

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of *Photographs and Maps Go to Court*

REFERENCE: Gillen, L., Ed., *Photographs and Maps Go to Court*, American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing, Falls Church, VA 22046, 1986, 88 pp., \$25.00.

Advertised by the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing as “. . . an in-depth discussion on photogrammetry in U.S. Courts,” this book falls far short of this lofty claim. However, Mr. Gillen is more realistic, and reminds the user to bear in mind that the text is a transcript of oral presentations which have been edited to improve their clarity and readability. The presentations and subsequent panel discussion that are the basis of this book were recorded by a stenographer during a session on “Forensic Photogrammetry” held in March 1986 as part of the proceedings of the Annual Convention of the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing.

Certainly, for the novice who is preparing material for the courtroom, there is good advice based on the firsthand experiences of the participants. This information alone, in the mind of this reviewer, is well worth the book's \$25.00 price tag. Theodore Ciccone, in his presentation “Seeing is Believing,” emphasized the value of visual aids (photographs, maps, charts, diagrams, models, and so forth) in getting a point across to a judge or jury. And Al Quinn provided a useful summary of the role of the expert witness—who is he, and how does he fit into the system?

From an analytical standpoint, however, the book is disappointing. I had hoped to find a more detailed review of methods and procedures used to reconstruct geometries and kinematic events, but found only a (detailed) description of how to use perspective grids. Mr. Gillen, in his introduction, makes a passing reference to the Direct Linear Transformation (DLT), but the information provided here is far from sufficient for a potential user of this technique. At the very least, references should have been provided, and such additions fall well within Mr. Gillen's editorial license.

Perspective grids, as advocated by Bill Hyzer (and summarized in this book by Jack Whittall and Kimberly Miller-Playter), are a useful tool, but the limits of this tool must be clearly understood. Much has been written on perspective grids, and it appears they are being used more and more in court—but I have yet to see a clear description of the limits of the technique. Any analysis made without a thorough understanding of these limits could fall prey to a detailed examination, with disastrous consequences in the courtroom. For example, the use of perspective grids assumes that all “target” features are constrained to a common plane. If this is not the case, significant measurement errors could result.

Photographs and Maps Go to Court is easy reading. It still contains some irrelevant material and colloquialisms which detract the reader from the body of the text, but Gillen and his colleagues are to be commended for bringing this compendium together.

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