
Editor's Comments

In August, the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners will celebrate sixty years as an organization. There have been many technological advances since Albert S. Osborn presided over that first meeting. In those days, document examiners weren't concerned with the identification of a photocopier or inkjet printer. The Selectric typewriter was twenty years in the future. The founders certainly hadn't given any thought to the latest technique using Adobe Photoshop. In those days, document examiners were mainly concerned with handwriting. Well, it seems that the more things change, the more they stay the same. For all of our technical advancements, sixty years later, document examiners are still primarily concerned with handwriting. Handwriting accounts for the majority of work for most document examiners.

Even so, all those technological advancements are of vast importance to the document examiner. With that in mind, two articles in this issue deal with some of those advancements. One will discuss an interesting aspect of photocopier identification. Another will present a computer-assisted method of reassembling torn documents. A third article will focus on the subject of identity documents, a very important subject in this time of massive illegal immigration and international terrorism.

And while the technology revolution has had a way of monopolizing the research time of document examiners, the 1993 US Supreme Court decision *Daubert v. Dow*, and its 1999 progeny *Kumho Tire v. Carmichael*, has had the effect of refocusing our attention on handwriting. Since *Kumho*, a standard guideline for the examination of handwriting has been written and academic research has been conducted confirming the individuality of handwriting. And while there have been a few disappointing decisions at the federal district court level, several recent decisions, such as *US v. Gricco* and *US v. Kirby*, have been very encouraging. In fact, in *US v. Gricco*, the SWGDOC-developed handwriting guideline and the handwriting research were both cited as part of the judge's reasoning in allowing the handwriting testimony to be admitted into evidence.

Still critics of handwriting identification evidence show no signs of throwing in the towel. One critic has repeatedly maintained that the "core claim" of handwriting identification, the individuality of handwriting, has been fatally falsified. This statement proceeds from a basic misunderstanding of the principles of handwriting identification.

Accordingly, we are republishing a 1963 article by Ordway Hilton that originally appeared in the British journal *Medicine, Science and the Law*. In my opinion, this article does an exceptional job of explaining the basic principles behind handwriting examination. Mr. Hilton explains the principle that no two people write exactly alike in a way that anyone should be able to understand. Unfortunately, and perhaps because it was published in a British journal, many examiners in the US do not seem to be familiar with this work. It is my hope that this article will be useful to our readers in explaining or understanding the basic principles of handwriting examination.

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Editor