



D42 A Study of Fingerprint Literature as a Basis for Educational Curricula

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After attending this presentation, attendees will leave with an understanding of how content analysis may be used to create a basis for academic curricula in professions where a significant amount of academic literature exists, but no standard curricula have yet been created.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by emphasizing the value of curriculum development in forensic science.

Forensic science, being partially born from the practice of law enforcement and the needs therein, does not have standard academic curricula available for many of its subdisciplines, such as firearms, tool marks, and questioned documents. As a result, there was a historical shift in some disciplines of forensic science from a science based on research to a science based on application. This shift may potentially prevent a science from growing and progressing as it should.

It is up to the profession to extract its own curriculum with its own sources, including past and existing procedures and peer-reviewed publications. Developing a curriculum would be useful in outlining the scientific foundations from which the science grew, and perhaps more importantly, to promote that continued scientific growth, as well as providing forensic science educators and trainers a basis to develop their own coursework.

Working groups, such as the Technical Working Group on Education and Training (TWGED), have previously recognized the value of curricula. While these projects do develop a consensus curriculum, they can be lengthy and consumptive of resources. This study seeks to use another means to develop a type of consensus curriculum: published content analysis. Content analysis is a method of analyzing communication in order to produce an objective and quantitative assessment of the content within. It can do this by various methods, including word counts, frequencies, or spatial and time analysis. Content analysis has been used to compare literature in cases of disputed authorship, to compare writing style and technique, and to quantify the effect the communication had on its audience. The benefits of using content analysis for curriculum development are that the literature used is provided to the public for review and it also consists of a diversity literature that spans over long periods of time.

In this study, a content analysis was performed of nine well-known fingerprint books as a way to develop a curriculum for the fingerprinting and friction ridge profession. Specifically, this study uses the table of contents of each written work to compare the chronological and relative order of topics. The order that is deduced from the analysis will provide an "informational hierarchy" for the subject matter. For example, topics appearing closer to the beginning of tables of content may be more basic, more fundamental, or both. Therefore, when taught, the subject should be treated in a similar fashion.

Content Analysis, Curricula, Education