

Forensic Science
Mrs. Smith

Name _____
Date _____

**Crime Laboratories and Functions of the Forensic Scientist
Class Notes**

HISTORY OF CRIME LABS IN THE UNITED STATES

The first crime laboratory in the United States was established by the police chief of Berkeley, CA, August Vollmer in 1923.

He did this by heading the first University institute for Criminology and Criminilistics at the University of California at Berkeley.

In 1932 the FBI by the order of J. Edgar Hoover organized a laboratory that offered forensic science services. It is still WORLD's largest criminal laboratory. It is located in Quantico, VA.

There are many crime labs all over the United States. In fact it is estimated that there are about 400 public criminal laboratories at each various levels of government – federal, state, county and municipal.

NOTE – Not all crime labs are created equally. What type of analyzation techniques, the size, etc vary from one crime lab to another. There are no direct methods that are mandated.

The number of crime labs has grown significantly over the past two decades for four main reasons:

1. The Supreme Court's decisions in the 1960's that required police to place greater emphasis on securing scientifically evaluated evidence and all but eliminated confessions as a routine investigative tool.
2. A dramatic increase in US crime rates led to a greater need for scientific examination of criminal evidence.
3. The advent of DNA profiling led to a need for crime labs to expand their staffs and modernize their facilities to meet the demands of DNA technology.
4. The fact that all illicit drug seizures must be sent to a forensic laboratory for confirmatory chemical analysis before is can be submitted into court.

DNA PROFILING:

CODIS – Combined DNA Index System – database of DNA profiles collected from crime laboratories.

Problems with CODIS: There is not enough manpower or time to analyze all the samples collected on a daily basis.

It is reported that there are 57,000 unanalyzed DNA samples at state and national agencies.

There are 500,000 untested convicted offender samples.

Solution: The government is currently funding for in-house analyzation at the crime labs or outsourcing samples to private labs.

In 2008 California started collecting DNA from all people arrested not just convicted criminals. Other states are starting to do this also.

LARGEST CRIM LABS IN THE UNITED STATES:

The Four Major Federal Crime Laboratories in the United States are:

1. FBI Department of Justice in Quantico, VA
2. The Drug Enforcement Administration Laboratories
3. Laboratories of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
4. The US Postal Inspection Service Laboratories

The Federal system of government emphasizes the importance of retaining local control over important matters such as criminal prosecution.

The Services of a crime lab include:

Fingerprint Analysis	DNA Profiling	Polygraph Administration
Voiceprint Analysis	Ballistics	Document Examination
Photography	Crime Scene Investigation	

A forensic scientist must not only analyze physical evidence but also persuade a jury to accept the conclusions derived from that analysis.

FUNTIONS OF THE FORENSIC SCIENTIST:

1. Analyze physical evidence
2. Provide Expert Testimony
3. Collection and Preservation of Physical Evidence

ANALYZING PHYSICAL EVIDENCE:

Physical evidence is factual unlike eye witness testimonies and confessions.

The ways a scientist examines evidence is different in every crime lab. A method is considered valid if it is widely accepted as a proper way of examining evidence by the scientific community.

TESTIMONY:

Expert Witness – individual whom the court determines to possess knowledge relevant to the trial that is not expected of the average lay person.

Courts look at the persons experience, training and education to determine if they are an expert witness. The judge ultimately makes the final decision.

Lay Witness – must give testimony on events or observations that arise from knowledge. Testimony must be factual and cannot contain the personal opinions of the witness.