



D11 The History of the Scientific Working Group on Digital Evidence and the New Forensic Science Discipline for Evidence

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the benefits of having an international certification program for many types of digital media based on the criteria and to describe the numerous positive outcomes of having such a program.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by stimulating a discussion in the community and to gain the benefit of ideas generated as this topic is discussed.

In the 1980s, investigators were encountering and seizing computers as evidence in their investigations. In the mid to late 1980's, forensic laboratories in Washington, DC were receiving cases that had computers along with other types of physical evidence. These laboratory submissions started a search for the answer to the questions: "What is the role of the forensic laboratory for computer evidence?" This topic of discussion continues today. The early history of forensic digital evidence involved an ad hoc group in the Washington, DC area, referred to as the Federal Crime Laboratory Directors. They meet two times a year to exchange information about their agencies and discuss topics of mutual concern. It was after two such meetings at that U.S. Postal Inspection Service Laboratory in Dulles, VA in early 1998 that, what is known today as the Scientific Working Group on Digital Evidence (SWGDE) was formed. SWGDE defined digital evidence as "information of probative value that is stored or transmitter in a binary form." SWGDE defined other terms related to digital evidence.

At the International Association of Forensic Sciences (IAFS) in Los Angeles at UCLA in 1999, the Executive Committee of SWGDE arranged for the first forensic science session in the U.S. related to digital evidence. Workshops by SWGDE regarding the establishment of a digital evidence section in forensic laboratories followed at the American Academy of Forensic Science thereafter. The American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD/LAB) recognized digital evidence as a sub-discipline in their accreditation program in 2003.

Currently, SWGDE has developed the first version of a "Best Practices" guide that is available at www.swgde.org along with several other final documents and draft documents for public review and comment. New challenges are continually facing the digital evidence examiners who must be able to forensically collect, preserve, store and examine various formats of digital evidence as the volume of data and new forms of technology increase exponentially. The scientific integrity must be maintained.

Digital Evidence, History, SWGDE