



Questioned Documents Section - 2016

J12 A Comparative Study of Common Individual Writing Characteristics in Determining Left- and Right-Hand Writings

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The goal of this presentation is to distinguish one handwriting from another and to determine handedness of the writer.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing how individual writing characteristics are useful in determining the handedness of the writer.

The majority of the world's population, irrespective of gender, is accustomed to writing with the right hand; few people use their left hand and very rarely a person is ambidextrous (i.e., is able to write with both hands). The determination of the handedness of a suicide note and of anonymous, threatening, and disguised writings is a vital point of inquiry for a handwriting expert. Handwriting is not only a design of letters, but also of specific mannerisms of writing based on the individual writing characteristics which help to associate a writer to a handwritten text. Certain individual writing characteristics are more often associated to either left-handed or right-handed writing that would allow the document examiner to determine the handedness of the writer.

The present study was conducted using a total of 500 writing samples from male and female writers who were between the ages of 18-65 years. The background of the writers varied and included students, retirees, and those employed in either the public or private sectors. The 500 samples were evenly divided into 250 left-handed and 250 right-handed writers whose writing was used to categorize individual writing characteristics more commonly associated to the left- or right-hand writing. For comparative study of Roman script, in upper and lower case, and numbers zero to nine, four writing samples were taken from the paragraphs in the Huber and Headrick *Facts and Fundamentals* book.¹ Using gel and ballpoint pens on white executive bond paper, the text was dictated to each writer who was using his or her accustomed writing hand. The writing samples were critically and exhaustively examined to differentiate the common individual writing characteristics that can be used in determining whether the writer was left- or right-handed.

Reference(s):

1. Roy A. Huber, A.M. Headrick, *Facts and Fundamentals*, CRC Press; 1st edition, April 15, 1999
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Handedness, Characteristics, Accustomed