Is the `writing on the wall` for Handwriting?

Introduction
As the 20th century dawned, illiteracy rates in Ireland averaged 11%. The household returns from the 1901 and 1911 census in Ireland show fasimiles of our ancestors’ handwriting. The census image below shows a head of household who can read but cannot write. This prompted us to do a primary data survey to look at handwriting. Recent technological advances question the value and importance of handwriting in the workplace and we wondered if adults in Ireland would still value children being taught ‘joined up’ or cursive handwriting?

Methodology
Our survey was piloted to refine how the questions should be phrased. A network of friends and family should be phrased. A network of friends and family were shared as adults willingly filled in these sheets. Diverse workplaces to include schools, offices, hospitals and factories were targeted to write were shared as adults willingly filled in these sheets. Diverse workplaces to include schools, offices, hospitals and factories were targeted to write were shared as adults willingly filled in these sheets. Diverse workplaces to include schools, offices, hospitals and factories were targeted to write were shared as adults willingly filled in these sheets. Diverse workplaces to include schools, offices, hospitals and factories were targeted to write were shared as adults willingly filled in these sheets. Diverse workplaces to include schools, offices, hospitals and factories were targeted to write were shared as adults willingly filled in these sheets.

Results

1822 survey sheets were returned and analysed using Excel®.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Handwriting Preference</th>
<th>Biro</th>
<th>Roller ball</th>
<th>Pen and Ink</th>
<th>Pencil</th>
<th>Not stated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1235</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>942</td>
<td>51.70%</td>
<td>5.71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self assessment of own handwriting</th>
<th>Legible always</th>
<th>Legible to me</th>
<th>Not always legible</th>
<th>Illegible</th>
<th>Not stated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>942</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>26.78%</td>
<td>20.36%</td>
<td>0.89%</td>
<td>0.27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

93% of adults agreed that handwriting is still considered important in the workplace by a surprising 83%, with a margin of error of ± 0.017, using ± 1.96√(p(1 - p )⁄ n) important in the workplace by a surprising 83%, with a margin of error of ± 0.017, using ± 1.96√(p(1 - p )⁄ n).

Discussion

- The results of this survey are accurate at the 95% confidence interval with a margin of error of ± 2.34% due to the sample size of 1822.
- Despite careful attention to design and layout not all the questions were answered by all respondents.
- Surprisingly gender was the question which 22% failed to answer. Computerised surveys by contrast, prompt if a question is not answered.
- Studies show the global figure for left handedness ranges between 8.7%-9.2% which fits with our figure of 9%.
- Cursive or joined handwriting was developed and popularised to make writing faster. In the OECD’s survey of adult skills (PIAAC** 2012) three skills were evaluated literacy, numeracy and problem solving using computer skills. No mention is made of handwriting ability.
- Census 2011 states that 17% of the population were born outside Ireland which fits with our figure of 16.42% who first attended school in another country.
- Ireland has a less than 5% rate of pupil enrolment in early preschool public education. Time spent in early preschool supports cognitive, social and emotional development and later improves adult competencies.
- Handwriting is an important motor skill linked to reading and spelling.
- 68% support the view that children should still learn cursive or ‘joined up’ handwriting skills.
- Our results showed that handwriting is still considered important in the workplace by a surprising 83%, with a margin of error of ± 1.96% (p(1 - p) n).