

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *Crime Scene Processing and Laboratory Workbook*

REFERENCE: Jones P, Williams RE. *Crime scene processing and laboratory workbook*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2009, 269 pp.

This book is a practical crime scene workbook intended to complement a crime scene investigation textbook like Barry Fisher's *Techniques of Crime Scene Investigation*. The authors are a former criminal/crime scene investigator and a forensic entomologist/educator. The workbook contains practical exercises that can assist students, working as individuals and in teams, in learning proper techniques for documenting, collecting, and processing physical evidence. The workbook and appendices contain a variety of forms like those a law enforcement agency might use in documenting the processing of photographs, latent fingerprints, bloodstains, and firearms. The reader is given various scenarios and is asked to process the evidence (such as latent prints suspected to be present on paper) and to complete various report forms.

The report forms are helpful and give the student examples of the necessity for proper documentation and clear written descriptions of the evidence. However, the reader is also told to examine various types of evidence, but without an instructor present it will be difficult for students to acquire the required techniques to accomplish the processing correctly. In some exercises, the reader is told they are not crime scene investigators, but are the laboratory personnel assigned to "work the case." The processing of suspected

bloodstain evidence, for example, asks students to work with various reagents to accomplish presumptive and confirmatory tests for blood. Without the proper scientific and criminalistics backgrounds, however, it may be dangerous for students to engage in such experiments and to assume they have the appropriate backgrounds to examine and interpret such evidence. In Chapter 10, the reader is asked to view and critique an episode of the television program *CSI*.

Another shortcoming is that the authors do not inform the reader in the introduction of the full array of equipment needed to complete the exercises. In addition, I believe an experienced instructor should be present to assist students in learning how to process the evidence, but also to understand the theory that explains why the evidence and chemicals react the way they do. I also have a small problem with conflicting language on the back cover and in the text about the objectivity of the crime scene investigator. The Preface states "CSIs are specialists. They are *objective* investigators." I could not agree more. However on the back cover, the authors state "Documentation tells the story of the crime and can ultimately prove a suspect guilty." Crime scene processing is the first step in a forensic science investigation and investigators must be taught that evidence may incriminate or exonerate the defendant, depending on the physical realities of the crime. This is the primary job of the CSI.

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