

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *Crime Scene to Court: The Essentials of Forensic Science, 3rd edn.*

REFERENCE: White PC. *Crime scene to court: the essentials of forensic science, 3rd edn.* Cambridge, UK: Royal Society of Chemistry, 2010, 569 pp.

Crime Scene to Court: The Essentials of Forensic Science is an edited volume, explaining the fundamentals and principles of forensic science. The book is intended for the criminal investigator practicing in the U.K.; for those outside the U.K., some chapters may be interesting but less directly relevant. It is also appropriate as a basic text for the laboratory examiner in the U.K. The book covers a broad range of forensic topics and expanding on the 2nd edition; three new chapters are included: Forensic Anthropology and Archeology; Forensic Entomology; and Forensic Ecology.

Perhaps, the most useful aspect of the text is the explanation of nondiscipline-specific topics that help the investigator learn their roles and responsibilities, the importance of quality assurance and accreditation, and a final chapter on the U.K.'s hierarchy of law, expert testimony, and report writing. While a number of texts cover a broad range of forensic topics, *Crime Scene to Court* goes beyond many texts in providing the comprehensive fundamentals of the legal process. The book also stresses the responsibilities of the investigator and expands on the role of the investigator to include how job duties translate to the legal setting.

An increasingly relevant discipline in forensic science is computer-based media, and the book provides an excellent chapter on this topic. The author structures the information in a way in which the criminal investigator (including those with only a basic knowledge of computer-based media) is provided with information in a clear and understandable manner. The information is explained in a way that increases the investigator's knowledge of the fundamental aspects of computer-based forensics to help the investigator

understand what to do and what not to do when encountering digital evidence. In addition, the content complements the lay-person's knowledge and is structured so that the reader could browse a computer while reading and increase their fundamental knowledge of computer-based media.

Chapter 5, Trace and Contact Evidence, includes a section on casework scenarios. The casework scenarios are outlined in a way that the investigator can learn through a scenario, meanwhile being provided the knowledge of that specific topic. In addition, the Forensic Ecology chapter is useful as many comprehensive books neglect this topic.

The surprising downside to the book is the lack of images, especially images that are in color. While the balance of printing cost of colored images and making the text affordable to a large audience is certainly understandable, there are some black and white images in the book that lose tremendous value. Figure 8.4, for example, is an image intended to illustrate the difference between inkjet and laser printing but the lack of color makes it difficult to view the differences between the two types of print. With high-quality photographs, color, characteristics, and definition being such an important aspect of evidence photography and analysis, as well as a helpful visual aid in any textbook, the black and white photos do an injustice to the quality information found in the book.

While the text is written specifically to a U.K. audience, the book is circulated around the world. While procedure, terminology, and abbreviations vary among nations and therefore may not be appropriate for an investigator in North America, perhaps the most useful contribution to a world audience would be to technical/scientific working groups and other organizations that are evaluating their procedures. *Crime Scene to Court* provides a very good basic structure of the practice of forensic science, particularly in the U.K.

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