

An Overview of the Handwriting Analysis Systems in the Market

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ABSTRACT

Handwriting Analysis or Graphology is a field of study that uses analysis of handwriting to identify a person's personality and character. As computer technologies advance, the amount of time, exhaustion of repetitive analyse, complexity of the graphology processes and the ability to produce the graphology reports to clients timely, make the graphologists realise the importance of computerising their handwriting analysis process. The computerised handwriting analysis or handwriting analysis system allows graphologists to meet the increasing demands for graphology. There are many computer-aided handwriting analysis systems in the market. This paper aims to provide an overview of the handwriting analysis systems in the market. Five computerised handwriting analysis systems are discussed. Graphologists sponsor these systems with the aim of promoting the use of graphology by providing an overview of how handwriting analysis works for non-graphologists. The respective websites of these systems also include comprehensive information about graphology.

Key words: Handwriting analysis, Graphology, Computerised handwriting analysis, Handwriting analysis system

INTRODUCTION

Handwriting Analysis or Graphology is a field of study for identifying and understanding people's personality, behaviours and characters through analysing their handwritings. It is not something new as the techniques of graphology have been used for many years in numerous applications. The most common application of graphology is in employment profiling (Internet Health Library, 2000).

Handwriting analysis is a time-consuming and complicated process. It may take a few hours or even a few days to analyse a page of handwriting, depending on the level of detail and comprehensiveness of the report required. Each handwriting needs to go through a series of rigorous analysis processes which consider such factors as size, slant, width rhythm, style and pressure of the handwriting. Usually, a few lines of words are not sufficient for an analysis. A page of handwriting is required for a thorough analysis. Owing to the amount of time, exhaustion due to repetitive analysis, complexity of the processes and the need to produce reports to clients in a timely manner, graphologists have realised the importance of computerising their handwriting analysis process. Handwriting Analysis System (also called Graphology Analyser) allows graphologists to meet the increasing demands for their skills. Some graphologists have even commercialised their handwriting analyser as off-the-shelf software. Sheila Lowe & Associates is an example of a graphology website (RI Software Inc., 2004) and there are many similar websites.

HANDWRITING ANALYSIS SYSTEM

Five Handwriting Analysis Systems, namely, Jerral Sapienza's Self-Analysis, Andy Hunt's Graphonomizer, Handwriting University's Handwriting Wizard, Sheila Lowe's Handwriting Analyzer and Garth Michaels' Handwriting Analyst are discussed. Each of the system's functionalities and usage are described in detail. Screen shots of each system are also provided.

Jerral Sapienza's Self-Analysis

HWA.ORG sponsored this online handwriting analysis system. The system was written, engineered and maintained by Jerral Sapienza, a handwriting analyst and computer teacher with more than 30 years of experience in analysing handwriting (HWA.ORG, 2004).

The system works by asking the user several questions about different aspects of their own handwriting or the handwriting sample the user is looking at. The user will be asked to choose one answer from the list of possible answers. The system will then produce a report based on the answers given. Figure 1 shows a screen shot of the system.

A system guide is provided to use this system effectively. Users could review the standard format or some of the examples and then prepare their handwriting sample. Help is also available if the user is uncertain about some of the handwriting analysis terms. Users are asked to rate the user interface and accuracy of the report produced by the system.

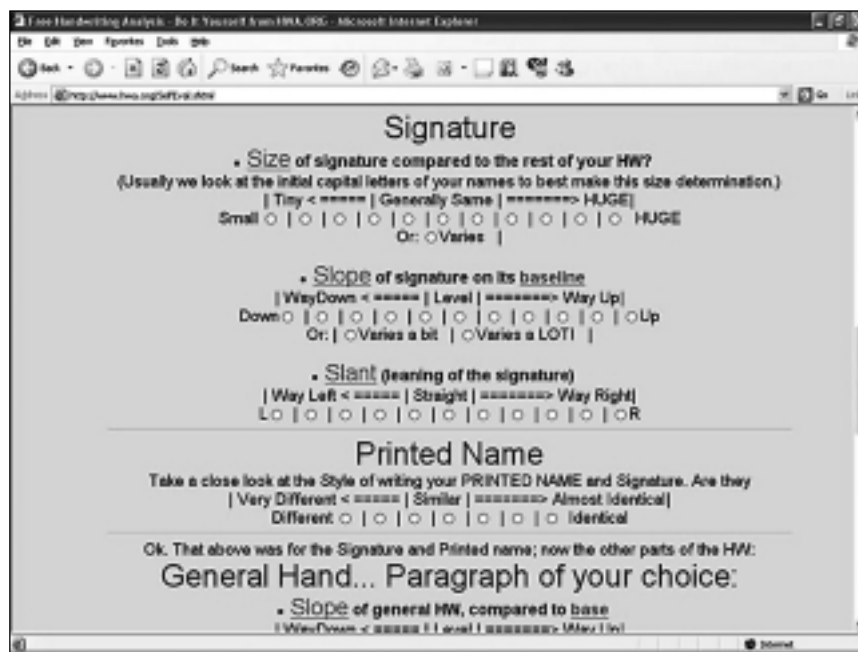


Figure 1. Screen Shot of Jerral Sapienza's Self-Analysis.

Andy Hunt's Graphonomizer

Quantum Enterprises sponsored this handwriting analysis system, called Graphonomizer. Graphonomizer was originally created by Andy Hunt in 1992 and adapted in 1996 for use on the World Wide Web. It was developed using well-established scientific procedures, objective evidence derived from statistical analysis and the research studies of many scientific investigators in laboratories throughout America and Europe (Quantum Enterprises, 2004).

Before users start their analysis using the free service, they are asked to prepare the handwriting sample according to detailed instructions given. The system will then guide the

users through a series of questions. When the answers to the questions have been received, the results will be automatically transferred to the Graphonomizer computer program which will use the scores to compile a personality bar chart and produce a personality profile. The chart shows the scores for the eight personality traits of the subjects, namely, independence, assertiveness, submissiveness, perfectionism, ambition, aggression, extraversion and worldliness, scoring from 0 to 10 on each.

Upon completion, users have to click the ‘Submit’ button and the analysis report will appear on the computer screen. The report is a complete analysis which contains about 500 to 1200 words, depending on the number of characteristics shown in the handwriting and a personality chart with scores for eight major personality traits. The handwriting analysis system was rated 76.2% accurate by its users. Figure 2 shows the screen shot of the Andy Hunt’s Graphonomizer.



Figure 2. Screen Shot of Andy Hunt’s Graphonomizer.

Handwriting University’s Handwriting Wizard

Handwriting Wizard is an online free self-test handwriting analysis system owned and sponsored by Handwriting University (2004). Users are asked to prepare a cursive handwriting sample on unlined paper for the analysis. Figure 3 shows a screen shot of the Handwriting University’s Handwriting Wizard. Users start their analysis by answering a series of questions and matching the prepared handwriting sample with the examples shown. The text-based report will be sent to the user via email.



Figure 3. Screen Shot of Handwriting University’s Handwriting Wizard.

Handwriting Wizard consists of nine handwriting characteristics. Each characteristic represents handwriting’s uniqueness and element. Table 1 shows the nine characteristics of the Handwriting Wizard.

Table 1. Nine Handwriting Characteristics of the Handwriting Wizard.

| Characteristics | Handwriting Elements |
|-----------------|---|
| 1 | Slant |
| 2 | Size |
| 3 | Stem of the lower case “d” and “t” |
| 4 | Lower case “o” |
| 5 | Random strokes |
| 6 | Humps of the letter “M” and “N” |
| 7 | How high the “t-bar” crosses the stem? |
| 8 | Shape of the lower loop or tail of the letter “y” and “g” |
| 9 | Margin and spacing |

Each characteristic consists of one or more questions. A sample is given for each option when users need further assistance. There are certain questions where users are allowed to choose more than one option and there are some which can be skipped. For a more accurate result, it is recommended that the user follows the instructions and completes as many questions as possible.

Sheila Lowe's Handwriting Analyser

Sheila Lowe's Handwriting Analyser applied and followed the German theory of handwriting analysis called Gestalt or holistic graphology concept. There are 65 personality traits that are important and identifiable in handwriting. For every trait, there is a list of handwriting characteristics to match (currently 5000 signs). The software can describe up to 65 personality traits and uses up to 5000 signs to do this (RI Software Inc., 2004). Figure 4 shows the screen shot for Sheila Lowe's Handwriting Analyzer.

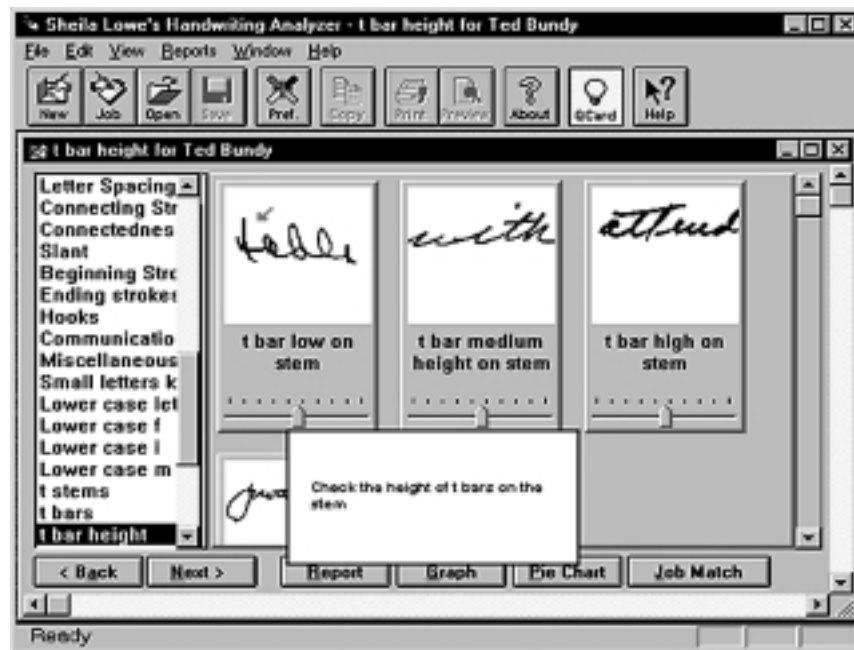


Figure 4. Screen Shot of Sheila Lowe's Handwriting Analyzer.

At least 10 of the categories should be completed in order for a report to be generated. It is up to the user how many more they want to choose. However, the more they do, the more accurate the report should be.

Sheila Lowe's Handwriting Analyzer is set up with 14 generic job profiles, but in real life every company has its own individual needs and requirements. The Job Profile Manager allows the business user to create his own profiles, based on a specific job description, so he can most closely match the candidate to the job requirements. To create a new job profile, the Profile Manager gives the user a list of about 40 general statements about jobs. The user ranks each statement on a scale of five, in relation to how important that statement is to the particular job under consideration. The computer uses the scores to create the job profile.

After a job profile has been selected, the computer compares the scores from the handwriting analysis already done to the scores required for the job. The resulting graph shows how close the candidate comes to a perfect match.

Garth Michaels' Handwriting Analyst

Handwriting Analyst is a graphology software developed by Garth Michaels, Dorothy Hodos and Marilyn Maze. The latest release for Handwriting Analyst is version 5.0. For every new analysis, the user is required to provide his/her name, writing hand (left-handed or right-handed) and gender. Handwriting Analyst consists of 60 multiple-choice questions. Each question provides several choices for user to select. Illustrations of each choice are provided

by on-screen samples. Examples of the characteristics are baseline slope, baseline variability, slant, margins, word spacing, expand, connectedness of small letters, connection of capitals, punctuation, pressure and more (Michaels, Maze and Hodos, 2004).

There are two types of questions, “Related Items” and “Unrelated Items”. “Related Items” are questions where you can only pick one item or option. “Unrelated Items” is question where the user can select more than one options. Figure 5 shows the screen shot for Garth Michaels’ Handwriting Analyst.

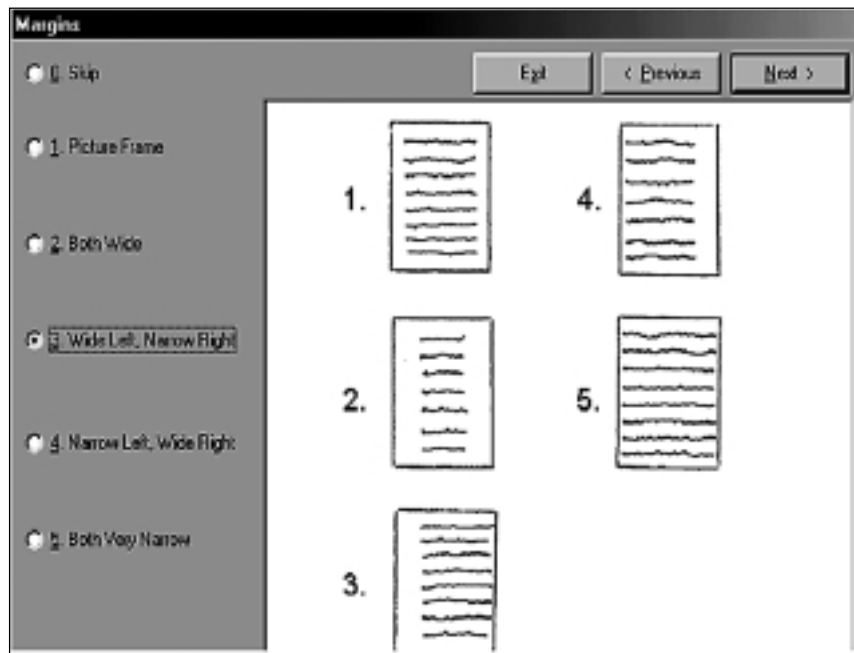


Figure 5. Screen Shot of Garth Michaels’ Handwriting Analyst.

There are 2 types of reports, Brief Report and Detailed Report. The Brief Report has most of the information that is found in the Detailed Report. The Brief Report provides a thumbnail sketch of the writer’s personality. The difference is that the Brief Report uses brief, concise statements while the Detailed Report contains detailed explanations of each characteristic. Detailed Report offers more elaboration and explanation of each trait.

Summary of Handwriting Analysis Systems

There is no best handwriting analysis system. It depends on the types of usage and the application areas. The right graphology software is the one which can suit most needs and usage. Each of the computerised handwriting analysis system discussed above has its own uniqueness. The more users understand handwriting analysis, the more accurate and comprehensive the analysis result will be. Table 2 shows the summary for the five computerised handwriting analysis systems.

Table 2. Summary for the Five Computerised Handwriting Analysis Systems

| No. | System Name | Description | Application Areas |
|-----|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. | Jerral Sapienza's Self-Analysis | Web-based computerised handwriting analysis system. The system works by asking user several questions about different aspects of the handwriting or the handwriting sample the user is looking at. Platform independent. It is a free handwriting analysis system. Text-based report type. | Personality Assessment |
| 2. | Andy Hunt's Graphonomizer | Web-based computerised handwriting analysis system. The system will guide the user through a series of questions. When the answers to the questions have been received, the results will be automatically transferred to the Graphonomizer computer program which will use the scores to compile a personality bar chart and produce a personality profile. Platform independent. It is a free handwriting analysis system. Text-based, graph, bar chart and pie chart report type. | Personality Assessment |
| 3. | Handwriting University's Handwriting Wizare | Web-based computerised handwriting analysis system. The system consists of 9 handwriting characteristics. Each characteristic consists of one or more questions. Platform independent. It is a free handwriting analysis system. Text-based report type. | Personality Assessment |
| 4. | Sheila Lowe's Handwriting Analyzer | Applying Gestalt or holistic graphology concept. Handwriting characteristics such as line spacing, margin, slant and pressure are represented by categories. At least 10 categories must be completed to generate a report. A standalone system. Runs on Windows. Price for Professional version is USD474 and Personal version is USD174. Text-based, graph, bar chart and pie chart report type. | Personality Assessment and Employment |
| 5. | Garth Michaels' Handwriting Analyst | The system consists of 60 multiple-choice questions. Each question represents one handwriting characteristic. A standalone application. Runs on Windows and consists of handwriting and signature. The price for Handwriting Analyst is USD39.95. Text-based report type. | Personality Assessment |

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