GRAPHOLOGY AND FORENSIC DOCUMENT EXAMINATION

When one thinks of the term *handwriting expert* one of two thoughts come to mind:

1. The forensic document examiner that examines and compares two bodies of handwriting for the determination of authorship, or
2. The graphologist that examines handwriting for purposes of personality assessment or other similar clairvoyant-type determination.

At the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners (ASQDE) we consider it vital to make clear the distinctions of graphology and forensic document examination both as part of our membership requirements and in our public statements. In particular the ASQDE has serious concerns when the two very distinct subjects overlap or are perceived as overlapping by the courts.

It must be clearly stated that graphology, as practiced in North America, has no place in forensic document examination. This comparison is akin to comparing astronomy to astrology. Forensic document examiners do not determine the gender of unborn children from the handwriting of expectant mothers. Forensic document examiners do not determine that handwriting has the qualities of a felon. Forensic document examiners do not assess and determine one's sexual performance capabilities from their handwriting. As fantastic as these examples may appear, each and every one of them, and many more that are just as outlandish, have been promoted in the past by graphologists in North America.

There are some in the graphology world who are crossing over into forensic document examination. There are significant problems with this. First, those who accept the fantastic capabilities of graphology clearly demonstrate a lack of foundational science in their applications of handwriting examinations. Second, those same individuals do not strictly follow all of the published industry standard bullet points for training in forensic document examination. This form of "training" is not just "different" to which some courts have eluded. Proficiency studies of forensic document examiners with training that fully meets the published industry standards have been conducted for 25 years by multiple, independent researchers and are documented accordingly. Not one single proficiency study, let alone comprehensive, independent, and multiple studies, have been conducted solely on graphologists purporting to also practice forensic document examiners and with training that does not fully meet the published industry standards for training.

The ASQDE membership is comprised solely of forensic document examiners with documented and extensive training in forensic document examination as a serious science-based study that meets all criteria of published industry standards.