



W23 Dispelling the Myths About the Forensic Examination of Handprinting

*Linton Mohammed, PhD**, Forensic Science Consultants, Inc, Burlingame, CA 94010-2017; *Lloyd Cunningham**, Alamo, CA 94507; *Katelyn E. Bruno, MFS**, Quantico, VA 22135; *Linda L. Mitchell, BS**, Forensic QDE Lab, LLC, Escondido, CA 92025-4116; *Brett Bishop**, Cheney, WA 99224

Learning Overview: After attending this workshop, attendees will be informed about the development of manuscript handprinting, motor-control theories regarding how handprinting is learned, examination techniques with handprinting, and will conduct hand-on examinations of genuine and simulated handprinting.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This workshop will impact the forensic science community by informing attendees on the history and development of manuscript handprinting and will enhance their abilities to conduct handprinting examinations. Attendees will also be prepared to defend the reliability of handprinting examinations in court.

Handprinting examinations have been conducted successfully for many years by Forensic Document Examiners (FDEs). However, there have been some recent court decisions in which handprinting evidence was deemed to be inadmissible due to a perceived lack of testing of the reliability of FDEs in handprinting examinations. This workshop will seek to dispel the myths created by these court decisions and statements of some critics of handprinting examination.

This workshop, which has a significant hands-on component, was designed to address the history and development of manuscript handprinting, the various styles of manuscript handprinting, and its fine and subtle elements. Research in handprinting together with casework examples will be presented. Motor-control theories of the development of handprinting will be presented and discussed. A review of empirical research conducted into the reliability of handprinting examinations will also be conducted.

Are there different examination techniques and methodologies applied to manuscript handprinting than applied to cursive writing? The transition from manuscript handprinting to cursive writing will be covered as will the similarities and dissimilarities between the different styles of handwriting.

Critics of the forensic identification of handwriting have now attempted to create an illusion that manuscript “handprinting” is not identifiable. As one critic stated recently, “Handwriting is different from handprinting as typewriting is different from either.” Unfortunately, some in the legal profession have accepted this absurd illusion, and the identification of manuscript “handprinting” is now separately under attack. One judge stated, “Typical handwriting analysis involves cursive writing, and the record is devoid of evidence that there is even a recognized field of expertise in the identification of handprinting.”¹ Another court opined, “Ultimately, the limited testing that exists is inconclusive as to the reliability of handprinting analysis.”² Recent court decisions and statements by critics of handprinting examination will be discussed and critiqued.

The issue of the techniques used to simulate manuscript handprinting and the difficulty factors in simulating cursive handwriting versus manuscript handprinting will be the main focus of this workshop, which will also include the study and examination of practical problems by the attendees.

Reference(s):

- ^{1.} *United States v. Fujii*, 152 F. Supp. 2d 939 - Dist. Court, ND Illinois 2000.
- ^{2.} *United States v. Johnsted*, 30 F. Supp. 3d 814 - Dist. Court, WD Wisconsin 2013.

Document Examination, Handprinting, Reliability