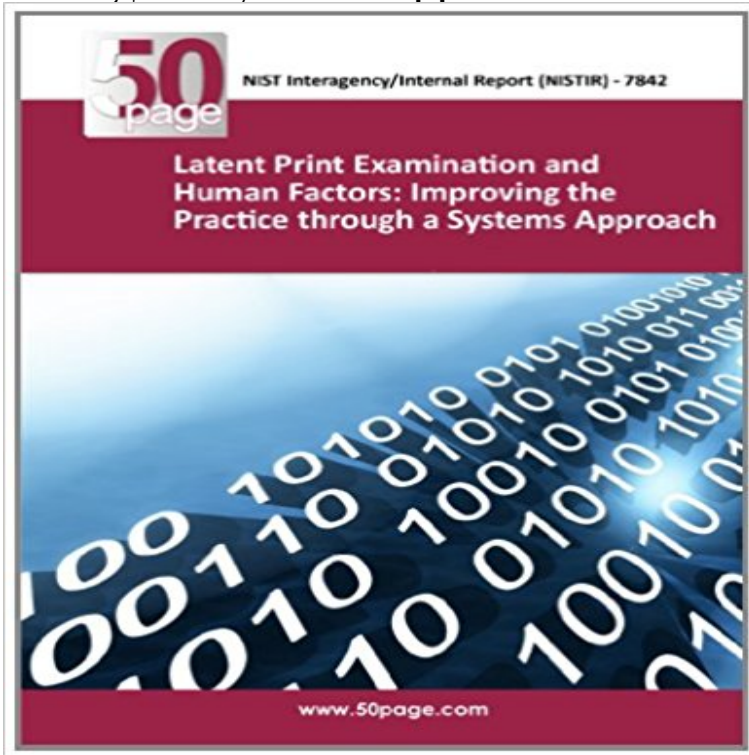


# Latent Print Examination and Human Factors: Improving the Practice through a Systems Approach



Fingerprints have provided a valuable method of personal identification in forensic science and criminal investigations for more than 100 years. The examination of fingerprints left at crime scenes, generally referred to as latent prints, consists of a series of steps involving a comparison of the latent print to a known (or exemplar) print. In addition to reaching correct conclusions in the matching process, latent print examiners are expected to produce records of the examination and, in some cases, to present their conclusions and the reasoning behind them in the courtroom. In recent years, the accuracy of latent print identification has been the subject of increased study, scrutiny, and commentary in the legal system and the forensic science literature. In December 2008, the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) convened The Expert Working Group on Human Factors in Latent Print Analysis to conduct a scientific assessment of the effects of human factors on forensic latent print analysis and to develop recommendations to reduce the risk of error. This report documents their findings and recommendations, addressing issues ranging from the acquisition of impressions of friction ridge skin to courtroom testimony, from laboratory design and equipment to research into emerging methods for associating latent prints with exemplars. It provides a comprehensive discussion of how human factors relate to all aspects of latent print examinations including communicating conclusions to all relevant parties through reports and testimony. Citation:

NISTInteragency/Internal

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