

# Conducting a Watermark Search

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# Conducting a Watermark Search

## 1 INTRODUCTION

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

## 2 SCOPE

These procedures will be used by a forensic document examiner or document analyst in order to determine the source of distinguishing marks (i.e., watermarks and brands) placed into or on the paper by the manufacturer, to identify the manufacturer of the paper, and/or to determine when a particular paper became commercially available (for dating purposes).

## 3 EQUIPMENT

- Post's Paper Mill Directories
- Lockwood's Directories
- Lockwood-Post's Directories
- Information provided by paper manufacturers
- Walden's Paper Catalogues
- Walden's ABC Guide & Paper Production Yearbooks
- Phillips International Paper Directories
- Paper manufacturers' websites
- Other related paper source materials obtained by the Laboratory when needed

## 4 PROCEDURE

- The presence of a watermark(s), as determined in the [Initial Assessment of Documentary Evidence](#), may necessitate a watermark search if it is a requested examination or if it is determined to be a probative examination. A watermark search may yield information regarding the manufacturer, as well as information regarding commercial introduction of a particular paper (i.e., dating).
- Information regarding the manufacturer of an item may be present **Redacted**  
While this is not a traditional watermark, probative information similar to watermarks may be gained by following similar search methods using the internet.
- **Redacted**  
the watermark is the information that is to be searched. The information can be searched using a variety of reference materials and resources.
  - These resources include QDU watermark references, the internet, **Redacted**
- The watermark search may be performed in one of the following ways:

#### 4.1 QDU Watermark References

- Manufacturer's information regarding watermarks and brands can be found in the following publications in the QDU's watermark references:
  - Walden's Paper Catalog
  - Walden's ABC Guide & Paper Production Yearbook
  - Lockwood's Directory
  - Lockwood-Post's Directory
  - Phillips International Paper Directory
- The Lockwood-Post's Directories after 2003 do not contain information regarding watermarks and brands.
- **Redact** of the watermark(s) and/or image name(s) can be searched in the appropriate section **Redacted** of the paper manufacturer directors.
- If **Redacted** the watermark(s) is located, information regarding the manufacturer of that watermarked paper may be listed, such as paper mill, paper converter, and/or paper merchant.
- The appropriate section of these directories can be searched for contact information for the paper manufacturer. Generally, the papermill is the preferred contact for information regarding the source or dating of the paper.
- The referenced pages of the directory should be copied and retained in the case records.

#### 4.2 Internet Search

- **Redacted** the watermark(s) and/or image name(s) can be searched using Google™ or an equivalent internet search engine **Redacted**
- Locate links to paper manufacturer's websites.
- Information on the watermarked paper may be located directly on the website or the appropriate contact information **Redacted** may be listed so further information can be obtained directly from the manufacturer's offices.
- Information located on the website that is probative to the case will be recorded (images files, printouts, written notes) and retained in the case records.

**Redacted**

- If further information regarding the watermarked paper is needed **Redacted** the paper manufacturer may be contacted, or the contact information may be provided to the appropriate law enforcement official for investigative assistance.

- Contact with the paper manufacturer must be recorded on the case communication log.
- Information provided by the paper manufacturer that is probative to the case will be recorded and retained in the case records.

#### 4.4 Conclusions

- Once examinations have been completed, reports may include one or more of the following types of conclusion(s), opinion(s), and other findings:
  - The text of any watermark(s) present
  - The manufacturer’s information for any watermark(s) present
  - The date the watermark(s) became commercially available
  - Other information pertaining to the watermark(s)
  - Inconclusive
    - No determination could be reached as to information concerning the watermar **Redacted**
    - This conclusion requires an explanation of the limiting factor(s).

#### 4.5 Records

- The case records will include at a minimum any of the following items that were used to support the conclusion(s):
  - Image files
  - Printouts
  - Referenced pages from paper directories
  - Photographs or drawings of the watermark(s)

#### 5 LIMITATIONS

- The search capabilities are limited to items and/or information contained in the QDU watermark references, **Redacted** an internet search, limited information contained in the submitted item, the **Redacted**

#### 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
10	01/14/2022	Updated to new technical procedures template
11	06/30/2023	Changed conclusion section "No Conclusion/No Determination" to "Inconclusive"