

Journal of the American Society of Professional Graphologists

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THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL GRAPHOLOGISTS

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PURPOSE OF THE JOURNAL

1. To present theoretical and research papers in scientific graphology according to traditional academic standards.
2. To create a forum for helping graphology gain a wider academic and professional audience in America.
3. To interface with the international professional graphological community.

MANUSCRIPT INQUIRIES

Marc J. Seifer, Ph.D., Box 32, Kingston, RI 02881

SUBSCRIPTIONS & GENERAL INFORMATION

Peggy Kahn, 4 Wayfaring Road, Norwalk, CT 06850

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American Society of Professional Graphologists

A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH FOR RESEARCH IN GRAPHOLOGY

Thelma Imber Seifer

Paper presented before the Society, Swarthmore, PA, March 21, 1990

ABSTRACT: The success of any experiment in graphological research is no better than the pre-plan, design, method of approach, analysis, documentation and presentation of such data in a professionally accepted manner. This paper attempts to outline possible areas for graphological research, and also a strategy for presenting credible scientific findings.

INTRODUCTION

At the first meeting of the American Society of Professional Graphologists, we decided that research would be one of our primary goals. A research committee which I chaired, was organized to encourage scientific study, to discover inherent truths and to publish relevant findings in the Society's *Journal*. It is the goal of the research committee to encourage and help coordinate efforts to further such scientific endeavors. This paper has been written in order to help in that effort.

The purpose of our research is threefold:

- 1) To advance graphology nationally and internationally.
- 2) To gain increased acceptance in the scientific community.
- 3) To gain wider public recognition and utilization.

Research requires one to probe deeply and present facts and original ideas that demonstrate the validity of one's contentions or further proof of established theories. The following 10 steps are offered:

1. **FORMULATE** a concept of research.
2. **DELIBERATE:** Consider possibilities, hypotheses and counter-hypotheses.
3. **DECISION:** Narrow down to a manageable topic.
4. **GATHER** sufficient samples.
5. **EXAMINE** and extract published pertinent material.
6. **OUTLINE** your approach.
7. **ANALYZE SAMPLES** and apply scoring.
8. **EVALUATE** results.

9. **TEST** with additional random samples and with other colleagues.

10. **WRITE** standard form documentation for publication.

To design a research program, thoughtful observations are made in various areas of personal interest that would have worthwhile applications. Determine the component elements of the concept to be researched. When a broad topic is chosen such as addiction, it can then be narrowed down to more specific topics such as drug abuse, food disorders, smoking or alcohol abuse. How do these illnesses affect handwriting? Where do they stem from? Consider cause and effect.

If the topic was illness, for example, concentration on a particular ailment such as cancer would be suggested. Perhaps the researcher could attempt to replicate or elaborate upon Alfred Kanfer's work. Thus, the research could be further honed to specific types of cancer. Another avenue of research might be to correlate handwriting with current psychological thinking. Narrow probing to a manageable size.

The Theory or Hypothesis should be developed, and a preliminary topic expressed stating the ultimate goal. The researcher should eventually convert his findings into objective concepts that can be utilized by others and added to our graphological knowledge.

To gather background information, review what may have been done in the past on the subject. Evaluate this source material. Try to discard the outdated, trivial and irrelevant and then proceed to add substantiated new data, connections and synthesis.

Outline your approach making clear in a concise manner the unifying elements of your research. It may be a longitudinal study of handwritings of a person or family from early years to present time or a collection of handwriting of known persons with some particular attribute. For example, Patricia Siegel has made a study of left handed writers. Gather a sizeable representative sampling of 10 or more handwritings. When choosing a topic and seeking fresh handwriting specimens, you might start with a given paragraph to copy and then give the writer an opportunity for an original response to a particular question. You then have similar wording to compare with others, plus their response in their own words and expression.

Look for patterns, similarities, disparities and differences. Try to compile a profile of the important elements and significant characteristics they have in common. Quantify observations using the 40 indicators of the Psychogram or Thea Stein-Lewinson's measurements or a newly designed chart. Then select the specific appropriate ones and possibly weight them if they seem more important. Statistical quantification generally increases the scientific weight of the findings.

Score your samples and analyze results. Determine if they need

modification or if they are significant divergent differences. Does the profile or diagram show a meaningful measurable pattern? Have you uncovered something additional that you did not expect? Can you demonstrate your findings?

Design a control group and match it to a random group. Determine if you can duplicate your results with another sampling. Establish if other graphologists can reach the same results using your methods or with another approach. Use statistics, diagrams or graphs to show the significance of your findings. Identify the degree of variability (a standard range of plus or minus error). This gives integrity to the scientific approach. By these means you may prove or disprove your original premise, or it may lead you to further investigations. Don't ignore contradictory evidence. Embrace it. Explain to your readers the complexity of the topic you have chosen.

If the results are significant or even tentative, you might as a cautionary step, present them before a peer group. Discuss openly the problems and concerns that your research is generating. This type of dialogue may help clarify the situation, or generate new related ideas. If the results are accurate, objective and verifiable, they may be worthy to be prepared for publication. The report should be complete including abstract, headings, appropriate handwriting samples, graphs, statistics, development of the hypothesis, its significance, conclusions and a bibliography.

Current projects in our society include the topics of drug addiction, alcohol abuse, developmental problems and children's handwritings, determining integrity in handwriting, using the computer to simplify calculations, psychobiography, questioned documents and diagrams of the unconscious. Other areas of potential research might include: (1) different illnesses; (2) twins; (3) adopted children; (4) changing role of men and women; (5) obsessive-compulsive disorders; (6) stress and delayed stress; (7) brain dysfunction; (8) creativity and self-actualized writers; (9) psychohistory and psychobiography; (10) correlation or comparative studies with known current psychological tests or theories.

The success of any research task is only limited by our imagination.

BIOGRAPHY: Thelma Imber Seifer is an accountant, graphologist and handwriting examiner. With a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics and Statistics and a minor in Psychology from Brooklyn College, Mrs. Seifer has certificates in Graphology from the New School For Social Research, (4-year program) and from Felix Klein's Advanced Courses in Handwriting Analysis. A member of the National Society of Graphology and the American Board of Forensic Examiners, she is also a charter member of both the National Bureau of Document Examiners and the American Society of Professional Graphologists.