

## Editor's Note

The following is Part II of a Special Topics in Disputed Document Testimony put on The 1931 Conference of Friendly Document Examiners (precursor to ASQDE). This collection was presented by Peter Tytell at the ASQDE meeting in 2006. Peter's preface and John Harris' foreword are included.

This publication has not been peer-reviewed. The speakers were part of a generation that really learned to write, and the writing instruments discussed are steel nib pens. Nevertheless, the principles espoused in it still apply today. As John Harris states in his foreword, "But don't discount the material because of its age. Questioned Documents are not limited to contemporary documents."

The remaining parts of this collection will be published in subsequent issues of JASQDE. As you read on, think carefully on how you would answer these questions. Write down your answers.

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Editor-JASQDE

### Section II Handwriting—Continued

#### 11. What value should be given to systems of writing as a means of identification?

*EDWIN H. FEARON*

The classifying of the handwriting by discovering what system a writing is related to is very important. It may be of sufficient value to show that a disputed writing was not written by the writer of the standards. In any event it reduces the number to whom the writing may possibly belong. System characteristics should be a part of every examiner's goods, wares, and merchandise. Without this knowledge there is always a danger of confusing system characteristics with individual characteristics, and thereby make a serious and embarrassing error.

*ALBERT D. OSBORN*

Great value should be given system forms for the evidence that two writings are based on different systems will be positive proof that they were not written by the same writer. On the other hand, two handwritings apparently based on the same system have that common quality, and if that quality is coupled with like individual characteristics in the two writings, and there are no real differences, the conclusion will naturally follow that they were written by the same hand. The system of writing may be of value in limiting the possible writers and in eliminating certain suspected writers because of age of system or the nationality of the system. System characteristics taken alone as a means of identification may of course, and probably will, lead to error.

*ALBERT S. OSBORN*

This disputed handwriting is based upon a system or combination of arbitrary forms, which forms the basis of the hand. While handwriting is somewhat modified by all writers and greatly modified by some writers, it usually retains certain characteristics of the system upon which it was based. Many times this is a very important phase of an examination. Certain characters were first invented at a certain date, or approximate date, and their use in a document of a preceding date would be strong evidence of a lack of genuineness. The presence, also, of certain characteristics in one series of documents and their absence in another many times is almost conclusive proof of lack of identity. The matter of system is very important in connection with the study of foreign handwriting or the handwriting of those who first learn to write in another language or in another country.