

Abstract

Fingerprinting – Past, Present and Future

The objective of the presented diploma thesis is to provide a comprehensive overview of findings in fingerprints area. Fingerprinting is a unique method enabling quick, inexpensive and reliable personal identification. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the presented issue, fingerprint reputation as ever-changing and continuously developing method is put into contrast with its contradictions and current problems.

The first part of the thesis describes roots and genesis of the method from its beginnings in ancient realms up to date. The process of shaping of the knowledge in the field of fingerprints into a science is presented through the works of the most prominent fingerprints personalities. Despite the difficult beginnings, fingerprints finally reached the position of trustworthy and respectful area of forensic science. Due to that; the historical part follows the journey of fingerprints evidence into the police investigation and court rooms. Final point brings an attention to the establishment of fingerprinting in Czech criminal investigation.

The main part of the thesis is dedicated to the practical aspect of fingerprints expertise. To provide a deep level of understanding, particular role of fingerprints in criminal investigations and its theoretical founding are discussed to open the topic. Furthermore; current state of knowledge and methods used in detection, development and preservation of fingerprints, with particular aim on the latent ones are also stated. Moreover; the stages of fingerprints identification are described to get acquainted with experts work. Brief explanation of the usage of computer technologies and automated identification systems concludes the topic.

The final part of the thesis is a polemic on the future of fingerprints as a forensic discipline. The existence of different conceptual approaches and even inconsistencies within them are presented. Adverse effects are demonstrated on specific court cases. Phenomenon of the fingerprint crisis in context with the situation in the United States of America is also reflected. The thesis intends to identify the main problems of fingerprinting, analyse the causes and

consider possible solutions. To conclude the topic technological progress and possible innovations are considered.