



Q&A

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SI-3

In our last issue David Atlas proposed his ideas in favor of an additional GIA clarity grade, SI-3. The following responses are reprinted in their entirety when possible. Editing has been kept to a minimum.

As an instructor in Diamond Grading, I found David Atlas' short essay interesting and pointed. However, recognizing that different diamond grading labs often provide slightly different grades for the same stone (recall the Sept. 1981 expose by *The Goldsmith*), I don't believe that yet another grade (SI-3) is the answer.

Splitting VVS, VS, and SI into numerical sub-grades is part of the problem, not part of the solution. As the number of categories increases, grading seems to become more precise. However, the lack of repeatability (e.g., one hears stories of the same lab giving the same stone two different grades on different occasions) indicates a lack of accuracy.

Rather than adding another grade, why not tighten up the standards for SI-2 by encouraging a clear consensus on what that grade means?

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Mr. Atlas' points are well taken. Many members of the jewelry trade do not understand the GIA system for grading some eye imperfect diamonds. Actually many do not properly understand any of the clarity grades in the system except for perhaps the flawless grade. It is also true that gem laboratories around the world may have slight differences in the way that they perceive and clarity grade diamonds. Major ethical labs will usually agree very closely, but because grading is subjective they will not always agree. The system is abused on a daily basis by some labs, dealers, jewelers, or appraisers through ignorance or avarice. Education can overcome one and the promotion of ethics the other.

I also used to think that an additional grade of SI-3 would be helpful for some stones that seemed slightly better than I1 but not quite good enough to be an SI2. However, after further examination of this idea, I now feel that additional grades would only add to the problem. Suppose that when GIA began their grading system there were only two grades: eye clean or not eye clean., subjectivity would be reduced to a minimum. Since clarity grading is a subjective process, adding grades increases the margin of error. GIA settled upon 10 workable grades.

I do not agree with breaking down the SI2 grade into four grades as suggested by Mr. Atlas (SI2 eye clean, not eye clean, SI3 eye clean, not eye clean). What would be used for the criteria determining eye clean? Eye clean is also a function of one's vision capabilities. What is visible to one person may not be visible to another person.

Since no two diamonds are alike, the reality is that standardized grading to a perfect state is not possible. That is why GIA has two graders grade each diamond and in a discrepancy over the grade a supervisor makes the final call. GIA also does not guarantee to grade a stone the same if it is submitted a second time.

The Guide is just that -- a "guide" to pricing, not an absolute. No price list will ever be that. If we were to totally refine price reporting, it would have to go way beyond the eye clean issue. For example, in the carat weight categories a light 1/2 carat (.44 - .49) F VS1 is currently \$2600 per carat and a 1/2 carat (.50 - .59) F VS1 is \$3200 per carat. Compare two theoretically identical F VS1 diamonds .49 and .50 carat. Is one point worth \$300 more? What is the price of a 1.99 carat diamond compared to a 2.00 carat stone? Other factors affecting value are proportions and in some cases fluorescence. To be able to produce a price list, assumptions must be made not only about the 4 C's but also that the user knows how to appraise. Appraising is as much an art as it is a science. The example in Mr. Atlas' essay must be adequately dealt with but in my opinion by the appraiser, jeweler, or whomever is affected. Yes, an eye clean SI will probably be priced differently than an eye visible SI. However, two theoretically identical stones will also be priced differently if in the stock of two different dealers.

I do offer this solution which works well when I am doing appraisals. I do recognize that some diamonds are more or less appealing due to certain attributes. Therefore I attempt to put a "+" or "-" to the grade when necessary for my own evaluation purposes. If the diamond is a low SI-2, I grade it SI-2- on my notes only and value it between SI2 and I1. If it is an SI2 for technical reasons but faces up good, I might grade it SI2+ on my notes and value it between SI1 and SI2. I use these pluses and minuses to adjust pricing and in reality I have added about 14 grades to the system (I use it on VVS1 to I1) without changing the system or altering the 10 GIA clarity grades used for the written report.

Richard Drucker, GG

Mr. Drucker is publisher of The Guide, a pricing report on diamonds and colored stones. Ed.

Clarity grading of diamonds or any of the gemstones is not a problem for me. The GIA standards are explicit, definitive and adequate for international trade and for world-wide standards. The GIA standards permit SI2's to have eye visible inclusions. The adjectives describing the inclusions are: minute, minor, noticeable and obvious. All of the factors of size, number, position, nature, color or relief must be summarized. Those need no alterations. I stop calling diamond "gem" after VS2.

How many local grading systems have you been exposed to? And how many of them can be equated to GIA standards? One source that I am familiar with has seven grades of Imperfect. Another will not discuss GIA standards nor try to equate them. I have read that the European standards for diamonds are about 15% below GIA standards. Russian and Scandinavian clarity grading standards appear to support GIA standards.

...Let the GIA grading structure alone and concentrate on what is wrong with the jewelry industry operation...

I enjoyed reading Mr. Atlas' SI3 article and I respect his views.

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A couple of footnotes to the discussion of SI3. Those of you who face diamond clients across the counter know that there is a lot of difference psychologically between an SI2 (slightly included) diamond and an I1 (INCLUDED) diamond. There may be more difference between the names of the grades than the grades themselves. We can see the possibility of pressure from the trade to soften the dreaded INCLUDED grade. The best situation for the trade is to simply call the I1 a SI2. I suspect if I1 had always been called SI3 and the remaining I stones were divided into I1 and I2 we wouldn't be having this discussion.

Take twenty gemologists with stop watches to the beach (East coast) before dawn and ask them to independently stop their watches at sunrise. You will have twenty different times. Nature doesn't create different grades of diamonds, nature makes different diamonds and we attempt to overlay our grades on them. Perfection is not achievable. Ed.

Questions and Answers

Q: How do you estimate the depth of a diamond in a closed bottom setting where the Leveridge gauge won't fit?

Answers:

In the Summer issue of *Gems & Gemology* Joseph Gill describes a method of measuring the movement of the microscope stage from focusing on the table and culet of a stone and comparing this movement to a known stone depth's movement...I also keep a pair of needle nose nautical calipers...it's much easier than trying to hold an open Leveridge Gauge where you think the culet and table might be.

Edgar Cambere, GG

I estimate the depth by building from estimates of the pavilion depth, crown height, and crown angle and measurements of the girdle thickness and table. (paraphrased)

Benard Laves

Install a Bausch & Lomb reticle (P/N 31-16-43) in 10X eyepiece. Saves much time in measuring melee, stone depth in ear studs and other blind situations. I find it doesn't interfere with other grading operations. Scale is 10mm with 0.10mm increments. Calibrate with table gauge.

T. William Benedict, GG, ASA(MGA)

Q: It seems that I burn up microscope bulbs ever time I turn around...solutions? cheap source?

Answers

Your line voltage may be too high. Use a voltage dropping device to drop it to 110v or less. Or use a halogen lamp conversion kit (Available from Gem Lab). I've used one for 4-5 years and have not burned out a bulb yet. better light source too. T. William Benedict, GG, ASA(MGA)

...possibly use a line conditioner (it works in computers) to stop spikes (research what you buy because cheap ones often do nothing)...second, I might look at the microscope itself and look for anything that might cause intermittent shorting of the current...and third, if all else fails I would suggest finding a wholesale supplier of the bulbs!

Thom Underwood, GG, ASA(MGA)

Q: I sometimes appraise stones of which I'm less than 100% sure of the identity, eg. a flawless emerald of African appearing color. What does the GIA do when there are no inclusions a stone like emerald?

A: As a wholesaler of emeralds, it is extremely rare that we encounter a flawless African emerald, although African stones are much cleaner and can be found very clean. Be sure to use side lighting with a fiber optic light source to better illuminate the stone often revealing something you may have missed. Also immersion is very useful. GIA can do a spectroscopic analysis to test for trace impurities on those stones in question. Characteristic impurities often reveal stone sources.

Sindi Schloss

New Questions

Q: I have been approached to appraise large diffusion treated Blue Sapphires approx 25-45 carats each. Has anyone had any experience appraising these for retail? What values are you obtaining and what info are you using to justify your results? Do you have any thoughts or info to help me?

Rick Goodden, GG

Comment: My approach for an insurance appraisal would be to add the cost of a very light blue sapphire of equivalent clarity/size to the cost of treatment. (Remember repolishing is necessary after treatments, thus a weight loss.) Dror Yehuda has stated he feels this is the wrong approach in appraising a Yehuda treated diamond. Of course if you can sell a diamond for \$500 and pay \$100 to have it treated and can now sell it for only \$600 why bother treating it. An analogy is the cost of rough plus the cost of cutting as an approach to valuing polished.

It appears to be an acceptable methodology if you are comfortable with appraising I-2 and I-3 diamonds.

Market value of treated diffused sapphires might be hard to obtain.

Some gemologist will just refuse to appraise. Another consideration: AGA's policy on not appraising for investment purposes.

A Ceylon sapphire dealer told me in February 1990 that colorless sapphire was hot, but even a touch of blue lowers the value dramatically.

Also see the October 1990 issue of JCK, page 46 for an article on appraising diffusion treated sapphire.

Other comments please. Ed.

Q: I'm seeing more large brown diamonds for appraisal and I'm having trouble finding prices other than dealer offerings.

Any help?

Q: GIA used to publish an index of relative values of diamonds in various sizes/colors/clarities. Does some one know of such an index for lower color grades--N and below? The DMM and Rapaport only go down to M.

Q: In appraising European cut half carat diamonds I feel these would not really be recut to modern cuts and calculating the value via this methodology may under value them. Any help?

Comment: David Atlas section of old European cut diamonds in the DMM goes up to 0.40, he has distributed a list of 3/4, 1, and 2 carat stones as of 1/89. We have asked him for an update and inclusion of half carats. Ed.

Q: It has come to my attention that G. I. A. color grading has changed somewhat. The change is rumored in the end of the near colorless (I-J) area. The rumors stem from both the Eastern and Western Coasts. Can you tell us if there has been a change in the master sets that could effect diamond color grading?

Cortney Balzan, GG, ASA (MGA)

Report any instances of variations on color grades and/or clarity grades to me and I'll forward to GIA asking them to explain. The more detailed your information the more help it will be to explaining what is happening in the market. Ed.

Q: Should the general public be informed of the grading tolerances that apply to both diamond and colored stone quality reports?

C. R. "Cap" Beesley, GG

Mr. Beesley is owner of the American Gemological Laboratory, noted for their pioneering work on colored stone grading reports. Ed.

Report on CAPPISA-10 course at Indiana University. This is a course on antique and period jewelry.

Tom Sequin, GG took this course by correspondence. He reports he could have done just as well by reading the courses's recommended reading list. FYI the list follows:

An Illustrated Dictionary of Jewelry by Harold Newman

Old Jewelry, 2nd edition, by Jeanenne Bell

Antique & Twentieth Century Jewellery by Vivienne Becker

Jewelry, Illustrated Library of Antiques, The Smithsonian prepared by the Cooper-Hewitt Museum.

New AGA Officers Elected for 1991-2

President	Cortney Balzan
1st V.P.	Donald Palmieri
2nd V.P.	B. Young McQueen
Secretary	Leo Schmied
Treasurer	Dana Richardson

Regional Governors

I	Craig Lynch
II	James Krol
III	Jim Jolliff
IV	Thomas Sequin
V	Anne Hawkin
VI	Mona Miller

AGA in Tucson

Dinner Dance on Sunday Evening at 7pm at Doubletree Hotel

Conference starts on Monday with sessions on Fancy Color Diamonds, Hydrothermal Russian Lab Grown Synthetic Emerald, Fracture Filled Emerald, Fracture Filled Diamonds, Classification and Grading of Opals. Tuesday has sessions on treatments and videos of previous lectures. Tuesday evening is the AGA Flea Market; and Wednesday features the computer review day and synthetic stone exhibition. Check where the session is being held since some are at the Doubletree and others in the conference center.

This year you can attend on a session by session basis,

Q & A

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Computers for Gemologists

Coming in the next JCK issue is a review of appraisal programs. The reviews were latest in the series conducted by the AGA's software review program. This committee is headed by Messrs. Thom Underwood and Robert Rosenblatt.

On PIM's. What a godsend! I don't know how I would get along without one. All information cross referenced, preformatted letters, envelope printing and so much more. WOW! I have been using ACT and been moderately happy. ACT just came out with a 2.0 version which supposedly addresses all my complaints (my update is in the mail!!!) such as spell checking, laser printing of envelopes, and memory resident segments allowing me to conveniently go into my word processor and back without fully exiting the program.

Thom Underwood, GG, ASA(MGA)

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