

How does training as a handwriting analyst (graphologist) prove useful in forensic handwriting examination?

The question is, can a handwriting analyst conduct a forensic handwriting examination or forensic handwriting examiner conduct a handwriting analysis? Since the skills required are different, the answer would be a resounding 'no'.

The training and methods in the two fields of the study of handwriting differ vastly. However, a forensic document examiner who has had a grounding in handwriting analysis, is at an advantage as the number of handwriting features and dynamics in handwriting analysis, is significantly greater than that of forensic handwriting examination. Siegel (1995/96), quotes from several forensic document examination sources, including Sulner (1966) in *Disputed Documents*; Quirke (1930) in *Forged, Anonymous and Suspect Documents* and Aschaffenburg (1986), *Collected Essays on Various Aspects of Handwriting Examination*, regarding the value of knowledge and skills as a handwriting analyst, in the work of forensic handwriting examination. In *Fundamentals of Document Examination*, Robertson (1991) in (Siegel 1995/6) mentions many cases where expert handwriting examiners have raised the aspect of a writer's state of mind. In the *Law of Disputed and Forged Documents*, Baker (1995) in (Siegel 1995/6) emphasises the neuro-muscular relationship to handwriting. In *Behavior Factors in Handwriting Identification* by Naftali (1965) in (Siegel 1995/6), he stressed the fact that the forensic handwriting examiner should understand the impact of physiological, psychological and neurological aspects of the writer. This knowledge is of paramount importance to the forensic handwriting examiner. Forensic handwriting examiners who have been exposed to handwriting analysis training are also more able to understand natural dynamic, expressive movements 'evaluate individual details and micro movements as they relate to the whole' (Siegel 1995/6), which provides a depth of understanding of the complexity in the execution of handwriting.

Marks (1994), quoting from American Jurisprudence 3d, says 'Although a background in graphology is not generally considered a prerequisite for entering the field of document examination, there is no doubt that it is advantageous. Some authorities believe that to determine the authorship of a whole page or several pages of handwriting, a thorough knowledge of the principles of experimental graphology is essential. Other experts disagree,

but the fact is that the continuing research in the field has elevated graphology to a new level of respect in many in the scientific community.' (American jurisprudence Proof of Facts 3d, p 651)

It is therefore well understood by experienced and well read forensic handwriting examiners and researchers and academics with knowledge of forensic handwriting examination, that a

knowledge of the physiological, psychological, neurological aspects of the writer, must be considered in the work of the forensic handwriting examiner and that this knowledge overlaps with that obtained in the related field of handwriting analysis.