

FOREWORD

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It is said that it takes “a village to raise a child” but takes a team to solve crimes and successfully bring the case to court. This volume tackles one often-ignored area of forensic sciences, that of Forensic Geosciences and encompasses geology, paleontology, botany, taphonomy, and entomology along with emerging and evolving technologies.

Despite what may be portrayed in movies and on series, forensic scientists are no longer individually the master of many fields. Instead, we tend to focus on one or a few associated areas so that we can not only apply these skills, but also develop research to push our field forward and keep abreast of all the research being done by others. Similarly, law enforcement investigators will likely know a few of the forensic science fields, often because they are utilized in their local laboratories or because they have used them in prior cases. However, forensic fields that are utilized less frequently, because the type of cases to which they can be applied are less common, may escape notice by the investigators.

As this volume promotes, these less well-known forensic specialties are useless unless they are brought to the forefront and placed into application. But when they are, as showcased by the case studies and simulated cases in this collection, they can add a tremendous amount of information in interpreting the movements of the perpetrators and the victims in crimes against persons. These specialties also play a critical role in a variety of other crimes including illegal imports, production of faked items, and, very importantly, environmental crimes.

It is not enough to simply promote the techniques, such as ground penetrating radar or laser scanning, without also understanding the science behind their implementation. Those of us with limited knowledge of the methodologies presented here may not perceive the limitations of the techniques that would be readily apparent to the expert in the field. That expert will not only know how to work around problems but also where a different technique is more appropriate or where there are completely different approaches that should be used.

In reading the articles in this collection, I was struck by how different approaches by forensic scientists would have been useful in cases in which I was or am involved. Therefore, it is imperative that all forensic scientists be aware of the potential contributions by allied fields. This volume promotes that information distribution between forensic disciplines but also supports the formation of teams of allied scientists who can collaborate on different

aspects of an issue. How this is accomplished will vary by jurisdiction but is a worthy goal for all of us in the forensic sciences.

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