

Journal of Forensic Identification



Publication Guidelines

International Association for Identification

www.theiai.org

Joe M. Maberry, *President*

Joseph P. Polski, *Chief Operations Officer*
2535 Pilot Knob Road, Suite 117, Mendota Heights, MN 55120-1120
(651) 681-8566, Voice (651) 681-8443, Fax
email: iaisecty@aol.com

Journal of Forensic Identification

Alan L. McRoberts, *Editor*
Debra L. McRoberts, *Associate Editor*
P.O. Box 893789, Temecula, CA 92589-3789
(951) 587-8337, Voice (951) 587-8347, Fax
email: jfieditor@theiai.org

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Preface

Writing for Publication by John P. Nielson, the original editor of the *Journal of Forensic Identification*, was published by the International Association for Identification in 1991 to help new authors to organize their thoughts for publication. It was an outstanding pamphlet, but it has been out of print for many years and some aspects of the document are no longer applicable to our current journal. Nevertheless, some of John's original ideas and writings have been retained in these new guidelines, so he deserves a great deal of credit for any help that these guidelines may provide.

This current guide provides more specific guidelines so that authors can produce papers that will require less editorial effort. The more closely an author follows these guidelines, the more likely the article will be accepted and published. Editorial assistance in revising papers will continue to be provided, but extensive editorial effort may cause greater delays in the publishing of those papers.

Journal of Forensic Identification Publication Guidelines

Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to encourage authors to write papers for the *Journal of Forensic Identification (JFI)* and to assist them in this endeavor.

This guide will cover the standard elements that a paper under consideration for publication should include, the types of papers that are published in the *JFI*, issues of style, submission guidelines, information regarding the practices and procedures used in the production of the *JFI*, and some technical guidance for the novice writer.

The *JFI* uses *The ACS Style Guide* (published by the American Chemical Society) as the basic reference for publication style issues. However, it is unrealistic to expect authors to be familiar with and to abide by the 400 plus pages of information that the style guide provides. Rules regarding some specific issues of style and grammar that are frequently encountered in submissions are listed in Appendix A.

Types of Papers

Before an author begins to write a paper, he or she should decide what type it will be. The *JFI* publishes five types of material: articles, technical notes, case reports, commentaries, and letters to the editor. Each type of paper has different objectives and writing styles.

Articles are papers that report in-depth research on a particular topic. Typically, this may mean repeated experiments or trials, a broad coverage of the topic, and ordinarily a lengthier paper. Articles should be written in the third person.

Technical notes are ordinarily short papers that report on a particular method or technique. Typically, a technical note would be appropriate to report a fairly simple improved method or very limited research. Technical notes may be written in the first person and second person.

Case reports discuss an interesting case or series of cases. They illustrate the need for attention to certain details or bring to light trends or patterns, the knowledge of which will help others. Sometimes, case reports may be similar to technical notes except that they are based on a specific case or cases. Case reports should be written in the first or third person.

Commentaries are also occasionally published. They include papers that discuss a premise or central idea that is built upon personal opinion, or they are reports that are unsupported by physical data. The nature of commentaries (personal opinion versus technical data and interpretation) limits the number of commentaries that will be published in the *JFI*. Because of the opinionated and personal nature of most commentaries, commentaries are not revised or subjected to the normal editing practices of the *JFI*. The commentaries are submitted to two reviewers for input as to whether the commentary should be published as is. (Commentaries should be thoroughly proofed prior to submission.)

Letters to the editor are brief communications that discuss a previously published paper, comment on Association business, or provide general information. Again, because of the personal nature of most letters, letters are not revised or subjected to the normal editing practices of the *JFI*. Letters are submitted to two reviewers for input as to whether the letter should be published as is. (Letters should be thoroughly proofed prior to submission.)

Sections within a Paper

Title

The title of a paper is critically important. It must concisely communicate the contents so that others can decide whether to read the paper. The title should state the major topic area of the paper as well as major methods or chemicals used. For example, “Crime Scene Processing” is a wholly inadequate title. “Crime Scene Processing of Fabrics” has narrowed the topic area, but it is still not narrow enough. “Fluorescence Examination of Fabrics for Trace Evidence Using a Forensic Light Source” contains enough information to allow potential readers to decide whether the paper’s content is of interest.

Abstract

An abstract is placed at the head of the paper, before the introduction. It is a condensed version of the paper and states important new techniques or findings. The abstract allows readers to quickly decide whether the paper is of value to them, or later it may refresh the reader’s memory of the contents. The abstract is also very important for indexing services, thus, it should be provided for all papers (excluding letters and commentaries). An abstract can usually be constructed in 50 to 100 words. Only the major points and results should be included. The content of the abstract should not be considered as part of the paper (i.e., it should not introduce any material that is not included within the paper). Writing an abstract is one of the final steps in paper preparation. Only after completion can an author accurately summarize the paper.

Introduction

The introduction orients the readers to the topic. It funnels them, so to speak, from a diverse range of interests and backgrounds into the narrow area that the paper addresses. An introduction may be as short as 3 or 4 sentences or may run many paragraphs, according to the need. It should be no longer than necessary to orient the reader. The introduction should include a general statement introducing the topic area of the paper. It should summarize past work and literature (if any). In a minimal way, it should educate the reader. A separate background section can be used to follow the introduction when a more in-depth discussion of past work or research is needed.

Materials and Methods

The materials and methods section is a straightforward narrative, much like an investigative report or laboratory case notes. The materials and methods section details the information necessary to repeat the work. This is a scientific paper, so it is necessary to write with precision. In the case of chemicals, what brand and purity were used? Another brand or grade may give different results. How old was it? Perhaps shelf life plays a part in success. Under what conditions was the work done? Each variable and step should be described so that the readers may duplicate the procedure and achieve the same results. Common sense should be exercised; it is not necessary to describe how to use a fingerprint lifting tape (at least as it is commonly used) or to specify a particular brand of camera, unless only that brand will allow the results. It is better to err on the side of too much description than to leave out something that is important to success.

Results

This section presents what results were obtained. The results should stand on their own merit, being obvious to the trained reader. They may not require anything more than a brief description (The results are depicted in Figure 1.). No conclusions are drawn at this point; the results are simply stated. If the paper is based on many trials, the most expedient way to report the results is in the form of a table. Charts or graphs are also useful to present data in an easy-to-understand form. Figures (drawings or photographs) often communicate results in a way that is superior to written description. When there are many variables or multistep procedures, the results section will of necessity be longer. Complete coverage is a requirement in a scientific paper.

Discussion

In the discussion section, the results are interpreted for the readers. The author should tell the readers why the result has significance, how a problem has been solved, or the implications of the research. It is also important to report the limitations of one's findings. There may be some situations under which the results have not been tested or under which the method will not work. This must be reported as well. This section might be

many paragraphs long if there is much to discuss and interpret. On the other hand, it might only be one or two sentences. Again, thorough coverage is the goal, not length.

Conclusion

The conclusion should be based on the evidence that has been presented. The major reason the paper was written should be stated, and the result that justifies its significance should be addressed.

References

Past publications that relate to the subject are an important part of any research project. Reference to past publications shows that the author has considered material that has been presented in the past. Quotes and information that are being recounted require a reference. References that are useful to support or debate the information that is being discussed are also beneficial. Although personal communications and presentations are acceptable references, alternative sources of information should be used when possible. It is more advantageous to the readers to use accessible references (e.g., books, journals).

References should be cited by number in the order of their first mention (i.e., "...several studies [1-4] show..."). At the end of the paper, the references should be listed numerically. The use of bibliographies (i.e., a list of texts that generally relate to the topic, but from which no specific references can be drawn) is not acceptable.

The appropriate formats for listing most types of references can be found in Appendix B. Although it is preferred that authors submit the references in the appropriate format, editorial assistance will be provided as necessary. Of critical importance is that authors submit complete and accurate information that is needed to provide the complete reference.

***JFI* Practices and Procedures**

Original Material

The *JFI* publishes original material. Original material is defined as that which has not been previously published nor is under consideration for publication. A submission for publication assigns exclusive publication rights to the *Journal of Forensic Identification* and the IAI unless such rights are forfeited in writing. The *JFI* is liberal in allowing the noncommercial reprinting of articles from the *JFI*, especially to the IAI divisions. However, if an article is first published elsewhere, or is under consideration elsewhere, it will not be considered for publication in the technical section of the *JFI*.

It is customary for conference presenters to allow the host organization (e.g., IAI and the American Academy of Forensic Science) the first opportunity to publish any works that have been presented at the organization's seminar. (If a presentation is made at the A.A.F.S. meeting, the paper should first be submitted to the *Journal of Forensic Science* for publication.)

Peer Review and Edit Process

All new submissions are acknowledged via email. Each paper (with the exception of some letters to the editor) is assigned to a minimum of two subject-specific reviewers. These reviewers are normally from the *JFI* Editorial Review Board. Subject matter specialists are occasionally recruited and consulted when sufficient reviewers for a particular topic are not available from the review board. Editorial review of the paper is ordinarily completed within three months from receipt of the manuscript. Upon completion of the reviews, the author is notified of the article's status.

The editor will notify the author via email or postal delivery of whether the article is accepted or not or whether a minor revision is required for acceptance. Accepted articles are edited for publication, and a copy of the edited article is sent via email to the author for approval. During the edit process (a period of approximately 60 to 120 days prior to the anticipated publication date), an author may be requested to provide additional information to clarify an issue and improve the paper. If a paper is not accepted, the author may request a written critique of the

problems or issues related to the nonacceptance. (This is not automatically provided, because many authors are not interested in reworking a submitted paper.) Some papers are accepted on the condition that specific revisions will be completed by the author before the editing process is initiated. The author is provided approximately thirty days to complete those revisions. Delays in the submission of the revised paper may necessitate reassigning the submission date and date for publication.

The *JFI* is a peer-reviewed journal. This means that submissions are reviewed and critiqued by people who have knowledge in the subject field. This does not mean that all theories, experiments, and conclusions have been independently tested. Reviewers are not required to do a complete retesting of all procedures and processes. Although it is desirable when possible, it is impractical in many instances and impossible in others. Reviewers attempt to detect faulty research, logic, or conclusions, but this cannot ensure that faulty research or papers of questionable accuracy are not published. A secondary practice that is ultimately as significant as the reviewer critiques is the one performed by the readers. When a paper has been published and a reader questions the technique, findings, or conclusions, the reader has a responsibility to investigate and question what has been published by contacting the author for clarification or by writing a letter to the editor. As a matter of practice, letters addressing issues of this nature are readily accepted and evaluated by the editor. When letters of this type have value, they are provided to the original author for a response. If that response satisfies and eliminates the concerns of the reader, no further action is taken. If the response does not satisfy the reader, then both the letter and the response are published.

Artwork and Figures

All artwork should be original or accompanied by a citation. A list of reprint permissions must be included at the end of the paper. Written permission for all cited artwork is required. Editorial staff assistance will be provided to secure necessary permissions as needed.

All artwork must be mentioned, described, or referenced in the narrative text. Examples:

... a significant amount of third level detail (Figure 1).

or

... a significant amount of third level detail is depicted in Figure 1.

All images, graphs, and charts that are imported into the word processing document should also be submitted to the editor as individual files. (Use the figure number as a file name.) All images should be 300 ppi (minimum) when scaled to the maximum column width (approximately 4" equals a 1200 pixel width). Color images and artwork are encouraged. However, graphs and charts should be designed for both color and monochrome printing. All line art should be created to the final scale, with lines that are a minimum of 1 point in thickness. Chemical structures should be created and submitted as image files. Tables that have been created in the word processing program are acceptable and need not be submitted as separate artwork.

Photographs and digital images may be submitted as monochrome or color images. Unless monochrome is selected for specific purposes (e.g., filtering techniques), the use of color is encouraged. Although not all color images will be printed in color, electronic copies of the *JFI* do include images in its submitted mode. Photographs should be labeled on the back in pencil. The label should contain the figure number. Digital images should use the figure number as a file name.

Line art and graphs should be submitted as digitally created artwork. This provides the most flexibility in formatting and the highest quality published paper. If the author lacks the resources to create necessary line art or graphs, he or she should submit clearly drawn figures using black ink on a white paper.

Authors

List only those persons who had a substantial part in designing or conducting the research and without whom the paper could not have been completed. An author is one who takes intellectual responsibility for the results that are reported and can knowledgeably discuss the contents. The work of

photographers, the assistance of co-workers in providing minor pieces of information, or the work of lab technicians to perform repeated trials of an experiment or validation generally does not qualify them for coauthorship. An author may offer acknowledgments and appreciation in an acknowledgment paragraph at the conclusion of the paper. It is customary for the principal author to be named first. The author who is listed first is the author who will be used as primary author in most referencing systems. However, the order in which the names are listed is a matter of personal preference, and the authors should decide the order prior to submitting the paper.

The full name and affiliation of each author should be included. However, one author should be designated as the corresponding author. The corresponding author's full mailing and email address must be provided. After a paper has been submitted to the *JFI*, the corresponding author should immediately notify the editor of any changes in this contact information.

Submission Guidelines

Electronic submissions (on disk, CD, or via email) are preferred over printed submissions. The document should be saved or converted to a WordPerfect, Microsoft Word, or generic word processing program format (e.g., .rtf or .txt). Illustrations, figures, and images should be submitted as individual files separate from the text document. The illustrations may also be imbedded, along with their respective captions, within the text document. Printed manuscripts should be double-spaced. Email submissions should be limited to one or more files, with a combined total of a maximum of 6 megabytes per email.

Conclusion

The information presented in this guide is intended to assist and encourage authors to prepare papers for publication in the *Journal of Forensic Identification*. It is hoped that novice and experienced writers alike will find value in this guide and that through a brief skimming of its contents (or a thorough reading), all persons preparing to submit a paper to the *JFI* will be able to better understand the submission process. Editorial assistance in revising papers will continue to be provided, but publication may be delayed for papers that require extensive editorial effort.

Appendix A

Grammar and Style Issues

- If the punctuation is part of the quotation, it should be within the quotation marks.
- If the punctuation is not part of the quotation, it goes after the quotation mark.
- Use quotation marks for words used in a “new sense” or for words “not used literally”, but only the first time they appear in text.
- Use “*i.e.*”, “*e.g.*”, and “*etc.*” only in figure captions, in tables, and in parentheses in text. Elsewhere, spell out “that is”, “for example”, and “and so forth”. (“That is” requires a paraphrase or rewording of what preceded it, and “for example” is followed by an example of the preceding word or phrase.)
- *Word contractions* will not be used.
- *Pronouns* are often a problem. Do not use a plural pronoun with a singular antecedent. Writers often use “they” as the pronoun for a singular subject; that is *not correct*. Either use “he or she” or *make the subject plural*.
- *Italics* may be used sparingly to emphasize a word or phrase (not for long passages). Italics may also be used for a *word being defined* or for a newly *introduced* word the first time it appears.
- The *slash* should not be used to mean “and” or “or”. “And/or” should not be used; “and” or “or” should be used, depending on your meaning.
- *Fingerprint, palmprint, soleprint, tenprint, footprint, and shoeprint* should each be used as one word (i.e., not finger print) and they should not be hyphenated.

Appendix B

Reference Formatting

Scientific

Author 1; Author 2; etc. Title of Article. *Journal Abbreviation* YEAR, Volume (Issue), Pagination.

Nonscientific & Newspapers

Author 1; Author 2; etc. Title of Article. *Title of Periodical*, Complete Date, Pagination.

Books without Editors

Author 1; Author 2; etc. Chapter Title. *Book Title*, Edition Number; Publisher: Place of Publication, Year; Volume Number, Pagination.

Books with Editors

Author 1; Author 2; etc. Chapter Title. In *Book Title*, Edition Number; Editor 1, Editor 2, etc., Eds.; Publisher: Place of Publication, Year; Volume Number, Pagination.

No author, use editor(s) at start of reference.

Government Publications

Author 1; Author 2; etc. Chapter Title. Document Title; Government Publication Number; Publishing Agency: Place of Publication, Year; Pagination.

Publishing Agency: The office or agency issuing the report as well as the Government Printing Office must be cited. The order is: department or agency, administration or office, and finally, U.S. Government Printing Office, all separated by commas and set in roman type. The field ends with a colon.

Meetings & Conferences

Author 1; Author 2; etc. Title of Presentation (if any). Presented at Conference Title, Place, Date; Paper Number.

Patents

Patent Owner 1; Patent Owner 2; etc. Title of Patent. Patent Number, Date.

Personal Communications

Author. Affiliation, City, State. Phrase describing the material, Year.

Thesis

Author. Title of Thesis, Degree-Granting University, Location of University, Date of Completion.

Websites

Page Title, Website Title (if available), Website Address, (Date Accessed).

2005-2006 OFFICERS AND APPOINTED POSITIONS

Joe M. Maberry, President
DEA-South Central Laboratory
10150 E. Technology Blvd
Dallas, TX 75235

Diana Castro, 1st Vice President
Los Angeles Police Department
150 N Los Angeles St Rm 213
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Kenneth F. Martin, 2nd Vice President
Massachusetts State Police
142A North Road, Rte. 117
Sudbury, MA 01776

Robert Garrett, 3rd Vice President
93 Highland Ave
Metuchen, NJ 08804

Vici Inlow, 4th Vice President
US Secret Service
PO Box 6500
Springfield, VA 22150

Joseph P. Polski, Chief Operations Officer
Office of the Chief Operations
2535 Pilot Knob Road, Suite 117
Mendota Heights, MN 55120

Alan L. McRoberts, Editor
Journal of Forensic Identification
P.O. Box 893789
Temecula, CA 92589

Jefferson K. Itami, Int'l Rep.
Crime Scene Consultants
1984 Kensington Ave
Salt Lake City, UT 84108

Gregory M. Parkinson, Sgt. At Arms
Town of Palm Beach
345 South County Road
Palm Beach, FL 33480

Diane Dillard, Legal Counsel
The Dillard Law Firm
Attorney at Law
Brownsville, TX

Helga Langthorn, Division Rep.
Armor Holdings, Inc.
13386 International Pkwy
Jacksonville, FL 32218

Norman R. Smith, Historian
616 N Florida Street
Arlington, VA 22203

2005-2006 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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R.C.M. Police
1200 Vanier Parkway, NPS Bldg, 5th Floor
Ottawa, ON K1A 0R2
Canada

H. Glen Calhoun
Miami-Dade Police Department
9105 NW 25th St. Rm 1134
Miami, FL 33172

Michael J. Campbell
Ron Smith & Associates, Inc.
N48 W26388 Bayberry Ct
Pewaukee, WI 53072

Michael S. Gaynor
San Francisco Police Department
850 Bryant St Rm 577-16
San Francisco, CA 94103

Leslie C. Hammer
Alaska Department of Public Safety
5500 E Tudor Rd
Anchorage, AK 99507

John Kilgore
Iowa DCI Criminalistics Laboratory
2240 S. Ankeny Blvd.
Ankeny, IA 50023

Richard 'Kevin' Lawson
St. Louis County Police Department
111 S. Meramec, 4th Floor
Clayton, MO 63105

Deborah A. Leben
US Secret Service
950 H St NW FSD
Washington, DC 20223

Bridget A. Lewis
Iowa DCI Criminalistics Laboratory
2240 S. Ankeny Blvd.
Ankeny, IA 50023

Stephen B. Meagher
FBI Laboratory Division
2501 Investigation Pkwy, Room 2302
Quantico, VA 22135

Philip J. Sanfilippo
Metro-Dade Police Department
9601 NW 58th St
Doral, FL 33178

Frank A. Ryttersgaard
R.C.M. Police
1200 Vanier Parkway, Rm 503 NPS Bldg
Ottawa, ON K1A 0R2
Canada

Kenneth O. Smith
US Postal Service
22433 Randolph Dr
Dulles, VA 20104

Norman R. Smith
616 N Florida Street
Arlington, VA 22203