

Abstracts

Volume 6, Number 2

Striation Patterns in New and Used Ballpoint Pens (Jane A. Lewis)

This study examined the incidence and individuality of striations in strokes produced by ballpoint pens. Ink strokes produced by various ballpoint pens were examined microscopically. Striation patterns produced by high-end (> \$10.00) versus low-end pens (< \$10.00) were also considered. Differences in the incidence of such ballpoint pen striations were assessed from samples of new pens versus samples of used pens. Photomicrographs illustrate the types of ballpoint pen striations observed.

The Initial Profiling Trial of a Program to Characterize Forensic Handwriting Examiners' Skill (Bryan Found and Doug Rogers)

This paper reports the results of the first profiling trial of a program that was developed to provide information concerning the skill characteristics of document examiners in expressing authorship opinions on handwritten text and signatures. This information is provided to participants of the profiling trials in the form of a certificate that numerically describes the nature of their skill in terms of correct, error, and conservatism rates. The rationale for the program, given recent criticisms of opinion identification evidence of this type, and some elements of the testing program are described. The performance feedback package is overviewed which provides examiners with the opportunity for corrective action where required. In this trial, 20 government employed document examiners provided opinions on the process of production and authorship of 250 questioned signatures that were a mixture of genuine, disguised, simulated, and auto-simulated signatures. Findings for the group included a very low error rate (0.04%) for authorship opinions, with a high correct rate for genuine signatures, and a high conservatism rate for simulated and auto-simulated signatures. Examiners correctly identified that signatures were simulated in 95% of instances.

Lineup: The Reliability of Examinations Involving Multiple Writers (David L. Parrett and Garry Szabo)

A 1999 United States District Court ruling suggested possible bias in one-on-one questioned to known suspect document examinations. The ruling was, in part, a result of document examination critic Mark Denbeaux's assertion that an examination of the writing of several persons similar to a police "lineup" might produce a different opinion by the examiner. In contrast to the traditional police "lineup" of a few individuals, this study employed the writing of 1,000 "suspects." Four examiners were provided a questioned document consisting of a "London Letter." They were given the task of determining if the questioned author's handwriting was among the 1,000 "London Letters" gathered from different writers. All four examiners, encompassing a wide range of experience, reached definitive correct conclusions.

Identifying Manufacturer and Date of Manufacture of a CD-R and CD-RW (Sandra Ramsey Lines and Jared M. Annes)

A computer disc was suspected as having been produced in the summer of 2002, rather than the dates displayed for the files on the disc that indicated the disc was used (burned) on May 21, 1999. The forensic document examiner was asked to: remove the stick-on label that obscured the information underneath; identify the manufacturer or distributor from the information imprinted on the disc; then make contact with the manufacturer/distributor to determine the dates of manufacture and distribution of this particular disc to prove or disprove the disc was burned in 1999. Research into the manufacture and distribution of a CD-R and CD-RW revealed that it is possible to identify the manufacturer of compact discs by using special software. The label was removed without damage to the disc and the information it contained. Contact was made with the manufacturer and distributor of the CD-R. It was learned that the disc was in existence as the time the information was purportedly burned on it.

Dichroic Filters: Their Use in Questioned Document Examinations (Gerald Richards)

This paper provides a description and history of dichroic filters as they have been adapted and used by the forensic document examiner. In addition, an explanation is provided as to how the filters function in conjunction with the human eye or electronic imaging device. Different types of filters and their sources are fully described.

**The Handwriting Testimony in the Trial of Bruno Richard Hauptmann
(A. Frank Hicks)**

The trial testimony involving the kidnapping and subsequent death of Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr. was explored in some detail. The strategies used by the prosecution and the defense when questioning the document examiner experts were addressed and some of the more notable answers highlighted. Photos of the ransom letters and some court charts have been shown.