

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *Fingerprints and Other Ridge Skin Impressions*

REFERENCE: Champod C, Lennard C, Margot P, Stoilovic M. *Fingerprints and other ridge skin impressions*. CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL, 2004, 285 pp.

Good texts on fingerprint methods are rare, and this volume, a collaboration between pairs of noted Swiss and Australian researchers, promised to be a welcomed addition. The book attempts to provide a survey of fingerprint detection methods combined with a discussion of examination philosophy, but the result is two books in one without the benefit of a much needed transition to make the two diverse aspects of latent print examination truly cohesive.

Neither book is successful. The perspective is limited to the limited scope of the researchers not based upon a concept of examination totality.

The overall effect is a patchwork approach that makes the book a barely acceptable addition to the forensic science library instead of a volume that could have been outstanding.

The work is divided into six chapters plus four appendices. Chapter 1 condenses a number of studies related to fetal development of friction ridge skin but the authors' indiscriminate use of "minutiae" to describe a wide array of individualizing features is confusing. Biological uniqueness is mentioned, then largely ignored. Chapter 2 attempts to explain the examination process of analysis, comparison, evaluation and verification (ACE-V) used in Daubert hearings, but defines the process as linear when, in reality, it is not. However, this ACE-V preamble is a convenience to introduce the intent of the book, that is, to present the argument that transparency is needed in fingerprint examination and can only be achieved by statistics. While a need exists for further studies in fingerprints that include

statistical analysis that is nicely stated in Chapter 6, the reasoning the authors' present in Chapter 2 is unconvincing. The fact that dogmatic myths and superstitions are still espoused by some examiners is a failing of the profession, but the remedy to correct this is not based in statistics.

Chapters 3 and 4 are devoted to fingerprint visualization and preservation methods designed for laboratory application with one segment describing crime scene enhancement of bloody impressions. The list of techniques is extremely thorough, and if the reader is seeking nothing more than an exhaustive compilation of literature references, the authors amply provide. What is missing is a more critical evaluation of the procedures in terms of effectiveness and practicality. For example, the inclusion of osmium tetroxide, which can be lethal, is of questionable value, and more inappropriate when osmium is not mentioned in the generic laboratory safety section. A reader wishing to utilize the information as a practical guide is better off following the flow chart in Appendix 3 and the reagent preparation guidelines in Appendix 4. Some bias is noticeable, such as limiting film discussion to 35 mm and including cadmium salts for post-ninhydrin treatment. Chapter 5 is a hodgepodge of topics, some pedantic, such as the suggestion for new terminology on the justification that the current terms are often abused, but most are very interesting, such as residue longevity studies.

The book has nuggets of value buried in a tome that overall has a lack of focus and suffers from inadequate editing. The merit of this book is in the appendices and references. The remainder misses the mark.

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