

ICPO / INTERPOL Forensic Science Symposia, 1995 - 2016

“Research on Drug Evidence”

Prefacing Remarks (and a Request for Information)

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ABSTRACT: A brief overview of the ICPO / INTERPOL Forensic Science Symposia, with a focus on the “Research on Drug Evidence” reports from the 11th (1995) through 18th (2016) Symposia, is presented.

KEYWORDS: INTERPOL, Illicit Drugs, Controlled Substances, Review, Forensic Chemistry.

Introduction

The INTERPOL Forensic Science Symposium is a periodic meeting of crime laboratory directors and associated personnel under the auspices of the General Secretariat (1). The initial Symposium, titled as: “The First I.C.P.O.-INTERPOL Seminar on the Scientific Aspects of Police Work” and held in November 1963, marked a significant break from typical INTERPOL conferences in that the attendees were not police officials but rather forensic scientists. The Symposia are commonly referred to as “Triennial”; however, the first six were actually held in 1963, 1968, 1972, 1975, 1978, and 1980, respectively. All 18 Symposia have been held in France, at St. Cloud (a suburb of Paris) from 1963 to 1986 and since 1989 at Lyon.

The general purpose of the early Symposia was to introduce, review, and/or discuss new or improved methods for conducting forensic analyses, and to a lesser degree to coordinate select research efforts at the attendees’ laboratories (2). “Coordinating

laboratories” were designated to address specific research topics, in some cases in cooperation with “assisting laboratories” from other nations. Many different forensic topics were covered, including, e.g., arson, ballistics, field tests, etc. The coordinating laboratories were tasked with presenting reports or updates at the next Symposium. Since the 11th Symposium (1995), however, the primary responsibility of the coordinating laboratories has been to provide a comprehensive review of the scientific literature in their assigned topic (i.e., published since the last Symposium), along with a presentation summarizing recent developments. This shift reflected the increasing number of researchers involved in forensic science (many of whom had minimal association with INTERPOL), the similarly increasing number of sub-disciplines (consider, e.g., the advent and rapid expansion of digital evidence and DNA analyses), and the rapidly increasing number of pertinent articles in the literature. One of the longest standing topics has been “Drugs” (more recently titled as: “Research on Drug Evidence”), with short reports

dating to the earliest Symposia and more comprehensive reviews provided since 1995.

The “Proceedings” from the first 10 Symposia were rather uneven efforts, usually consisting of little more than a syllabus provided by the organizers and a loose collection of articles, reports, and handouts provided by the coordinating laboratories. Retention of these collections was at the discretion of the attendees. Starting with the 11th Symposium, however, the Proceedings became more formalized, with bound copies of the various review articles provided in hard copy to the attendees (and subsequently, combined in book form and marketed). Starting with the 16th (2010) Symposium, the complete Proceedings have been posted on line (3a-c).

The value of the review articles from the 11th through 18th Proceedings, however, is limited by their relative obscurity. It would not be an exaggeration to state that many forensic scientists have barely or never heard of the INTERPOL Forensic Science Symposia. This is not surprising, since historically nearly all of the invitees have been management-level personnel, not bench chemists or analysts. In order to improve the accessibility to this resource, the “Research on Drug Evidence” reviews from the 1995 through 2016 Proceedings are reprinted as the following eight articles. To the author’s knowledge, the only similar long-term series of review articles were those published by Brettell *et al.* in the biennial “Fundamental and Applied Reviews” issues of *Analytical Chemistry* from 1983 through 2011 (4a-o). These latter reviews covered all of the major sub-disciplines of forensic science in separate sections, including drug analyses. In addition, two independent reviews that focused primarily on forensic drug analyses were published in 1983 (5) and 2003 (6). In total, these 25 articles provide a nearly comprehensive overview and review of the literature that covers more than 50 years.

Request for Information

Regrettably, INTERPOL did not retain any of the Proceedings prior to the 11th (1995) Symposium (7). In a few cases a summary report was published either in the *International Criminal Police Review* (8) or as some very brief notes in the next Report of the General Assembly (9). The author’s laboratory has printed or electronic copies of all “Research on Drug Evidence” reports from the 10th (1992) through the 18th (2016) Symposia, all of which were prepared in-house, but nothing prior to the 10th. An extensive on-line search suggests that the 2nd (1968), 4th (1975), 5th (1978), 6th (1980), and 9th (1989) Proceedings are held in various library archives around the world. At present, the condition, completeness, and accessibility of these holdings are “unknown / to be determined”. There do not appear to be any holdings listed for the 1st (1963), 3rd (1972), 7th (1983), and 8th (1986) Proceedings. It is possible that these latter Proceedings are in un-catalogued library holdings, but that is unlikely. If they exist at all, they would be in the personal collections of the attendees - or (at this point) more likely among the files left at their respective facilities upon their retirements.

Although these first 10 Proceedings have only minimal value as literature reviews, they retain significant historical value as “snap-shots” of the topics of importance in forensic science at those times, as established by the attendees. For this reason, **the author requests the assistance of the readership in locating originals or copies of the “Drugs” / “Research on Drug Evidence” reports from the first nine Proceedings.** If most or all of these can be located, they and the “Research on Drug Evidence” report from the 10th Proceedings will be reprinted in the 2017 issue of *Microgram Journal*. The author’s email address is: dea-microgram@usdoj.gov

References

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b) 2013: <https://www.interpol.int/content/download/21910/206602/version/1/file/IFSMSReviewPapers2013.pdf>
c) 2016: <https://www.interpol.int/content/download/33314/426506/version/1/file/INTERPOL%2018th%20IFSMS%20Review%20Papers.pdf>
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7. INTERPOL Staff (several), Personal Communications to the author, 2016.
8. For example, see: Anonymous. First I.C.P.O. - INTERPOL seminar on scientific aspects of police work. *International Criminal Police Review* 1964;174(Jan):25-28.
9. For example, see: a) Report of the 33rd I.C.P.O. / INTERPOL General Assembly, Caracas, Venezuela, September 30 - October 7, 1964, p. 288; b) Report of the 38th I.C.P.O. / INTERPOL General Assembly, Mexico City, Mexico, October 13 - 18, 1969, p. 41; and c) Report of the 42nd I.C.P.O. / INTERPOL General Assembly, Vienna, Austria, October 2 - 9, 1973, p. 316. Note that each of the above provided only minimal details. After the 42nd General Assembly, the Symposia were either barely mentioned, or not at all.