
Identification of Handwriting

Writing is a conscious act. Still, through repeated use, the actual formation of each letter and word becomes almost automatic, so that the experienced writer concentrates most of his conscious thought on the subject matter rather than on the writing process itself. Thus, writing comes to be made up of innumerable subconscious, habitual patterns, which are as much a part of the individual as any of his personal habits or mannerisms. Writing is more, however, than a set of subconscious habits. It is a living, gradually changing part of the writer and is far from a mechanical reproduction prepared by the complex human mechanism of muscles and nerves that are called into play to produce it. It is influenced by a mental picture of copybook form, modified by individual taste and the writer's ability to imitate that which is in his mind. Physical and mental conditions at the time of writing may affect it. Whether it is a criterion of personality is debatable, but that it is individual to each and every person is an established fact. Therefore, it can be identified, and the identification is based on all the elements that combine to create the individuality.

The factors that identify any person's writing are numerous. Some are more important than others, but conditions surrounding the particular case determine those that are to be given the highest identifying value.

In a problem involving the authorship of handwriting, all characteristics of both the known and unknown specimens must be considered. Basic writing habits common to both must agree if all are the work of the same writer. A single significant difference between the two is a strong indication of two writers, unless this divergency can be logically accounted for by the facts surrounding the preparation of the speci-