Prior to the establishment of the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners Inc. (ABFDE), in 1977, the need to identify qualified forensic scientists capable of providing forensic document examination services, was long recognized.
Within its mandate, the Board provides a program of certification in forensic document examination with the dual purpose of serving the public interest and promoting the advancement of forensic science.

American Board of Forensic Document Examiners
In purpose, function, and organization, the ABFDE is analogous to the certifying boards in other scientific fields. The ABFDE is recognized by, and was originally sponsored by the American Academy of Forensic Sciences.
ABFDE is a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia. The Board's sponsors are:

• The International Association for Identification
• The Mid-Atlantic Association of Forensic Science
• American Society of Questioned Document Examiners
• Canadian Society of Forensic Science
• Southeastern Association of Forensic Document Examiners
• Southwestern Association of Forensic Document Examiners
The ABFDE is the only certifying body that can claim such sponsorship and, as such, is not to be confused with any other organization having a similar sounding name.

The Board is composed of elected officers and directors who serve staggered terms, and a Professional Review Committee which upholds the ethical and professional rules of conduct that are set forth in the Bylaws.
What is Forensic Science?

- The application of science to the law
What is a Forensic Document Examiner?

- An expert who examines a document to render an opinion about an issue involving the document
- The issue can include handwriting, signatures, alterations, obliterations, ink, authenticity, dating or printing processes
What Lab Equipment does a Forensic Document Examiner Use?

- Various magnification devices
- Various light sources and filters
- Instrument to image impressions
- Cameras, Photoshop, scanners
Writing can be positively identified based upon a pattern of individualized characteristics.
DETECTION of ALTERATIONS

Examination of Inks with similar colors - Alternate Light Source Examination

Was the “IOU” increased?

Microscopic Ink Examination

How was the number altered?
Note two different inks ...

Pencil Guidelines

Was this traced?

American Board of Forensic Document Examiners
What is under the obliteration?

Don't tell about bomb!

Recovering Data
Arabian Horse - Veterinary Malpractice

Cosmetic
eye
dye
surgery
ROBBERY DEMAND NOTE

Handwriting Examinations of course but ......

oblique lighting of the “Demand Note” provides another clue
RECOVERING DATA from CARBON TYPEWRITER RIBBON

“Have 48 hours to live. TOPHUONG (NO GOOD WHORE) APT #26 July 11, 1979 State of California Office of Traffic Safety 7000 Franklin Boulevard, Suite3”

FRACTURE EDGE MATCH
STAMP IMPRESSIONS

Questioned Stamp

Known Stamp

Actual Rubber Stamp

American Board of Forensic Document Examiners
Envelope Defect on Questioned Envelope Matched to Defect present in Box of Envelopes Seized from Murder Suspect’s Desk
DATING ENTRIES
SELF-SERVING ENTRY ADDED LATER?

Original Doctor's Order

Added Later

Infrared Color
Printers provide physical evidence in cases involving counterfeit, composite, or altered documents.

- Digital copies of genuine signatures can be easily transposed onto documents without the knowledge or consent of “signer”
- Desktop publishing gives average computer users ability to create convincing fraudulent documents
- Modern printers give forgers the ability to produce high-quality fraudulent documents
The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) was chosen for final construction, review and publishing all training guidelines and examination guidelines. All guidelines are available to FDEs, nationally and internationally.

Certification examines knowledge & proficiency of an examiner.

It also requires recertification every five years after certification is acquired.
To apply for certification, proof must be shown for all of the following:

- Baccalaureate degree
- A full-time training period of at least two+ years (or equivalent) in a forensic laboratory recognized by the Board
- Applicants need to supply reference names and addresses of three qualified Forensic Document Examiners who can attest to the applicants' qualifications for certification
- At the time of application for certification, applicants must be engaged in the full-time practice of forensic document examination (Exceptions to this rule are also evaluated on an individual basis)
ABFDE Outline of Certification

After meeting all requirements, applicants must complete and successfully pass each step outlined below before advancing to the next step:

- Complete a comprehensive written examination
- Complete five practical examinations based on a wide range of problems frequently encountered in document examination
- Complete oral examinations based on a wide range of problems frequently encountered in document examination

Eligible applicants are required to undergo these examinations within two+ years of having their applications approved. Any applicant who fails to pass any step of the examinations may apply for retesting.
Any individual who holds a valid Certificate of Qualification issued by the Board may use the designation “Diplomate of the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners.”

Certificates of Qualification remain the property of the Board and are not transferable to any other person(s). Any individual who has been certified is entitled to the continued possession of the Certificate, unless and until the Board considers it necessary to revoke it.

There is only one category of certification - Diplomate. There are no "retired" Diplomates or "emeritus" Diplomates. Either an examiner is currently certified by the ABFDE or they are not.
Recertification of Diplomates

Certificates of Qualification in Forensic Document Examination are valid for five years, and can be renewed in accordance with the following standards:

- Applicants must be actively involved in case examination and other facets of questioned document examination.
- Applicants must earn 40 continuing education credits during the five-year renewal period following certification. Credits are awarded for a variety of related activities, such as attendance and participation at ABFDE recognized forensic meeting and programs, and publication of articles in journals recognized by the Board.
- Technical Research and presentations.
On February 18, 2009, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) issued a report, we are all very familiar with, identifying various needs of the forensic science community:

- “A recommendation of particular interest ... is that of mandatory accreditation of forensic entities and certification of forensic service providers. That includes identification units, fingerprint units, and crime scene units”

- Accreditation of the unit/organization and the certification of practitioners cost precious dollars. The current federal legislation being proposed in response to the NAS Committee Report provides funding for these activities.
These recommendations are sound. The need for proficiency and consistency within forensic examinations and reports respectively, is critical.

The accreditation and certification process serves the dual purpose of serving the public interest and promoting the advancement of forensic science.
Thank You