



Jurisprudence Section – 2011

E16 Considerations in Selecting and Working With Forensic Document Examiners

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be able to recognize the choices among advertised handwriting experts and forensic document examiners and be able to better understand the offered expertise levels that have developed due to the ease of internet advertising and the lack of barriers into the profession or regulation in forensic science. A review of empirical research findings on development of expertise will promote greater understanding of necessary considerations by those who engage or cross-examine experts in general. Educational programs in document examination will be reviewed to promote awareness and an ability to better select the desired type of expertise.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating how improved reliability will occur for attorneys seriously seeking a neutral, highly educated expert to competently analyze evidence, thus leading to lessened error.

Unfamiliarity with the history of the forensic document profession coupled with poorly informed knowledge concerning the examination of documents has led to frequent confusion among legal professionals who encounter this forensic discipline. Misconceptions exist concerning the examination of documents and specifically concerning the examination

of handwriting patterns. While some confusion may be due to FRE 901 sanction of non-expert handwriting opinions, greater misinformation is due to the proliferation of online expertise. In spite of honed critical thinking skills, legal professionals are unprepared to wade through internet advertisements and the incredible and often false witness claims found there. How to find your way through the spectacular marketing of handwriting and document examination expertise? The differing paths to forensic document examination skill will be reviewed and evaluated to provide assistance to the legal professional in selecting experts as well as in encountering evidence and expertise claims. The best practice for working with an expert will be discussed to promote better understanding of the expert versus advocacy role with the goal of preventing reckless expert opinions and negligent presentation of evidence in legal motions or in testimony.

Forensic Document Examination, Expertise, Reliability