

# Checkwriter Examinations

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# Checkwriter Examinations

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This procedure is intended to be utilized by trained personnel to ensure consistency and transparency of methods employed during the examination of checkwriter evidence received in the Questioned Documents Unit (QDU).

## 2 SCOPE

These procedures will be used by a forensic document examiner to conduct examinations and comparisons of impressions from traditional mechanical checkwriters for purposes of classification or determination of origin.

## 3 EQUIPMENT

- 150-watt tungsten halogen light, or comparable equipment
- Hand magnifier (minimum magnification, 4X)
- Stereomicroscope (minimum magnification, 6.3X), or comparable equipment
- Checkwriter standards and reference materials

## 4 PROCEDURE

- All steps in this procedure will be completed using proper lighting and magnification for the examination being conducted.

### 4.1 Analysis

- A. Examine the original impression(s) to determine whether the mechanical checkwriter utilizes liquid ink or a ribbon mechanism.
  - o Characteristics of liquid ink mechanical checkwriter impressions include:
    - Clear solid inking with well-defined edges when viewed microscopically
    - Excessive ink deposits may be present
    - Possible irregular inking of the impression
  - o Characteristics of ribbon mechanical checkwriter impressions include:
    - Clearly displayed texture of the ribbon on the impression when viewed microscopically
    - Significantly less defined edges to the impression
    - Possible ribbon shift, impression voids, and blemishes
- B. Examine the prefix, printing elements, slugs, payee perforator, and perforations utilized in the production of the checkwriter impression(s).

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2. Record observations using photography or drawings to document preliminary notes.
- C. For checkwriter classification purposes, evaluate the information obtained to determine the manufacturer of the machine/slugs that were used to create the

impression(s) by comparing the impression(s) to checkwriter standards and reference materials.

## 4.2 Comparison

- A. For comparisons with other impressions (questioned or known) or a known machine, analyze the impression(s) and/or machine components and compare the class characteristics and individual characteristics.
- Examples of class characteristics include:
    - Impression format
    - Printing element characters
    - Inking system
    - Payee perforator

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## 4.3 Evaluation

- A. Evaluate similarities, differences, limitations, and their significance individually and in combination to determine if the impression(s) are of common origin and/or if the questioned impression(s) was made by the known machine.

### 4.3.1 Conclusions

- Conclusions when classifying checkwriters:
  - The manufacturer, make, and/or model information for the checkwriter used to prepare the document, as applicable.
  - No Conclusion/No Determination
    - No determination could be reached as to the classification of the checkwriter used to produce the item(s) usually due to limiting factors such as insufficient quantity of material or poor condition of the item. This conclusion requires an explanation of the limiting factor(s).
- Conclusions when determining whether a particular checkwriter prepared a questioned document(s):
  - Identification
    - A determination that the questioned impression(s) were prepared by a particular checkwriter, due to agreement in individual characteristics. No differences that would preclude an identification were observed.
  - May Have Prepared
    - A less than definitive determination that a particular checkwriter was used to prepare the questioned impression(s). The comparison

- between the checkwriter and the questioned impression(s) reveals no significant, reproducible, or inexplicable differences. There is significant agreement in all observable aspects of the results; however, limitations are present. This opinion requires explanation of the limiting factors.
    - No Conclusion/No Determination
      - No determination can be reached whether a particular checkwriter was or was not used to prepare the questioned impression(s). There may be correspondence in class characteristics, however there are factors that significantly limit meaningful examinations. This opinion requires explanation of the limiting factors.
    - May Not Have Prepared
      - A less than definitive determination that a particular checkwriter was not used to prepare the questioned impression(s). The comparison between the checkwriter and the questioned impression(s) reveals reproducible and inexplicable variations. Inconsistencies are observed, but limitations are present. This opinion requires explanation of the limiting factors.
    - Elimination
      - A determination that a particular checkwriter was not used to prepare the questioned impression(s) due to sufficient disagreement in class and/or individual characteristics. Differences are observed.
  - Conclusions when determining whether two or more document(s) share a common origin:
    - Share a Common Origin
      - A determination that the items were prepared by the same checkwriter due to agreement in individual characteristics. No differences that would preclude a definite determination were observed.
    - May Share a Common Origin
      - A less than definitive determination that two or more checkwriter impressions originated from a common source. The comparison of the impressions reveals no significant, reproducible, or inexplicable differences. There is significant agreement in all observable aspects of the results; however, limitations are present. This opinion requires explanation of the limiting factors.
    - No Conclusion/No Determination
      - No determination can be reached whether the checkwriter impressions did or did not originate from a common source. There may be correspondence in class characteristics between the items; however, there are factors that significantly limit meaningful examinations. This opinion requires explanation of the limiting factors.
    - May Not Share a Common Origin

- A less than definitive determination that two or more checkwriter impressions did not originate from a common source. The comparison of the impressions reveals reproducible and inexplicable variations. Inconsistencies are observed, but limitations are present. This opinion requires explanation of the limiting factors.
- Do Not Share a Common Origin
  - A determination that the items were not prepared by the same checkwriter due to sufficient disagreement in class and/or individual characteristics. Differences are observed.

#### 4.4 Records

- Examination records must include any reference information, standards, photographs, printouts, drawings, or identifying characteristics that support your conclusions.

#### 5 LIMITATIONS

- The following factors could affect the examination process and/or the results rendered:

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- Lack of a sufficient quantity of questioned and known items
- Prior destructive forensic examinations such as latent print processing
- Lack of/limited individual characteristics

#### 6 SAFETY

Standard precautions should be followed for the handling of chemical and biological materials. Chemical and biological materials that are hazardous or potentially hazardous will be maintained and examined in specifically designated areas within QDU space. QDU personnel may refer to the [FBI Laboratory Safety Manual](#) for additional guidance.

#### 7 REVISION HISTORY

Revision	Issued	Changes
05	01/14/2022	Entire document updated for clarity and reformatted into the new template. Added conclusions for checkwriter classification to section <a href="#">4.3.1</a> .