FROM THE EDITOR...

Standing on the shoulders of giants, we gaze forwards.

This issue is very important for the **Journal of Forensic Document Examination** (**JFDE**) community, since it signifies the next step in the evolution of the journal. Already, the 2018 issue was published online by PKP Press. This started a series of interconnected actions that culminated in the current format and method of peer reviewing system. As you might have already seen, the website was fully overhauled with special focus on the detailed and up to date Guidelines for the Authors. The current format of those Guidelines is fully compatible with the online scientific data bases and aims at a scientific homogeneity of the included papers. Also, the Editorial Team has evolved, focusing on a multidisciplinary approach on the discipline of Forensic Document Examination. Currently, amongst our ranks, are forensic document examiners, academics, neuroscientists, pattern recognition and machine learning experts as well as legal scientists. Furthermore, striving for scientific and academic worldwide interconnectedness, we have recruited experts from both the New and the Old World, working in universities, laboratories and institutes worldwide.

Moving on, we have introduced the use of OJS platform, through which we now operate in a double-blind peer review system for each contribution, with neither the authors nor the reviewers knowing the identity of others. Already the platform and the system have been tested and from the issue of 2020 and on, all papers will be reviewed and published in this manner.

Having ushered the Journal into a new threshold, we are fully aware that neither the **JFDE** nor the Forensic Document Examination as a discipline would not be in the current state of art without the valuable contribution of the late Bryan Found, PhD.

Since the late 1980s, Dr. Bryan Found had accomplished more than any other researcher in the world to develop the science of handwriting identification. He had been an unrelenting advocate for not permitting biasing or context irrelevant information to enter into forensic handwriting examinations. Dr. Found had been invited to over 20 countries to present workshops on the science of handwriting individualization and on human factors. Most recently he was invited to be a speaker for a plenary session at the International Symposium on Forensic Science Error Management sponsored by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in July 2015. He, along with his colleagues, had published over 40 peer reviewed forensic scientific journal articles, including in the **JFDE**, 44 conference abstracts, and three invited book and encyclopedia chapters. Dr. Found was during the end of his life the Chief Forensic Scientist at the Victoria Police Forensic Services Department in Australia, one of the world's largest multi-disciplinary laboratories, where he strived to maintain the highest standards for forensic laboratories. These standards include educating practitioners, staff members, investigators, and attorneys about cognitive factors that include the potential impact of exposing practitioners to domain irrelevant context information. One could only wonder what further contributions would he add to science, if he was still alive today.

This issue is a compendium of several very important papers by Dr. Found and his colleagues - most often Doug Rogers - at LaTrobe University in Melbourne, Australia, that we believed made a significant impact to the scientific development of handwriting identification as we know it today. These publications, along with the *Modular Forensic Handwriting Method* (JFDE, Vol 26), and the interview titled, *A Discussion of Issues Around Human Factors And Bias In Forensic Handwriting Examinations: The Present And Future For Practitioners* (JFDE, Vol. 25), encapsulate his importance for our discipline.

A main purpose of this compendium is to educate the researchers, field practitioners and students about Dr. Found's critical contribution on the research that has led to where we are today and culminated in the NIST report, scheduled for publication in 2020, as well as create a chronological perspective of his work. However, the reader should not think that the collected papers have only a historical value. On the contrary, the analyzed subjects are today as important as they were the time they were authored.

The first paper published in 1995 titled, *Contemporary Issues in Forensic Handwriting*

Examination. A Discussion of Key Issues in the Wake Starzecpyzel Case, is perhaps the most influential paper in this issue, let alone heretical at the time it was published. In this paper, Bryan urged Forensic Document Examiners to accept the criticism of their field, mainly focusing on the Southern District of New York Federal Court's Judge Lawrence W. McKenna's decision in U.S.A. v. Starzeckpyzel that the handwriting identification was not a science, but a technical skill. Dr. Found encouraged the use the court's decision as a springboard for further scientific evolution to revisit and to reinvent Forensic Document Examination as a more robust identification science.

It must be noted that Found, himself, stated that the initial response of the forensic world to this paper was *mostly suspicion.* For all practical purposes, the lack of serious scientific research in the United States on handwriting identification at that time, coupled with the lack of awareness of the majority of FDEs in the U.S. regarding research that was going on in Australia, New Zealand, and in the Netherlands, proved exactly his points. It was the Association of Forensic Document Examiners and the **JFDE** that welcomed Dr. Found's and Huub Hardy's (Netherlands) more scientific approach to document examination. This is one of the reasons, Found and his colleagues were frequent contributors to the **JFDE** that published the first Modular system in the 1999 issue and the latest in the 2016 issue.

In his work, Dr. Found focused much effort on the subject of cognitive bias. According to him, bias is the biggest source of errors, where humans are involved. Characteristically, he notes, *There is no shame in making errors, the only shame is not understanding the systems that caused them, not learning from them and not having mitigation strategies in place to avoid them in the future* (**JFDE,** Vol 25). Part of his and his colleagues' approach towards evolving strategies to avoid bias is highlighted in the papers *Matrix Analysis: a Technique to Investigate the Spatial Properties of Handwritten Images*, where the authors' research on objective measurement strategies to assist experts to make judgements about spatial consistency is described, and the paper, *The Objective Static Analysis of Spatial Errors in Simulations,* which deals with the objective spatial error scores resulting from measurement of forged and genuine signatures.

Another major contribution of Dr. Found in the field is his research on the assessment of the complexity of handwritten images that culminated in the Module 5 of his magnum opus, the *Modular Forensic Handwriting Method* (**JFDE**, Vol. 26), which must be noted is one more procedure to reduce bias and error in the case work of examiners. His insights regarding assessing complexity are analyzed in the paper, *Statistical Modelling of Experts' Perceptions of the Ease of Signature Simulation.*

But above all, Bryan Found was a stout defender of the scientific value of Forensic Document Examination. He stated many times that there is real expertise associated with being a handwriting specialist in a forensic environment, as it is demonstrated in the paper, *The Skill of a Group of Forensic Document Examiners in Expressing Handwriting and Signature Authorship and Production Process opinions.* Furthermore, his research has proven that when testing the abilities and claims of the FDEs and comparing them to laypeople, it is evident that the skill of the handwriting examiners is real and - most importantly - this skill can be demonstrated. This important subject is thoroughly discussed in the paper, *The Development of a Program for Characterizing Forensic Handwriting Examiner's Expertise: Signature Examination Pilot Study.*

Finally, no compendium would be complete without including Dr. Found's lynchpin paper, *Comparison of Document Examiners' Opinions on Photocopied Signatures* originally published in the JFDE in 2001. This paper is one of the more widely referenced papers in the field of forensic document examination.

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