

International Association for Identification



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Yesterday the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) released the long-awaited report of the Committee titled *Identifying the Needs of the Forensic Science Community*. That report contains numerous items of interest to members of the International Association for Identification (IAI). There has not been adequate time to fully evaluate the entire 254 page report but based on preliminary reviews, below are some points that might be considered if members are queried regarding the report:

- The Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations (CFSO) (website: www.thecfso.org) of which the IAI is a member was largely responsible for convincing Congress of the need for this committee. We thank Congress and the National Academies for their hard work over the past several years to produce this report and call attention to the needs of the nation's forensic community.
- The IAI has over the years supported the need for this kind of study. During the course of the NAS hearings the IAI was invited to present its positions concerning these issues. With the release of this report, the IAI stands ready to support many of the committee's recommendations and work with the necessary parties to achieve those goals.
- The IAI endorses continuing research in pattern evidence to include fingerprint evidence. In fact that was recognized in the final paragraph of the IAI's Standardization Committee's report in 1973 that called for additional research to be conducted to provide continuing scientific support to fingerprint identification
- Over the years a number of research projects have been conducted. None of those projects refuted the scientific principle that fingerprints are unique and permanent.
- There is no research to suggest that properly trained and professionally guided examiners cannot reliably identify whole or partial fingerprint impressions to the person from whom they originated.
- The IAI endorses accreditation of forensic service providers as well as certification of examiners in their respective disciplines. To that end the IAI put in place its first certification program 32 years ago and to date has added certification programs in six additional disciplines.
- Members who may have to testify about friction ridge identifications are reminded that the admissibility of their testimony rests with the presiding judge. Challenges to the underlying science and practice are handled in Daubert/Frye type hearings and should not affect direct testimony in the trial proper.
- It is suggested that members not assert 100% infallibility (zero error rate) when addressing the reliability of fingerprint comparisons.

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- Although the IAI does not, at this time, endorse the use of probabilistic models when stating conclusions of identification, members are advised to avoid stating their conclusions in absolute terms when dealing with population issues.
- The IAI will be asking its science and practice committees to review the NAS report over the next few weeks and will provide the membership with additional guidance in the future.
- The Executive Summary of the report is available at: www.nas.edu at no cost. The entire report is available from the same website at a cost of \$33.00.

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