

SWGFAST Update

The Scientific Working Group on Friction Ridge Analysis, Study and Technology (SWGFAST) was established in 1997 and continues to operate through sponsorship from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Its mission is to assist the latent print community in providing the best service and product to the criminal justice system. It is realized that there are areas of common interest to the latent print community and other fingerprint applications (e.g., criminal history and biometrics). The SWGFAST guidelines; however, are developed for the specific requirements of the latent print community and may differ with those other applications.

A number of SWGFAST documents have been published with the intent of promoting consensus standards to preserve and enhance the quality of service provided by the latent print community. The guidelines identified as being essential to the promotion of the consensus standards are posted on the SWGFAST website. They will continue to be maintained, periodically reviewed, and new documents added as deemed necessary. Currently two documents are being published as drafts for comment. Significant revisions have been made to the *Quality Assurance Guidelines*, and, to be consistent with one of those revisions, an update to the *Guidelines for Latent Print Proficiency Testing Programs* has been made. SWGFAST monitors issues that are considered to be of concern to the latent print community. Committee discussions regarding current needs of the community continue with anticipation of future publication of Guidelines or Standards addressing these needs.

In addition to the published guidelines SWGFAST has produced a press kit containing responses to common questions asked by the media. The answers are not intended to be in-depth academic discussions (and may not address all aspects of a topic). They are presented as “sound bites” so that the media and interested parties can have access to credible responses to some of the most common questions that are asked of individual examiners.

SWGFAST has developed a partial list of research topics that would benefit the latent print community. It is our hope that researchers will be encouraged to address these and future topics. Also under the research category, SWGFAST encourages the collection of uniform statistical information regarding the latent print community (e.g., number of latent print examiners in the U.S., percentage of criminal investigations using forensic latent print examinations, number of latent print individualizations). On a separate matter, work is progressing on the previously announced NIJ sponsored SourceBook project.

The membership of SWGFAST is comprised of a diverse group of dedicated and professionally recognized individuals. This includes not only latent print examiners from enforcement agencies, but also defense experts, researchers, instructors, academics, managers, and others. This group’s diversity provides an objective, yet varied perspective to all matters of interest to the group.

SWGFAST guidelines, standards, position statements, research topics, and the press kit are available on the internet at www.swgfast.org. Feedback regarding a document that has been published as a draft for comment, or suggestions for new documents, the press kit, position statements, or research topics may be made via the website. An automated response will acknowledge the submission and the comments will be presented at a subsequent SWGFAST meeting. Comments may also be made during a SWGFAST panel discussion scheduled for the IAI annual conference in Boston.

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Analysis, Study, and Technology