

ABSTRACT

FINGERPRINTING – PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

The objective of this thesis is to present the forensic fingerprinting as a scientific method which, although in comparison with other forensic sciences being one of the oldest, is not out-dated at all, quite to the contrary – it presents an ever-changing and continuously developing field of science. The objective is approached through three distinctive and yet intertwined chapters corresponding with the title of the thesis – past, present and future of the fingerprinting. They are also designed, at least in part, to capture this constant forward motion.

Accordingly, the first chapter aims to describe briefly scientific roots of the method, the way it drew in its beginnings from various scientific discoveries, inspired by the rise of Darwinism. Particular emphasis is put on the description of the formulation and empirical confirmation of three physiological laws of fingerprinting that even today serve as its grounds.

The second chapter deals with and tries to describe the current state of knowledge and particular methods used in detection, development and preservation of fingerprints, especially latent ones. To do this it seems to be necessary to describe briefly the anatomy and physiology of friction ridge skin, as it enables to fully comprehend the way in which fingerprints are created. Again, later in the chapter, an emphasis is put on the description of scientific or scientifically developed methods used in fingerprint identification. In an effort to provide with a comprehensive description of the current state of fingerprinting, various stages of forensic fingerprint identification are mentioned.

In the third and last chapter, it is argued that while we cannot predict future, at least it is possible to make an educated guess based on our knowledge of current flaws and shortcomings. Such shortcomings, and in no way minor ones, are described along with their probable cause which, as it is argued, lays in the process by which the fingerprinting was established as a forensic science.