

Authors' Response

Sir:

Mr. Purdy makes two main points. First, he notes that the ASQDE website contained two different lists of email addresses, one of members and the other a courtesy listing of document examiners, containing both ASQDE members and non-members. He suggests that the study inadvertently used as its sampling frame the courtesy listing rather than the members-only list. We reviewed our files and found printouts of both of those lists. We have examined them and can report that his diagnosis is correct. Furthermore, however, we found that each and every name that appeared on the member list ($n = 51$) also appeared on the courtesy listing ($n = 51 + 89$). The result is that our sampling frame of forensic document examiners, and presumably our sample, is less homogeneous than previously thought.

Concerning respondents in the eventual forensic document examiner group reported in the study, we provide the following additional information to enable readers to better assess the sample group.

In response to a question about what major field or professional group they identified themselves with, the respondents answered with one of the following: "ASQDE," "Board certified forensic doc. examiner," "forensic document examination," "forensic document examiner," "journeyman QDE," "QDE," or "questioned documents."

Regarding the nature of their work, they gave one or a combination of the following responses: "all types of QDE examination," "assist in the administration of justice," "comparison of HW to identify or eliminate writers," "examine questioned and known writing," "examine questioned documents," "examine questioned HW," "expert witness," "forensic document examination," "forensic identification of HW for the legal community," "identification

of HW," "questioned documents (forgery/authentication)," "testify in court."

Finally, they reported that they had been doing such work for the following numbers of years: 3, 10, 15, 20, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29, 32, 36, 39, and 48.

Mr. Purdy's second point is that the change from pen nibs to modern writing instruments "might explain" why the responses of the "examiner group varied so much." Instruments of a century ago, he states, would "clearly reveal: the presence of stops and starts, the muscular action used to produce the writing and the direction of pen strokes." But, today, "[s]uch determinations are difficult and oftentimes impossible to judge . . ." The problem with Mr. Purdy's explanation is that there was no such finding as the one he seeks to explain. Indeed, for two of the three propositions he is addressing ("starts and stops" and "direction of strokes") the findings are precisely the opposite of what he seems to think they were. (See Table 1 of the article as well as the textual description of those data.) On those propositions, examiners overwhelmingly responded that their field believes it to be "well accepted as true" that they *can* determine starts-and-stops and direction of strokes. Mr. Purdy's is the one dissenting voice. He has reinforced our main finding: that handwriting examiners share less consensus than previously assumed.

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