

## Guidelines

There have been numerous best practices guidance documents developed for friction ridge science over the years. These offerings originally came from practitioners of friction ridge science and as friction ridge science evolved scientists began to lead the discussion of what should and should not be considered.

SWGFAST (Scientific Working Group on Friction Ridge Analysis Study and Technology) offered guidance on several relevant friction ridge analysis and examination topics.

SWGIT (Scientific Working Group on Imaging Technology) offered guidance on how to use digital images in friction ridge analysis.

Then in 2012 an important paper, Latent Print Examination and Human Factors: Improving the Practice through a Systems Approach, The Report of the Expert Working Group on Human Factors in Latent Print Analysis was published which offered a number of recommendations to improve the existing practices.

In 2014 NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology) consolidated SWGFAST to work on improving the discipline. NIST created the OSAC (Organization of Scientific Area Committees) Friction Ridge Subcommittee for Forensic Science which has published several important guidance documents that are very relevant today.

There are also some excellent guidance documents from the Academy Standards Board (ASB) worthy of consideration.


None of these guidelines have ever been embraced by law enforcement agencies in Canada. Police colleges have advocated for their acceptance but to little effect. Some aspects of some standards were implemented but most of these documents have been ignored over the years. The guidelines were dismissed as “an American thing” or “We just don’t have the time to do this sort of thing.”

Each of these evolutionary guidelines were and are important. They offer guidance on where friction ridge examination science is and where it is heading.

For the last three decades Canadian law enforcement forensic units have been taking direction from a collective of administrators who have placed more emphasis on their own priorities and not on friction ridge science.

This is yet another way that law enforcement has been a poor custodian of friction ridge science.





These scientifically derived standards have largely been ignored by Canadian law enforcement forensic units. Many law enforcement practitioners now find themselves at a loss to show even a basic understanding of the Friction Ridge Examination process which unfortunately does nothing to inspire confidence in their subjectively derived conclusions.