



## Jurisprudence Section – 2003

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### E18 Understanding Handwriting Evidence

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Upon completion of this presentation, the audience will learn the advantages and disadvantages of different types of handwriting evidence presented in legal proceedings. Methods for the collection and submission of such evidence will be discussed relative to maintaining the expert's objectivity. A suggested approach to the scientific examination of handwriting evidence and report preparation will show the audience how to limit opposing expert testimony, expedite pleas, reduce court time, and how to effectively present results that are court friendly.

Despite a world that is becoming increasingly reliant on electronic means of correspondence, handwriting remains the quickest and least expensive method of communication. Although electronic forms of commerce have gradually increased and resulted in a reduction in some routine forms of handwriting evidence, there is still considerable documentation that uses handwriting and the signature as a viable security device. Handwriting examination is one of the few forensic disciplines that can directly associate a person with a crime. Therefore the requests for handwriting examinations remain in demand. Handwriting evidence also offers inherent benefits in court over other types of forensic evidence because most persons have used some form of handwritten communication at one time or another. The illustrative nature of handwriting evidence lends itself to courtroom presentation; however, the value of this characteristic has not been fully utilized to the benefit of the court or the profession. The frequent occurrence of opposing handwriting experts in the courtroom, suggests a lack of universal scientific validity in the profession. This presentation will discuss the value and limitations of different types of handwriting evidence in legal proceedings. The importance of objectivity when collecting and submitting handwriting evidence for expert examination will be reviewed. The preparation of reports and the scientific basis upon which these reports are based will be explained. The establishment of standard handwriting examination procedures based on a scientific method approach may ultimately expedite pleas, reduce court time, limit opposing expert testimony, and present findings which are both meaningful and lay friendly.

**Handwriting Evidence, Objectivity, Testimony**