

## BOOK REVIEW

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### A Review of *Chemical Criminalistics*

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**REFERENCE:** Maehly, A. and Stromberg, L., *Chemical Criminalistics*, Springer-Verlag, 175 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010, 1981, 322 pages.

The authors of this work have written from the advantageous position of being intimately familiar with their subject, a qualification not universally available to authors of books on forensic science subjects. Indeed, the major strength of this book rests with the personal description of the actual laboratory work done in real cases. A unique contribution is the provision of the specific wording of reports in many cases. This is virgin territory for authors and yet is a subject often agonized over (and debated) by forensic scientists. While one might not agree with all the report outlines, it is useful to know how such things are done elsewhere.

As is often the case, the quality of the individual chapters varies. In a book of 20 chapters covering a wide range of subjects of interest to the forensic chemist, such variation is inevitable. The chapter on "The Forensic Expert" should, however, be mandatory reading for all who practice (or would like to practice) in the field.

In the Preface, the authors state that they have attempted to go beyond the books directed at students and investigators by including relatively numerous literature references. In this they have succeeded. Each chapter also includes a number of tables of data with practical significance. Unfortunately, in these, and sprinkled elsewhere throughout, there are a number of inaccuracies at least insofar as the North American scene is concerned. (For example, "In the Unites (sic) States there exists an agreement with the explosive manufacturing industry to add markers to their products." p. 258).

A major criticism of this book is the apparent lack of a firm editorial hand. The organization and numbering system is cumbersome and there are an unacceptable number of spelling and typographical errors. Some of these bring an element of humor, for example, "rubber casket" (p. 238) but their numbers distract the reader to the point that he concentrates on them rather than the substance.

The book will find its main value as excellent training material for new forensic chemists rather than as a manual for practitioners. One hopes that a second edition will correct the errors and incorporate more details of analytical procedures and interpretive data.

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