

## BOOK REVIEW

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# Forensic Science Glossary

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**REFERENCE:** Brenner JC. *Forensic Science Glossary*, CRC Press, Boca Raton Florida, 2000, 174 pp., \$39.95.

As the already expansive terrain of forensic science continues to expand its boundaries, the number of attendant technical terms continues to grow as well. A glossary which provides succinct, plain-English explanations for such terms has clear value, because it may help bridge communications barriers that may otherwise separate scientist from non-scientist, and which may, as well, act as a language chasm drawing apart one scientist from another.

The real trick of a glossary of this nature is to craft definitions which are not too diluted for the scientist, nor too technical for the non-scientist. Accomplishing this delicate balancing act is a daunting task. But John C. Brenner, in his *Forensic Science Glossary*, is up to the task.

Brenner's glossary of forensic terms offers a panoramic view of the interdisciplinary field of forensic science, revealing the meaning of technical terms drawn from such diverse, albeit interrelated, realms as: toxicology, chemistry, DNA analysis, ballistics, fingerprinting, and photography. An appendix of firearms manufacturers,

and their respective addresses, is appended to the glossary. Curiously, the glossary also contains the names of firearms manufacturers, although some of the firearms manufacturers included in the glossary are not included in the appendix. Why didn't Brenner simply list all the firearms manufacturers in the appendix?

Although Brenner, overall, does a very decent job of traversing the tightrope of defining technical terms in a way useful to scientist, and non-scientist as well, some of the definitions raise eyebrows. For example, the definition given for "Cannabis" fails to mention that Cannabis is known commonly as "marijuana" (and by street names, such as "grass" and "pot"). A particular glossary will probably never be all-inclusive to everyone's satisfaction. With this acknowledgment, it is nonetheless a bit odd that a forensic-related term such as "criminology" falls outside the ken of Brenner's glossary. Readers must remain mindful that, in light of the continually-evolving nature of the forensic science field, a glossary of forensic terms may, in short time, become appreciably "dated."

Brenner's glossary should certainly be of considerable assistance to persons learning the specialized language of forensic science. Police, criminal investigators, lawyers, and other people involved in some capacity with forensic science-related work are among those who may benefit considerably from the wide-ranging definitions culled in *Forensic Science Glossary*.

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