J4 Digital Technology: Friend or Foe?

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the importance of counterfeit detection, the difference between traditional and digital counterfeiting, and how the printing processes used by counterfeiters have evolved over the past decade. The author will also discuss the lengths some counterfeiters will go to in an attempt to deceive the public.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by providing a thorough discussion of how techniques used to counterfeit United States currency have evolved as technology has advanced and become more affordable to attain.

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The act of counterfeiting has existed as long as people have used metals and other valuables to hold and exchange wealth. Every year the public is victimized by the counterfeiting of U.S. currency, and counterfeiting has always kept pace with the latest technology. As a result, there is a continuing challenge to stay “one step ahead” of the counterfeiter. This has resulted in a strategy of regularly enhancing the design of U.S. currency and incorporating more advanced security features to maintain the security and confidence in the U.S. Dollar.

Prior to the advancement of computer technologies such as the inkjet and laser printer, counterfeiters had to utilize traditional printing processes to produce their counterfeits such as an offset printing press or a hand operated intaglio press. These processes require a significant investment in equipment as well as a certain level of training and skill for proper use. Therefore these counterfeiters usually possess some sort of professional training or experience. Since producing counterfeit by one of these traditional processes generally yields a high volume of product, the printer is often required to work in conjunction with a distribution network.

Due to the technological advancement of digital printers, copiers and scanners, their widespread availability and relative low cost, the use of these devices for producing counterfeit currency has dramatically increased. Today, sophisticated copiers, printers, digital scanners, and computer software can interface with each other to present significant threats to currency. The problem with this type of counterfeiting is the vast numbers of individuals with access to this technology. Unlike traditional printing processes that require a skill or expertise, computer technology has placed the most modern printing tools in the hands of the even the most unskilled counterfeiter who can now quickly produce a passable counterfeit using equipment easily accessible through copy centers, offices and home use. While these processes require little investment or skill, they have historically produced counterfeit notes of poor quality, however as the quality of the technology has increased, so has the quality of the counterfeit notes. The creativity of the counterfeiter to improve their product has succeeded in making these counterfeits more difficult to detect.

Counterfeit, Digital Technology, Currency

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