by appropriate commercial and private references.

1.2 References:

- SWGDOC M03-13: SWGDOC Standard for Non-destructive Examination of Paper
- ANSI/ASB Standard 011: Scope of Expertise in Forensic Document Examination
- SWGDOC G02-13: SWGDOC Standard for Minimum Training Requirements for Forensic Document Examiners

2.0 Scope

2.1 This analytical method provides non-destructive physical examination techniques used by forensic document examiners for the examination of paper samples. The method is dictated by the objectives and by the case-specific material available of the items for examination.

3.0 Equipment/Reagents

- Stereomicroscope
- Incident, side, transmitted, and filtered light sources
- Micrometer
- Ruler
- Scale
- Imaging equipment
- Electrostatic Detection Device (EDD) and related processing equipment

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Examinations, observations, and notes to be recorded in iLIMS.

4.1.1 The examiner will need to assess the submitted items and consider the potential effects of water related soaked, soiled, and stained documents, or charred, torn, and shredded documents. These limitations along with storage conditions involving light, heat, or moisture can make some types of examinations unsuitable.

4.2 Determine whether the type of examination is a comparison between questioned and known items or only questioned items.

4.3 Determine whether the paper samples to be compared are suitable for examination and comparison. If not suitable, the examiner will discontinue method and report accordingly.

4.4 Examine the paper samples with transmitted light and determine if any watermarks are present.

4.4.1 The examiner will need to refer to published industry resources for watermark manufacturer and dating information.

4.5 Examine the paper samples for color characteristics.

4.6 Examine the paper samples with a micrometer and average the thickness of each paper sample at the center and opposite edges.

4.7 Examine the paper samples with ruler for length and width measurements.

4.8 Examine the paper samples for relative weight.

4.9 Examine the paper samples for relative opacity.

4.10 Examine the paper samples for texture and patterns features.

4.11 Examine the corners of the paper samples for the following features:

- Rounded or curved
- Rough
- Square

4.12 Examine the edges of the paper samples for the following features:

- Cutting marks
- Striations
- Coloration
- Orientation

4.13 Examine the paper samples with magnification and light sources that include UV, RIR, and IRL. Examine for the following:

- Chemical or contamination
- Alterations
- Carbonless paper transfers
- Binding remnants
- Adhesives
- Padding material
- If printed material present, such as ruled lines and patterns, note spacing and length measurements
- Security features
- Other physical characteristics due to handling, such as folds, creases, fiber disturbances, hole punches, staples, staple hole size and location(s), etc

Note: If it is necessary to remove staples or other attached documents, then permission from the submitter must be obtained and the original condition of the evidence documented.

4.14 Examine the paper samples for indentation evidence.

4.15 The forensic document examiner will analyze, compare, and evaluate the observed characteristics.

4.16 Interpretation of Results

4.16.1 Results will reflect the scope of the non-destructive examination(s), strength or shortcomings of the evidence, and limitations of the findings.

- The paper samples originated from or share the same manufacturer source.
- The paper samples can neither be associated nor disassociated as originating from or share the same source.
- The paper samples did not originate from or share the same source.
- Other evidence that can associate the paper samples, such as indentations or other physical and handling characteristics.

4.17 Electronic Documentation (Electronic comparisons and Photographs)

4.17.1 Electronic renditions and notes will be stored in the case file.

4.17.2 Photographs shall be digitally retained by the laboratory.

4.18 Safety Considerations

4.18.1 This procedure involves hazardous materials, operations, and equipment. This procedure does not purport to address all the safety issues associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this procedure to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use. Proper caution must be exercised and the use of personal protective equipment must be considered to avoid exposure to hazardous conditions.

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Analytical Method #8: Physical Match

1.0 Background/References

1.1 This method is a guideline to assist in the examination and physical match of paper items. The question asked is: "Were these paper fragments at one time joined to form a single piece of paper?" The forensic document examiner will physically examine and compare paper fragments for similarities and differences at this level of analysis. The forensic document examiner may be further assisted by published standards and by appropriate commercial and private references.

1.2 References:

- SWGDOC Standard for Physical Match of Paper Cuts, Tears, and Perforations in Forensic Document Examinations
- ANSI/ASB Standard 011: Scope of Expertise in Forensic Document Examination
- ANSI/ASB Standard 44: Standard for Examination of Documents for Indentations
- SWGDOC G02-13: SWGDOC Standard for Minimum Training Requirements for Forensic Document Examiners

2.0 Scope

2.1 This analytical method provides physical examination techniques used by forensic document examiners for the examination of fragmented paper items to determine whether or not two or more fragments were at one time parts of a single piece of paper. The method is dictated by the objectives and by the case-specific material available of the items for examination.

3.0 Equipment/Reagents

- Stereomicroscope
- Incident, side, transmitted, and filtered light sources
- Imaging equipment
- Electrostatic Detection Device (EDD) and related processing equipment
- Other material, such as temporary adhesives and clips to aid in examination process

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Examinations, observations, and notes to be recorded in iLIMS.

4.1.1 The forensic document examiner will need to assess the submitted items and consider the potential effects of paper that is water soaked, soiled, stained, charred, and finely shredded items. These limitations along with storage conditions and prior handling can interfere with the examination of some characteristics.

4.2 The examiner will determine whether or not and how the items that are submitted are separated or broken.

4.3 The examiner will determine whether or not the items can be physically realigned.

4.4 The examiner will evaluate the items for individualizing features and conduct a side-by-side comparison of the items using the following process:

- Visual observation
- Manual arrangement
- Edge-to-edge realignment
- Surface marking characteristics
- Measurements and patterns
- *Care must be taken regarding the preservation of fragile match areas of the submitted paper items for examination.*

4.5 Examine/analyze, compare, and evaluate the observed characteristics individually and in combination.

4.5.1 Interpretation of Results

4.5.1.1 Results will reflect the scope of the non-destructive examination(s), strength or shortcomings of the evidence, and limitations of the findings.

- The fragmented paper items were at one time joined to form a single piece of paper.
- Although class similarities were observed, there were insufficient individualizing characteristics to determine whether or not the fragmented paper items were at one time joined to form a single piece of paper.
- The fragmented paper items did not originate from a single piece of paper.

4.5.1.2 *Other subsequent document examinations, such as for indentations may be appropriate following the physical match method.*

4.6 Limitations

4.6.1 Items submitted for examination may have inherent limitations that can interfere with the procedures in this standard. Limitations should be noted and recorded.

4.6.2 Limitations can be due to limited quantity, or comparability, or condition of the items submitted for examination. The condition of a paper sample may make it unsuitable for some types of examinations (for example, items that are water soaked, stained, soiled, charred, or finely shredded paper). Such features are taken into account in this standard.

4.6.3 prior storage, handling, testing, or chemical processing (for example, for latent prints, biological screening, ink analysis) can interfere with the examination of certain characteristics. Whenever possible, document examinations should be conducted prior to any chemical processing. Items should be handled appropriately to avoid compromising subsequent examinations.

4.6.4 In the absence of individual characteristics, it may only be possible to demonstrate an association between two or more items through the commonality of class characteristics.

4.7 Electronic Documentation (Electronic comparisons and Photographs)

4.7.1 Electronic renditions and notes will be stored in the case file.

4.7.2 Photographs shall be digitally retained by the laboratory.

4.8 Safety Considerations

4.8.1 This procedure involves hazardous materials, operations, and equipment. This procedure does not purport to address all the safety issues associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this procedure to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use. Proper caution must be exercised and the use of personal protective equipment must be considered to avoid exposure to hazardous conditions.

Analytical Method #9: Stamping Device Impressions

1.0 Background/References

1.1 This impact/mechanical process method is a guideline to assist in the examination and comparison of stamping device impressions. Stamping devices, such as hand stamps, self-inking stamps, and rotary die stamps come in a wide range of materials, such as rubber, photopolymer, and metal. The examination method focuses on the determination of class and randomly acquired characteristics of stamp impression items. The forensic document examiner may be further assisted by published standards and by appropriate commercial and private references.

1.2 References:

- ANSI/ASB Standard 117: Standard for Examination of Stamping Devices and Stamp Impressions
- ANSI/ASB Standard 011: Scope of Expertise in Forensic Document Examination
- SWGDOC G02-13: SWGDOC Standard for Minimum Training Requirements for Forensic Document Examiners

2.0 Scope

2.1 This analytical method provides procedures used by forensic document examiners for examination of stamping device impression items. The method is dictated by the objectives and by the case-specific material available of the items for examination.

3.0 Equipment/Reagents

- Stereomicroscope
- Handheld magnifier
- Incident, side, and transmitted light sources
- Imaging equipment

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Type of examinations, observations, and notes to be recorded in iLIMS.

4.2 Determine whether the type of examination is a comparison between questioned and known items or only questioned items.

4.3 The examiner will conduct a general, visual, and physical examination of the document to determine whether it contains original stamp impression. If not original, inquire if the original is available. Examination of the original stamp impression on the document is preferable.

4.3.1 If the available document is not original, the examiner will assess the quality of the item to determine if the details have sufficient clarity suitable for examination.

4.3.2 *Care must be taken for the potential computer-generated copy of a stamp design.*

4.4 If the questioned item is not original and not suitable for examination, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.5 If the non original questioned document is suitable for a limited examination, the examiner will proceed with the procedure to the extent possible.

4.6 Questions Stamp Impressions:

Examination of the questioned stamp impression will note examples of the following:

4.6.1 Class characteristics (i.e. features specific to a general stamp production run)

- Size
- Shape
- Type style design
- Text

4.6.2 Randomly Acquired Characteristics (i.e. features specific to stamp production process or individual usage)

- Cuts
- Gouges
- Impression voids
- Extraneous inking
- Stamp orientation and position

4.7 Known Items Examination:

The forensic document examiner will use the following procedures when analyzing known stamping device and known impressions.

4.7.1 If a known stamping device is submitted, the following should be noted:

- Name of stamp manufacturer
- Type of stamp (e.g. hand stamp, self-inking)
- Material
- Typeface orientation
- Condition (e.g. clean, worn, dirty, and damage)
- Randomly Acquired Characteristics

- Is ink pad available?
- 4.7.2 Compare the class characteristics from the known stamping device to the questioned stamp impression. If different class characteristics, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.
- 4.7.3 The examiner will prepare stamp impression exemplars from the known device. If the ink pad is available, proceed to take exemplars. If ink pad is not submitted, the examiner should request it.
- 4.7.3.1 Obtained exemplars suitable for comparison must consider the type of ink (aqueous or oil-based) and substrate similar to that used for the questioned stamp impression. The following are best practices:
- Create first, second, third, and forth generation stamp impressions on initial ink start without re-inking the device
 - Use varying angles
 - Use varying pressure
 - Re-ink and repeat
 - *The first impression created will have the heaviest amount of ink. Follow-up impressions created without re-inking will produce progressively less inked impressions.*

4.8 Known Stamp impression Examination:

Examination of the known stamp impressions for the following randomly acquired characteristics:

- Cuts
- Gouges
- Impression voids
- Extraneous inking
- Stamp orientation and position

4.9 Whether the type of examination is a comparison between questioned and known items or only questioned items, compare the stamp impressions.

4.9.1 Analyze and evaluate the stamp impressions for comparability. If the stamp impressions are not comparable, discontinue procedure and report accordingly.

4.9.2 *The lack of contemporaneous known stamp impressions can affect a meaningful comparison. The submission of known stamp impressions within the same time period of the purported questioned stamp should be requested for a meaningful comparison and results.*

4.9.3 The examiner will conduct a side-by-side comparison.

4.9.4 Compare class characteristics for the following:

- Size
- Shape
- Type style
- Text
- Design

4.9.5 Compare randomly acquired characteristics for the following:

- Wear
- Damage
- Blemishes
- Impression voids
- Extraneous inking

4.10 Examine/analyze, compare, and evaluate the observed characteristics of each stamp impression and their significance individually and in combination.

4.11 Interpretation of Results and Reporting

4.11.1 Results will reflect the scope of the examination(s), strength or shortcomings of the evidence, and limitations of the findings.

- **Identification** - There is agreement in all class characteristics and randomly acquired characteristics, no significant and inexplicable differences, no limitations, and there is no probability of a duplicate stamp.
- **Elimination** - There are substantial inexplicable differences at any level of the examination and comparison.
- **Qualified conclusion** - There are limitations to the examination and there are noted similarities or differences. Such a conclusion can be appropriate and also requires an explanation of the limitations as they relate to the weight of the findings.
- **No conclusion** - There are significant limitations and the examination reveals no significant differences. Such a conclusion can be appropriate and also requires an explanation of the limitations.

4.11.2 Examiners may use similar reporting language referred in the SWGDOC Standard Terminology for Expressing Conclusions of Forensic Document Examiners.

4.12 Electronic Documentation (Electronic comparisons and Photographs)

4.12.1 Electronic renditions and notes will be stored in the case file.

4.12.2 Photographs shall be digitally retained by the laboratory.

Analytical Method #10: Checkwriter Impressions

1.0 Background/References

1.1 This impact/mechanical process method is a guideline to assist in the examination and comparison of mechanical checkwriters and checkwriter impression items. The examination method focuses on whether a particular checkwriter created an impression, whether two or more impressions can be sourced to the same checkwriter device, or to determine the make and model of the checkwriter that created an impression. The forensic document examiner may be further assisted by published standards and by appropriate commercial and private references.

1.2 References:

- SWGDOC E07-13: SWGDOC Standard for Examination of Mechanical Checkwriter Impressions
- ANSI/ASB Standard 011: Scope of Expertise in Forensic Document Examination
- SWGDOC G02-13: SWGDOC Standard for Minimum Training Requirements for Forensic Document Examiners

2.0 Scope

2.1 This analytical method provides procedures used by forensic document examiners for examination and comparison of checkwriter items. This method includes the comparison of questioned and known items or of exclusively questioned items. The method is dictated by the objectives and by the case-specific material available of the items for examination.

3.0 Equipment/Reagents

- Stereomicroscope
- Handheld magnifier
- Incident, side, transmitted, and filtered light sources
- Imaging equipment

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Type of examinations, observations, and notes to be recorded in iLIMS.

4.2 Determine whether the type of examination is a comparison between questioned and known items or only questioned items.

4.3 Conduct a general, visual, and physical examination of the document to determine whether it was produced by a checkwriter.

4.3.1 If not, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly. Examination of the original document is preferable. If not submitted, request the original.

4.3.2 If the submitted questioned document is not original, the examiner will assess the quality of the item to determine suitability:

- The details have sufficient clarity and detail suitable for examination
- The amount of inking
- Condition of the document

4.3.3 If known checkwriter specimen(s) is submitted and is not original, the examiner will assess the quality of the item to determine suitability:

- The details have sufficient clarity and detail suitable for examination
- The amount of inking
- Condition of the document

4.3.4 If a known checkwriter(s) is submitted, the examiner will determine:

- Condition of the checkwriter(s) and any visible features
- Whether the known checkwriter can produce suitable exemplar impressions
- If exemplar impressions are not suitable, request known course of business impressions

4.3.5 If the submitted known checkwriter(s) or known course of business impressions are not suitable for comparison purposes, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.4 Determination of Comparisons:

Whether the type of examination is a comparison between questioned and known items or only questioned items, conduct a side-by-side comparison.

4.4.1 The examiner will compare the class characteristics to include the following:

- Format
- Design of typeface
- Size
- Inking system
- Payee perforator
- Prefix

4.4.2 If different class characteristics noted, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.4.2.1 Care must be taken that the prefix may be a removable and replaceable feature on

certain devices. Perforators may also be inactive on certain devices. It is important to note that a device may contain a custom prefix specific to an individual purchaser/user, which may be unique to that one device.

4.4.3 The examiner will compare the individualizing characteristics to include the following:

- Damage defects
- Blemishes and wear
- Misalignments
- Perforation characteristics
- Impression voids
- Ink voids
- Over inking
- Ink transfer features
- Prefix characteristics

4.5 The forensic document examiner will analyze, compare, and evaluate the observed characteristics of the impressions and their significance individually and in combination.

4.5.1 Interpretation of Results

4.5.1.1 Results will reflect the scope of the examination(s), strength or shortcomings of the evidence, and limitations of the findings.

- **Identification** - There is agreement in all class and individual characteristics, no significant and inexplicable differences, no limitations, and there is no probability of a duplicate checkwriter.
- **Elimination** - There are substantial inexplicable differences at any level of the examination and comparison.
- **Qualified conclusion** - There are limitations to the examination and there are noted similarities or differences. Such a conclusion can be appropriate and also requires an explanation of the limitations as they relate to the weight of the findings.
- **No conclusion** - There are significant limitations and the examination reveals no significant differences. Such a conclusion can be appropriate and also requires an explanation of the limitations.

4.5.1.2 *Examiners may use similar reporting language referred in the SWGDOC Standard Terminology for Expressing Conclusions of Forensic Document Examiners.*

4.6 Electronic Documentation (Electronic comparisons and Photographs)

4.6.1 Electronic renditions and notes will be stored in the case file.

4.6.2 Photographs shall be digitally retained by the laboratory.

Analytical Method #11: Dry-Seal Impressions

1.0 Background/References

1.1 This impact/mechanical process method is a guideline to assist in the examination and comparison of dry seal devices and dry seal impression items. The examination method focuses on whether a particular dry seal created an impression and whether two or more impressions can be sourced to common device. The forensic document examiner may be further assisted by published standards and by appropriate commercial and private references.

1.2 References:

- SWGDOC E08-13: SWGDOC Standard for Examination of Dry Seal Impressions
- ANSI/ASB Standard 011: Scope of Expertise in Forensic Document Examination
- SWGDOC G02-13: SWGDOC Standard for Minimum Training Requirements for Forensic Document Examiners

2.0 Scope

2.1 This analytical method provides procedures used by forensic document examiners for examination and comparison of dry seal items. This method includes the comparison of questioned and known items or of exclusively questioned items. The method is dictated by the objectives and by the case-specific material available of the items for examination.

Care must be taken for the possible duplication of another dry seal.

3.0 Equipment/Reagents

- Stereomicroscope
- Handheld magnifier
- Incident, side, transmitted, and filtered light sources
- Imaging equipment

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Type of examinations, observations, and notes to be recorded in iLIMS.

4.2 Determine whether the type of examination is a comparison between questioned and known items or only questioned items.

4.3 The examiner will conduct a general, visual, and physical examination of the document to determine whether it was produced by a dry seal. If not, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly. Examination of the original document is preferable and necessary to examine for clarity, detail, level of embossing, condition and for individualizing characteristics. If the original item is not submitted, the examiner should request the original document.

4.3.1 If the submitted questioned document is not original, the examiner will assess the quality of the item to determine suitability:

- The details have sufficient clarity and detail suitable for examination
- The appearance of visible embossing
- Condition of the document

4.3.2 If known dry seal specimen(s) is submitted and is not original, the examiner will assess the quality of the item to determine suitability:

- The details have sufficient clarity and detail suitable for examination
- The appearance of visible embossing
- Condition of the document

4.3.3 Whether or not the questioned document impression is an original or not, if not suitable for comparison, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.3.4 If a known dry seal device(s) is submitted, the examiner will determine:

- Condition of the device and any visible features
- Whether the known dry seal device can produce suitable exemplar impressions
- If exemplar impressions are not suitable, request known course of business impressions

4.3.5 If the submitted known device(s) or known course of business impressions are not suitable for comparison purposes, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.4 Whether the type of examination is a comparison between questioned and known items or only questioned items, conduct a side-by-side comparison.

4.4.1 The examiner will compare the class characteristics to include the following:

- Impression format
- Size
- Design of typeface
- Other design features

4.4.2 If different class characteristics noted, the examiner will discontinue the procedure and report accordingly.

4.4.3 The examiner will compare the individualizing characteristics to include the following:

- Damage defects
- Wear

- Embossing variations and patterns

4.5 Examine/analyze, compare, and evaluate the observed characteristics of the impressions and their significance individually and in combination.

4.5.1 Interpretation of Results

4.5.1.1 Results will reflect the scope of the examination(s), strength or shortcomings of the evidence, and limitations of the findings.

- **Identification** - There is agreement in all class and individual characteristics, no significant and inexplicable differences, no limitations, and there is no probability of a duplicate dry seal.
- **Elimination** - There are substantial inexplicable differences at any level of the examination and comparison.
- **Qualified conclusion** - There are limitations to the examination and there are noted similarities or differences. Such a conclusion can be appropriate and also requires an explanation of the limitations as they relate to the weight of the findings.
- **No conclusion** - There are significant limitations and the examination reveals no significant differences. Such a conclusion can be appropriate and also requires an explanation of the limitations.

4.5.1.2 Examiners may use similar reporting language referred in the SWGDOC Standard Terminology for Expressing Conclusions of Forensic Document Examiners.

4.6 Electronic Documentation (Electronic comparisons and Photographs)

4.6.1 Electronic renditions and notes will be stored in the case file.

4.6.2 Photographs shall be digitally retained by the laboratory.

Analytical Method #12: Charred Documents

1.0 Background/References

1.1 This method is a guideline to assist in the examination and preservation of charred document items. The question asked is: "Can this burnt paper or fragments be preserved for investigative information of value?" The forensic document examiner focuses on careful approach and preservation techniques. The forensic document examiner may be further assisted by published standards and by appropriate commercial and private references.

1.2 References:

- SWGDOC P01-13: SWGDOC Standard for Preservation of Charred Documents
- ANSI/ASB Standard 011: Scope of Expertise in Forensic Document Examination
- SWGDOC G02-13: SWGDOC Standard for Minimum Training Requirements for Forensic Document Examiners

2.0 Scope

2.1 This analytical method provides procedures used by forensic document examiners for examination and preservation of charred document items. The method is dictated by the objectives and by the case-specific material available of the items for examination.

3.0 Equipment/Reagents

- Stereomicroscope
- Handheld magnifier
- Incident, side, transmitted, and filtered light sources
- Fine spray device
- Preservation tools (e.g. tweezers, trays, screen material, bone folder, and encapsulation material)
- Humidity chamber
- Imaging equipment

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Type of examinations, observations, and notes to be recorded in iLIMS.

4.2 Capture images of initial condition of the charred items as received.

4.3 The forensic document examiner has the discretion to continue the procedure to the extent possible and report accordingly.

4.4 Evaluate the charred item(s) for the following:

- All the components of charred material to determine suitability for preservation
- The condition and level of charring
- If wet, the item(s) will need to dry
- If a single page document, attempt to flatten the document
- If a multi-page or a mass of documents, attempt to separate and flatten each page
- Stabilize and encapsulate the document item(s)

4.4.1 Care must be taken that there are techniques at the discretion of the examiner for preservation purposes. Depending on the case at hand and condition of the submitted charred document(s), careful handling with humidifying, submersing, stabilizing and encapsulation can be appropriate preservation techniques.

4.5 Interpretation of Results

4.5.1 Results will reflect the scope of the examination(s), strength or shortcomings of the evidence, and limitations of the findings.

4.6 Other examinations may be conducted as required.

4.7 Electronic Documentation (Electronic comparisons and Photographs)

4.7.1 Electronic renditions and notes will be stored in the case file.

4.7.2 Photographs shall be digitally retained by the laboratory.

Analytical Method #13: Liquid Soaked Documents

1.0 Background/References

1.1 This method is a guideline to assist in the examination and preservation of liquid soaked documents. The question asked is: "Can this liquid soaked document be preserved for investigative information of value?" The forensic document examiner focuses on careful approach and preservation techniques. The forensic document examiner may be further assisted by published standards and by appropriate commercial and private references.

1.2 References:

- SWGDOC P02-13: SWGDOC Standard for Preservation of Liquid-Soaked Documents
- ANSI/ASB Standard 011: Scope of Expertise in Forensic Document Examination
- SWGDOC G02-13: SWGDOC Standard for Minimum Training Requirements for Forensic Document Examiners

2.0 Scope

2.1 This analytical method provides procedures used by forensic document examiners for examination and preservation of liquid-soaked document items. The method is dictated by the objectives and by the case-specific material available of the items for examination.

3.0 Equipment/Reagents

- Stereomicroscope
- Handheld magnifier
- Incident, side, transmitted, and filtered light sources
- Fine spray device
- Preservation tools (e.g. tweezers, trays, screen material, bone folder, and encapsulation material)
- Humidity chamber
- Freeze dryer
- Laboratory oven
- Imaging equipment

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Type of examinations, observations, and notes to be recorded in iLIMS.

4.2 Images will be captured of the initial condition of the liquid-soaked items as received.

4.3 The forensic document examiner has the discretion continue the procedure to the extent possible and report accordingly.

4.4 Evaluate the liquid-soaked item(s) for the following:

- All the components of the soaked material to determine suitability for preservation
- Whether wet or dry, the condition and extent from the liquid.
- If document item(s) are received as a wet single page, multi-page or as a mass of documents, attempt to unfold the document(s), and separate (as needed), without additional damage
- If document item(s) are received dried as a single page, multi-page or as a mass of documents, attempt to separate (as needed) and flatten the document(s) without additional damage
- If document item(s) are received freeze dried, attempt to separate (as needed) and flatten each page
- If the document thaws, then follow the wet document preservation process
- Stabilize and encapsulate the document item(s)

4.4.1 *Care must be taken that there are techniques at the discretion of the examiner for preservation purposes. Depending on the case at hand and condition of the submitted wet or dried document(s), careful handling with air drying, freeze drying, humidifying, submerging, or pressing (flattening) can be appropriate preservation techniques.*

4.5 Interpretation of Results

4.5.1 Results will reflect the scope of the examination(s), strength or shortcomings of the evidence, and limitations of the findings.

4.6 Other examinations may be conducted as required.

4.7 Electronic Documentation (Electronic comparisons and Photographs)

4.7.1 Electronic renditions and notes will be stored in the case file.

4.7.2 Photographs shall be digitally retained by the laboratory.

Analytical Method #14: Reporting

1.0 Background/References

1.1 This method is a guideline to assist in the general reporting guidelines for Document Examination

1.2 References:

- SWGDOC Standard Terminology for Expressing Conclusions for Forensic Document Examiners

2.0 Scope

2.1 This analytical method provides suggested wording for inclusion and wording which is discouraged in reporting observations, interpretations and conclusions. The method is dictated by the objectives and by the case-specific material available of the items for examination.

3.0 Equipment

3.1 Laboratory Information Management Systems (ILIMS)

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Recommended Terminology for Conclusions

- **identification (definite conclusion of identity)**—this is the highest degree of confidence expressed in handwriting comparisons.
 - The examiner has no reservations whatever, and although prohibited from using the word “fact,” the examiner is certain, based on evidence contained in the handwriting, that the writer of the known material actually wrote the writing in question.
 - *Examples*—It has been concluded that John Doe wrote the questioned material, or it is my opinion [or conclusion] that John Doe of the known material wrote the questioned material.
- **strong probability (highly probable, very probable)**—the evidence is very persuasive, yet some critical feature or quality is missing so that an *identification* is not in order; however, the examiner is virtually certain that the questioned and known writings were written by the same individual.

- *Examples*—There is *strong probability* that the John Doe of the known material wrote the questioned material, or it is my opinion (or conclusion or determination) that the John Doe of the known material *very probably* wrote the questioned material.
- DISCUSSION—Some examiners doubt the desirability of differentiating between strong probability and probable, and certainly they may eliminate this terminology. But those examiners who are trying to encompass the entire “gray scale” of degrees of confidence may wish to use this or a similar term.
- **probable**—the evidence contained in the handwriting points rather strongly toward the questioned and known writings having been written by the same individual; however, it falls short of the “virtually certain” degree of confidence.
 - *Examples*—It has been concluded that the John Doe of the known material probably wrote the questioned material, or it is my opinion (or conclusion or determination) that the John Doe of the known material *probably* wrote the questioned material.
- **indications (evidence to suggest)**—a body of writing has few features which are of significance for handwriting comparison purposes, but those features are in agreement with another body of writing.
 - *Examples*—There is evidence which *indicates* (or *suggests*) that the John Doe of the known material may have written the questioned material but the evidence falls far short of that necessary to support a definite conclusion.
 - There should always be additional limiting words or phrases (such as “may have” or “but the evidence is far from conclusive”) when this opinion is reported, to ensure that the reader understands that the opinion is weak.
- **no conclusion (totally inconclusive, indeterminable)**—This is the zero point of the confidence scale. It is used when there are significantly limiting factors, such as disguise in the questioned and/or known writing or a lack of comparable writing, and the examiner does not have even a leaning one way or another.
 - *Examples*—*No conclusion* could be reached as to whether or not the John Doe of the known material wrote the questioned material, or I could not determine whether or not the John Doe of the known material wrote the questioned material.
- **indications did not**—this carries the same weight as the indications term that is, it is a very weak opinion.
 - *Examples*—There is very little significant evidence present in the comparable portions of the questioned and known writings, but that evidence suggests that the John Doe of the known material did not write the questioned material, or I found indications that the John Doe of the known material did not write the questioned material but the evidence is far from conclusive.

- **probably did not**—the evidence points rather strongly against the questioned and known writings having been written by the same individual, but, as in the probable range above, the evidence is not quite up to the “virtually certain” range.
 - *Examples*—It has been concluded that the John Doe of the known material probably did not write the questioned material, or it is my opinion (or conclusion or determination) that the John Doe of the known material probably did not write the questioned material.
 - Can also use “It is unlikely that the John Doe of the known material wrote the questioned material.” There is no strong objection to this, as “unlikely” is merely the Anglo-Saxon equivalent of “improbable”.
- **strong probability did not**—this carries the same weight as strong probability on the identification side of the scale; that is, the examiner is virtually certain that the questioned and known writings were not written by the same individual.
 - *Examples*—There is strong probability that the John Doe of the known material did not write the questioned material, or in my opinion (or conclusion or determination) it is highly probable that the John Doe of the known material did not write the questioned material.
 - May use “highly unlikely” here.
- **elimination**—this, like the *definite conclusion of identity*, is the highest degree of confidence expressed by the document examiner in handwriting comparisons. By using this expression the examiner denotes no doubt in his opinion that the questioned and known writings were not written by the same individual.
 - *Examples*—It has been concluded that the John Doe of the known material did not write the questioned material, or it is my opinion (or conclusion or determination) that the John Doe of the known material did not write the questioned material.
 - This is often a very difficult determination to make in handwriting examinations, especially when only requested exemplars are available, and extreme care should be used in arriving at this conclusion.

When the opinion is less than definite, there is usually a necessity for additional comments, consisting of such things as reasons for qualification (if the available evidence allows that determination), suggestions for remedies (if any are known), and any other comments that will shed more light on the report. The report should stand alone with no extra explanations necessary.

4.2 Discouraged wording

4.2.1 Several expressions occasionally used by document examiners may be troublesome because they can be misinterpreted to: imply bias, lack of clarity, or fallaciousness and their use is deprecated. These expressions include:

- **possible/could have**—these terms have no place in expert opinions on handwriting because the examiner’s task is to decide to what degree of certainty it can be said that a handwriting sample is by a specific person. If the evidence is so limited or unclear that no definite or qualified opinion can be expressed, then the proper answer is *no conclusion*. To say that the suspect “could have written the material in question” says nothing about probability and is therefore meaningless to the reader or to the court. The examiner should be clear on the different meanings of “possible” and “probable,” although they are often used interchangeably in everyday speech.
- **consistent with**—there are times when this expression is perfectly appropriate, such as when “evidence consistent with disguise is present” or “evidence consistent with a simulation or tracing is present, but “the known writing is consistent with the questioned writing” has no intelligible meaning.
- **could not be identified/cannot identify**—these terms are objectionable not only because they are ambiguous but also because they are biased; they imply that the examiner’s task is only to identify the suspect, not to decide whether or not the suspect is the writer. If one of these terms is used, it should always be followed by “or eliminate[d]”.
- **similarities were noted/differences as well as similarities**— these expressions are meaningless without an explanation as to the extent and significance of the similarities or differences between the known and questioned material. These terms should never be substituted for gradations of opinions.
- **cannot be associated/cannot be connected**—these terms are too vague and may be interpreted as reflecting bias as they have no counterpart suggesting that the writer cannot be eliminated either.
- **no identification**—this expression could be understood to mean anything from a strong probability that the suspect wrote the questioned writing; to a complete elimination. It is not only confusing but also grammatically incorrect when used informally in sentences such as. “I no identified the writer” or “I made a no ident in this case.”
- **inconclusive**—this is commonly used synonymously with no conclusion when the examiner is at the zero point on the scale of confidence. A potential problem is that some people understand this term to mean something short of definite (or conclusive), that is, any degree of probability, and the examiner should be aware of this ambiguity.
- **positive identification**—This phrase is inappropriate because it seems to suggest that some identifications are more positive than others.
- **[strong] reason to believe**—there are too many definitions of *believe* and *belief* that lack certitude. It is more appropriate to testify to our conclusion (or determination or expert opinion) than to our belief, so why use that term in a report?

- **qualified identification**—An *identification* is not qualified. However, opinions may be qualified when the evidence falls short of an *identification* or *elimination*.

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