

## **THE SCIENTIFIC EXAMINATION OF QUESTIONED DOCUMENTS**

Forensic document examination is one of the most testing areas of forensic science and is well-established in British and international courts of law. The discipline is extremely broad, involving the study of all types of document to determine authenticity, expose forgery or reveal aspects of origin and history. In addition to handwriting and signature authentication, a forensic document examiner studies inks, typewriting, impressions, printing, alterations, photocopies and the products of modern office technology - areas beyond the limited scope of so-called “handwriting experts”.

The forensic document examiner will not limit examinations to only one particular aspect of a questioned document, but will employ all necessary procedures to ensure that a full picture of the forensic evidence is given. There are two basic requirements for a successful examination:

- The original forensic material
- Proper Laboratory facilities

### ***The original forensic material***

Ideally, I must examine the original forensic material, not a copy. A photocopy, facsimile copy, carbon copy or even a photograph is a poor substitute for the original; a copy does not show all the details of the original, indeed some copying methods are sometimes used as aids to disguise forgery.

If I cannot examine the original forensic material I may reach only restricted or qualified conclusions.

### ***Proper laboratory facilities are essential***

During my examinations of the original forensic material I may use a number of non-destructive scientific techniques:

#### **The Giles Document Laboratory**

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<i>Technique / equipment</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Video Spectral Comparator - VSC6000</li> <li>· Raman Spectral Comparator - Foram 685-2</li> </ul>	To study inks and features of the document not visible to the unaided eye
Electrostatic Detection Apparatus (ESDA)	To reveal faint or invisible impressions and latent marks on documents
Stereomicroscopy	To study documents in fine detail
Specially developed comparison equipment and computerised digital image capture facilities	To retain records of my results and to prepare demonstration material for reports or in Court
Computerised databases and Internet access	To provide reference information and scientific background to support individual casework

Because I need specialised equipment to examine documents I only do it in this Laboratory where proper facilities are available. I will not travel to other laboratories to carry out examinations. I have equipment and instrumentation here of the highest standards, including image capture facilities that are not available elsewhere. I maintain it and have no need to share it, so my examinations can proceed effectively, quickly and efficiently.

Please send material for examination here to this Laboratory. Do not be concerned about this; we place great emphasis on the safety and integrity of your documents:

- non-destructive methods - documents will not be damaged or altered in any way.
- secure storage and rigorous checking-in and checking-out procedures
- full confidentiality; no access to forensic material permitted to any third party.

There is therefore no good reason for any person to attend the examinations. Furthermore, where examinations have to be carried out within the time constraints of people attending the Laboratory this may not leave adequate time for all necessary examinations and checking procedures. In such circumstances my final conclusions may have to be qualified.

However, we do recognise that clients are naturally concerned regarding the safe transfer of forensic material to and from the Laboratory. If someone must deliver the forensic material and take it away at the end of the examination then proper arrangements can be made.

If not personally delivered we recommend forensic material be sent by DX, Recorded or Registered post or by a reputable courier. You should list the individual documents you are sending. We can then promptly acknowledge their safe receipt.

The Giles Document Laboratory has many years' experience in handling all types of document; you can be sure of their safe treatment and care whilst in our custody.

**Dr Audrey Giles**  
*Forensic Document Examiner*

9<sup>th</sup> March 2016