



## Questioned Documents Section - 2014

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### J14 Effective Court Charts

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After attending this presentation, forensic document examiners will learn the most effective ways to demonstrate findings in disputed document cases. Forensic document examiners learn simple and more complex technologies available to them for court chart construction.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by improving their basic preparation of court exhibits suitable for specific types of cases.

This presentation will provide attendees with an understanding of elements present in an effective court chart. In a disputed will case, 4X enlarged questioned and known signatures could be mounted on foam board and labeled. Questioned overwriting from an altered medical record may be enlarged, printed on a standard sheet of paper, and displayed with a projector for opaque items. Images of evidence imported into popular software programs allow for the projection of significant features of questioned and known writings on a screen in the court room. These and an array of familiar methods and new technologies that produce effective court presentations for forensic document examiners will be offered.

Forensic document examination is the application of allied sciences and analytical techniques to questions concerning documents. Disputed handwriting cases require the visual, microscopic, and instrumental analysis of questioned documents and known documents. These are then compared and an evaluation of the significance of the individualizing characteristics completes the examination. The creation of an effective demonstrative exhibit conveys significant findings to a jury. Chart preparation can also be a very important part of the examination process by scanning questioned and known writings in order to facilitate a side-by-side comparison. These charts may accompany the report and depict the significant features which support the conclusion in the case. Charts may also be utilized in the presentation of photomicrographs that are used to depict the qualities of a black ballpoint pen inked signature in order to prove that it is an original document rather than a copy.

The preparation of a simple court exhibit using a slide presentation program will be demonstrated along with standard paper exhibits meant to be published to the court. Graphic imaging software programs allow the creation of study charts that may also be attached to a report. Study charts in signature cases capture all of the questioned and known signatures, eliminating the surrounding printed material from each evidence item. A study chart arranges all of the questioned and known signatures in the case in a nutshell. Demonstrative charts can also be generated using the report features of a database that assists forensic document examiners in the collection, dissection, analysis, and presentation of forensic results.

The type of chart constructed must suit the case, the attorney, the judge, and the court facilities in order to be effective. When a courtroom is equipped with very limited technology, the most effective charts may be 4-6X enlargements of evidence mounted on foam board. Additionally, some attorneys may have their own preferences for presentation, such as the use of one enlarged questioned signature paired with one enlarged known signature on several individual paper sheets rather than the arrangement of one questioned signature with five or six known signatures on the same chart or sheet. Effective charts suitable to particular cases and situations will be demonstrated.

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### Charts, Court Presentation, Documents