

# *The Lone Star Forensic Journal*

## Publication Guidelines

### **Types of Papers Accepted:**

The *Lone Star Forensic Journal* publishes five types of material: articles, technical notes, case reports, commentaries, and letters to the editor. Each type of paper is defined below.

**Articles:** These 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.

**Technical notes:** These 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.

**Case reports:** These 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.

**Commentaries:** These 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. Because of the opinionated and personal nature of most commentaries, commentaries are not revised or subjected to the normal editing practices. The commentaries are submitted to the Editorial Review Committee for input as to whether the commentary should be published as is.

**Letters to the editor:** These 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 our normal editing practices. Letters are submitted to Editorial Review Committee for input as to whether the letter should be published as is.

### **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 three or four 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.

## **Practices and Procedures**

### *Original Material*

The *Lone Star Forensic Journal* 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 *Lone Star Forensic Journal* and the TDIAI unless such rights are forfeited in writing.

### *Peer Review and Edit Process*

All new submissions are acknowledged via email. Each paper (with the exception of some letters to the editor) is forwarded to the Editorial Review Committee for review. Subject matter specialists are occasionally recruited and consulted when sufficient reviewers for a particular topic are not available from the review committee. 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 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 *Lone Star Forensic Journal* 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.

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.

### *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 *Lone Star Forensic Journal*, the corresponding author should immediately notify the editor of any changes in this contact information.

### *Submission Guidelines*

As of August 1, 2019, only online submissions via the TDIAI website or emailed directly to the Editor ([Editor@TDIAI.org](mailto:Editor@TDIAI.org)) will be considered.

### **Conclusion**

The information presented in this guide is intended to assist and encourage authors to prepare papers for publication in the *Lone Star Forensic Journal*. 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), Page(s).

#### Nonscientific & Newspapers

Author 1; Author 2; etc. Title of Article. *Title of Periodical*, Complete Date, Page(s).

#### Books without Editors

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

#### 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, Page(s).

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; Page(s).

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).