

BOOK REVIEW

Jan S. Bashinski,¹ M.Crim.

Review of: *Techniques of Crime Scene Investigation, 7th edition, and Techniques of Crime Scene Investigation Interactive Training CD-ROM*

REFERENCE: Fisher BAJ. *Techniques of scene crime investigation*. 7th ed. CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL, 2004, 507 pp.

Homeyer J, Mikolajczyk S. *Techniques of crime scene investigation interactive training CD-ROM*, CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL, 2004.

The seventh edition of Barry Fisher's classic work on crime scene investigation, based on an earlier text by Arne Svensson and Otto Wendel, carries on the tradition of its predecessors. This widely used textbook is designed as a basic reference for students of crime scene investigation, including police investigators, crime scene technicians, and forensic scientists. New with this edition is a companion interactive training CD ROM developed by Jane Homeyer and Sarah Mikolajczyk.

The book and CD focus on the practical aspects of locating, documenting, collecting and processing physical evidence in criminal cases. The first five chapters of the text address various aspects of crime scene management, as well as issues such as ethics, testimony and professional development. Chapters 6 through 12 discuss specific types of evidence such as fingerprints, firearms and biological materials. Chapters 13–16 outline important evidence issues associated with the investigation of specific types of crime, such as sexual assault, burglary, bombing, and homicide cases. Throughout the book, the discussion is illustrated with excellent photographs and actual case scenarios. The emphasis is on a broad overview of the subject, coupled with many practical and specific examples that provide guidance as to how to proceed in realistic terms.

Like its predecessors, this edition deserves to be in the library of every practicing forensic scientist, crime scene investigator and detective. However, owners of the 6th edition may find little new in the text to justify investing in the new edition. The principal update in 7th edition consists of new photographs, in particular color plates, that in several cases make the points illustrated more visible than they are in black and white.

¹ Forensic Science Consulting, El Dorado Hills, CA.

The discussion of DNA evidence is a bit dated, emphasizing the older RFLP technology, which has been virtually abandoned in favor of PCR-based STR profiling. CODIS has been based on STR typing for several years (on page 213, STR typing is incorrectly described as a combination of PCR with RFLP). The discussion of universal safety precautions in the chapter on blood and biological evidence is excellent. However, this would have been an excellent opportunity to stress that barrier protection serves the dual function of protecting the investigator against disease and protecting crime scene against contamination by the investigator—a particularly important point given the sensitivity of PCR-based DNA testing. The recommendation on page 40 that people at crime scenes should not wear gloves (unless infectious diseases are a concern) so that they will not be tempted to carelessly touch objects that might have fingerprints on them is problematic. Preventing contamination (not only using gloves, but also masks and other barriers) of the scene by biological material originating from the investigators is an important precaution.

Because of their breadth of scope and wealth of authoritative guidance on crime scene issues, previous editions of "Techniques of Crime Scene Investigation" have been widely adopted as academic textbooks and as reference sources for professional certification examinations. The 7th edition is equally worthy. The development of the companion interactive training CD for the 7th edition is particularly welcome. The CD covers all the major topics in the text. The learning objectives and self-administered tests are clear and unambiguous. The CD is professionally produced, easy to navigate, and should prove a valuable study guide both for the student and for the practitioner preparing for certification.