



J9 The Creation of a Demand Note Reference Collection

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Learning Overview: This presentation will explore using three different digital platforms, Adobe® Bridge, Microsoft® Office Excel®, and Pikaso Write-On, to create a searchable demand note reference collection. A demand note is a written request for the receiving individual to perform an action, often used in bank robberies, pharmacy robberies, or threats. The intent is to compare the features of each of these programs and evaluate how effective they are in helping make associations between demand notes.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing attendees with a general framework on how to create their own digital reference collection and tailor it to their specific needs.

The Bank Robbery Note File (BRNF) was first developed in 1985 by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Document Section to provide a highly effective investigative service designed to assist with robberies where demand notes had been used. The basis for needing such a tool was that investigative experience demonstrated that subjects involved in the passing of such notes would continue to commit robberies until apprehended. Through the use of the BRNF, demand notes can be searched against each other in an attempt to make an association between cases. This can be of immense value because what may appear as an isolated bank robbery case may actually be a string of robberies that may never have been connected through conventional investigative techniques. Today, the BRNF contains more than 11,000 demand notes and uses the program Microsoft® Access to search and make associations with ease.

Currently, the Michigan State Police Questioned Document Unit has a total of 124 demand notes, spanning 20 years, with no defined program in place to assist in making associations between them. Looking to recreate the success of the BRNF at the state level, this study was focused on the development of a reference collection for demand notes encountered in casework. Three different digital platforms, Adobe® Bridge, Microsoft® Office Excel®, and Pikaso Write-On, were tested to evaluate the functionality and flexibility for a searchable demand note reference collection. Adobe® Bridge is a free digital asset management program that allows the user to preview, organize, edit, and publish files. An important feature of this program, and its draw for this study, is that a file's metadata can be edited. Specific keywords and labels can be assigned to a file, then searched using powerful filters and advanced metadata search features. Pikaso Write-On is a licensed program developed to collect, search, and manage large quantities of various documents. Many forensic document examiners in the field today are familiar with Write-On and its ability to assist in analyzing handwriting. Microsoft® Office Excel® is a licensed spreadsheet program that uses a grid of cells arranged in numbered rows and letter-named columns to organize data. Using several columns, features of each demand note were able to be documented and organized. In addition, a hyperlink can be associated to each demand note so that when clicked, the actual image can be visualized. In the end, a list of pros and cons from each of these programs was compiled and evaluated.

Questioned Documents, Digital, Reference Collection