

## **Council of Graphological Societies Journal (1976).**

### A LETTER TO A NEW GRAPHOLOGIST

by Milton Moore

Dear Harold,

Your questions regarding the uses and limitations of graphology, getting started, qualifications and public acceptance are all very pertinent. As a fellow beginner, I do not have all of the answers, but I would like to share a few thoughts with you and give you what information I have. References and a bibliography are provided for areas you may wish to investigate further.

I suggest you start your education with Huntington Hartford's book, "You Are What You Write". It is a comprehensive survey of graphology and the philosophies of many eminent contributors to this field. It would be beneficial to have Klara Roman's "Encyclopedia of the Written Word", as it provides a source of practically every term and concept associated with graphology (out of print and hard to find). Reading materials will vary from the serious to the 'anyone can do it', and some of the better books are out of print or have not been translated into English.

You should consider joining at least one of the professional, graphological organizations. They provide contacts with fellow graphologists and keep you up-to-date on recent developments through newsletters, seminars and conventions. Organizations vary in size, purpose and quality. I belong to two fine organizations-the American Association of Handwriting Analysts (AAHA) and the American Handwriting Analysis Foundation (AHAF).

AAHA is headquartered in Illinois and most of their members live in the mid-west. They have four levels of membership: honorary, student, associate and professional, the latter two obtained through testing. The professional membership level asks more rigid requirements regarding your contribution to graphology. Student membership is limited to two years at which time the student is expected to apply for associate status.

AHAF headquarters is in California with most members living in Western U.S. All members are considered active as long as they comply with the bylaws and pay their dues. Any active member may become certified through a rigid testing program.

Another group, the National Society for Graphology (NSG), is centered in New York City. It has stringent requirements for professional membership similar to those found in Europe. They also have an associate, student and non-active membership.

All these professional organizations have strong ethical standards and many of their members have earned doctorates and other advanced academic degrees.

Each association publishes a newsletter. AAHA has a library which members may use by mail [so does AHAF now]. None of them offers a correspondence course, but will provide names of their members who do.

Ideally a student should study graphology at the college level, however, New York's New School For Social Research is the only accredited U. S. College offering a comprehensive, resident course in graphology by Dan and Florence Anthony (2 1 semester hours). NOTE: This school no longer has a graphology program.

State or national standards similar to those established for lawyers, doctors, accountants and other professionals have not been set for graphologists, therefore, organizations such as AAHA and AHAF establish their own. Quotes from their recent newsletters indicate the concern and divergent opinions of their members in this area:

In strict "dictionary" terminology, a profession is "...in general, applied only to a pursuit that requires years of study and training before one is ready to follow it as a means of livelihood; the term also often implies that one has undergone certain tests of one's fitness and has won a degree or has given proof of one's qualifications and has been licensed to practice; it often also implies devotion to a higher end than that of personal profit or the earnings of a livelihood..." AAHA News-1974.

At the present time, certain bodies dealing with handwriting analysis in this country (and many individuals, to be sure) issue "certificates" which purport to attest to the authenticity given/received, and of the individual's ability to exercise his knowledge in an ethical professional manner.

Also at the present time, there are absolutely no standards of graphological proficiency; consequently, any certificate is only as valuable as the quality of paper upon which it is printed. AAHA News-Jan-Feb. 1975.

The first time you accept a dollar or two dollars from a friend or client for a handwriting analysis, you are technically a professional. AHAF News- 1st Quarter, 1974.

As graphologists, we are often sorely tempted, in an effort to present ourselves as being truly professional, to incorporate terms borrowed from the behavioral sciences; there is little objection to this practice, providing that the terms employed are fully understood, both by the analyst and his client. AAHA News-1974. There needs to be some way to assure those requesting the service of a graphologist that they will be dealing with a reputable analyst. AAHA News.

Most organizations outside graphology publish ethical standards. I have borrowed a few from the American Personnel and Guidance Association's Ethical Standards, which could apply to anyone dealing with human relations:

1. Members have and practice specialized knowledge, skills and attitudes, which are derived through scientific inquiry and scholarly learning.
2. They acquire these through professional preparation preferably at the graduate level, as well as through in-service training.
3. Their knowledge is constantly tested and extended through research and scholarly inquiry.
4. The field has a literature of its own, although it must draw portions of its contents from other areas of knowledge.
5. The members must meet certain standards.
6. The public recognizes and has confidence in the profession.
7. A service is provided to individuals and society above personal gain.
8. There is a code of ethics.

Harold, you asked how graphological knowledge can be used. Klara Roman describes graphology as "the art and science of determining qualities of the personality from the script." Since these qualities may have a bearing on all of our relationships, I think graphology has unlimited application. For example, it can be used to complement existing personnel selection methods. The graphologist who specializes in this area must be knowledgeable in basic management practices and the process of establishing criteria for the job. Betty Link, in her book "Graphology, a Tool for Personnel Selection", is a good source for identifying various qualities through handwriting analysis .

The analyst needs to know the type of people with whom the employee will be dealing; whether he will be working under supervision or alone, or supervising others; whether the group relationships require independence or cooperation. He should inquire about the product being sold or the service being presented to the public; about the market, the competition and the area of operation; whether rural, suburban, urban, or industrial. He should ask to whom the employee reports, and what company image is to be represented.

Teachers and parents can use graphology to understand behavioral changes in children caused by physical, mental or emotional stress. A good example is the teenager going through puberty. Handwriting

may change considerably at this time reflecting the turmoil which occurs as the child struggles to become adult. Parent reactions may take the form of punishment or an attitude which makes the child feel unwanted or inferior. The graphologist may not be able to diagnose all problems, but the trained observer should be able to recognize disturbed writing and either help the individual or refer him to a professional who can.

Graphology can be used to determine compatibility of prospective partnerships -- marriage, business, roommates, teammates, etc. It may also help current partners identify and resolve compatibility problems. From the script you can discover which partner is better qualified to handle finances, whether either prefers the company of others or likes to work alone, how each might react to crisis, and many other aspects which may determine success or failure.

Most texts discuss the many uses of graphology. I strongly feel that when it is used in a specific area, such as counseling or personnel selection, the graphologist should have the associated training associated with that field. Also graphology should complement rather than replace other personality assessment methods such as the interview, body language, and other testing. [Handwriting analysis is one of many personality assessment methods]

Speaking of testing, it would be advantageous for every graphologist to take a basic course in psychological testing. At least they should review one of the better known texts such as those by Cronbach or Anastasi in order to understand concepts of validity, reliability and objectivity. Validity is probably the most important because it basically means a device measures what it is supposed to measure. For example, if one claims that a particular spacing of letters, words or lines represents certain characteristics, one should be able to verify this consistently.

Some graphologists claim 80-90% success in their selection procedures. To prove such claims would require the employer to randomly hire applicants regardless of their qualifications, including potential failures. Graphological evaluations would be made at the initial hiring noting those applicants which had potential for success. At a later date a predetermined criteria (supervisor's ratings, sales records, turnover) would be used to measure success or failure. If the graphological evaluation correlated well with the criteria, the method may be valid. Normally graphology is not the only method used in personnel selection and companies do not hire potential failures, therefore, it may be impossible to do an accurate validation study of this type. In an excellent article, "Title VII and Employee Selection Techniques" printed in *Personnel* (Feb. 1973), dealing with employee selection techniques and test validation procedures, Miriam Safren noted that most employers don't bother to find out whether test scores or any other standards are related to later performance.

If an analyst is reliable, he will make consistent observations. This is more apt to be true if he is using a measurable type of analysis. While accurate measurements of slant, spacing and size are possible, it is often difficult to determine form level, rhythm and other dynamics. These latter aspects are very important and yet they are the hardest to standardize for purposes of evaluation. Ideally, when separate analyses of the same script are made using the trait-stroke, holistic or any other method, the results are identical!

Reliability is achieved through standardization and should enable the graphologist to repeat the results obtained by his fellow professionals. This requires the collective efforts of graphologists and their organizations. Standardizing texts, correspondence courses, lectures, and other instructional materials can provide direction for the student, but they should not limit one's creativity and self-study.

A test is objective when personal viewpoints and other biases do not affect the outcome. When personal likes or dislikes creep into the evaluation, that subjectivity affects the accuracy. An objective evaluation will be interpreted similarly by different evaluators; likewise, it will be interpreted the same way by a single evaluator who reviews it at different times. An objective analyst will not be affected by the fact that his client is a prisoner, divorcee, belongs to one sex or ethnic group, has body odor or behaves in some manner he doesn't like.

Even the government is concerned with testing. Due to misuse of personality tests, the 1964 Civil Rights Act was expanded in 1970 to require employers to validate tests if it appeared they were using them to discriminate in their hiring. The definition of 'tests' in this legislation is broad enough to include graphological evaluations.

You asked about public acceptance and limitations of graphology. It's discouraging for the beginner to learn that our government classifies it under amusements and recreation including it with such 'professions' as snake charmer, palmist, freak, soothsayer, striptease artist, card reader, etc. (Note: This was changed several years ago through the efforts of Rose Matousek and it is now listed in the Library of Congress under Psychology). Even authors of children's texts reflect their bias against graphology as my daughter's eighth grade health book; indicated:

"Your handwriting is not a trustworthy indication of character or personality. But many people waste money each year consulting so-called experts who claim ability to describe people's character and personality traits by looking at samples of their handwriting. More than anything else your handwriting reflects factors as the type of handwriting instruction you have had, the small-muscle coordination you possess, and the interests you take in your handwriting."

Graphology is not properly recognized in this country because of misuse by opportunists and the uneducated. Nightclub performances, carnivals, and shoddy reporting are more often for personal gain than public welfare. People are curious about their behavior and they frequently accept generalized statements from astrology charts, personality tests and graphological analyses as applicable to themselves. These generalizations have been described as the 'Barnum Effect' by psychologist Paul Meehl, named for P. T. Barnum, the circus showman, whose formula for success was to have something for everyone. This principle can give beginners a false sense of accomplishment and the client's praise may encourage them to continue with such "Bamumeese".

The lack of research limits graphology in academic and other professional circles. As Leslie King stated in the AAHA News, "it is a sad commentary that each month Psychological Abstracts reports approximately 2,000 experiments and studies, yet in the past decade research reports in handwriting analysis have averaged less than one report every two months." There hasn't been much listed in the Abstracts since 1971. In 1969, handwriting and graphology were deleted as individual subjects indexes and all associated materials were lumped under writing'. There have been pertinent studies reported in private journals and newsletters, but they have not received the public exposure they deserve.

Perhaps the major problem for the beginner is that of direction and becoming 'qualified'. With one exception, handwriting organizations do not prescribe a course of study leading to certification. The one organization which does, relies heavily on the trait-stroke concept. This method, formulated by Abbe Michon in the late 1800s, assigns meanings to individual strokes. Advocates claim that t-bars, loops and curlicues have specific meanings depending on how they are made and where they are placed. In my opinion, this approach is outdated and does not properly consider the dynamics of writing. Most professional graphologists in other organizations take a more eclectic approach or subscribe to a holistic view which considers writing in its entirety and emphasizes that no single component has a fixed meaning or can be interpreted without reference to all the other features. This is more apt to result in an accurate, in-depth analysis of the personality.

The beginner, however, may have trouble with the holistic approach, especially if he relies on self-study or is academically deficient. Perhaps universal standards will eventually be established which include desired avenues of study for meaningful qualification.

Well, Harold, I hope this will give you food for thought and get you started. Graphology is a challenging field and one which will give you a great deal of personal satisfaction. I encourage you to attend the AHAF Convention this year. You will meet many professionals who are friendly and anxious to help you. If I can be of further assistance, please call or write.

Sincerely,

Milt Moore

(Milton Moore, CG, has studied graphology since 1966. He retired from the USAF in 1979 after 26 years as a fighter pilot. He has a BS from U of Maryland in Frankfurt, Germany an MA in Guidance and Counseling and an MA in Human Relations from Louisiana Tech U. He was previously a Professional member of AAHA and is a Certified Life member of AHAF.)