



INDIVIDUALIZATION / IDENTIFICATION POSITION STATEMENT

It is the position of SWGFAST that “individualization” is synonymous with the term “identification” as used in friction ridge examination. Both are defined as: “the decision by an examiner that there are sufficient discriminating friction ridge features in agreement to conclude that two areas of friction ridge impressions originated from the same source. Individualization of an impression to one source is the decision that the likelihood the impression was made by another (different) source is so remote that it is considered as a practical impossibility” (SWGFAST Standards for Examining Friction Ridge Impressions and Resulting Conclusions 9/13/11 ver 1.0 posted 10/26/11).

The term individualization was originally introduced in latent print examinations to provide a more specific term than identification. In the friction ridge community, identification has historically meant association with a specific individual, while in some forensic disciplines it is used to denote the correspondence of class characteristics.

SWGFAST recognizes that individualization has been used within the latent print community to mean “to the exclusion of all others”. The ability of a latent print examiner to individualize a single latent impression, with the implication that they have definitively excluded all other humans in the world, is not supported by research and was removed from SWGFAST’s definition of individualization.