



## Questioned Documents Section – 2003

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### **J9 What is the Real Question? Is the Writing Genuine or Is It, and the Document Fabricated? Some of the Hazards Encountered in Examining Photocopied Documents**

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After attending this presentation, the participants will be familiar with some of the problems encountered in the examination of photo-copied documents.

Advances in office machine technology have made document duplication, creation, and alteration very easy. While computers, laser printers, and photocopiers are used for legitimate purposes in the business world to create and duplicate documents, a few people use them to fabricate fraudulent documents. With increasing frequency photocopied and computer generated documents are being given to document examiners for analysis. A primary reason is because they are often presented as the best available evidence since the original document no longer exists.

This paper discusses some of the issues the writers have dealt with in the examination of photocopied documents. The two major areas to be discussed are document fabrication and the identification of handwriting and hand printing on a photocopy. Determining the suitability of handwriting for comparison purposes is absolutely essential before a meaningful examination and comparison can begin. By its very nature the photocopy process causes some degradation in the quality of handwriting and other features of the document or item being copied.

It cannot be assumed that what is on a photocopy is also on the original document. Nor is it possible to determine what generation copy is being examined. These factors alone should be sufficient cause to exercise the up-most conservative approach to evaluating what is on the document, but all too often examiners reach conclusions that are not supported by the evidence. This paper will give some very practical reasons, based on actual case work, why an examiner should adopt an ultra conservative approach and word the results of his examination to account for the fact that he is NOT examining the original document.

**Questioned Documents, Photocopied Documents, Examination of Documents**