



Online Investigations Cheat Sheet

Searching the deep web helps investigators gather intelligence to conduct thorough investigations.

There's a lot more to gathering intelligence online than simply plugging names and keywords into Google, which only indexes 1% of what's on the web. The other 99% of information exists in the deep (or invisible) web, which can be a goldmine for investigators. But you have to know where to look.

Legal Matters

Before you start, it's important to stay informed about what is considered to be acceptable practice when searching the web, as the law varies based on your country or state and the reason for your search.

Talk to legal counsel before using information gathered from the web in an investigation. Information obtained under false pretenses may not be admissible in court, and investigating job applicants online may have legal implications.

Social Media

Social media sites are great sources for gathering intelligence about a subject, such as addresses, activities, schools, social circles, family, employers, professional associations, etc. Conduct searches across multiple social media sites, as some people have different privacy settings for each account.

In order to search Facebook or LinkedIn, you need to have your own account on each site. You can filter search results by city and other information you already know to increase your

odds of finding the right person. However, many social media sites have privacy policies that prohibit people from setting up accounts using an alias. This has raised some issues in the law enforcement community, as undercover identities are common tools for investigations. Be aware that evidence gathered by friending someone using a fake account may not be admissible in court.

Reminder: Intelligence is not evidence. Use intelligence gathering to get leads and then go after solid evidence that can be used in your investigation.

Searching the Deep Web

There are a number of ways to get the information needed to help you conduct a thorough investigation. Open sources are a great starting point. These are sources of publicly available information, some of which are not easily found on the internet unless you know where to look.

The list below provides some of the most useful sites for open source intelligence.

Reminder: Don't quit searching if you hit a wall. Keep digging, using the information gleaned from your search to find deeper sources. Sometimes you will need to go through several layers of searches, using clues you uncover along the way to get to the next nugget of information.

Websites

BRB Pub - Public records searching (US)
DomainTools.com
ZabaSearch Maps
Canada411.ca (Canada)
Pipl.com
Match.com
Kiwipulse.co.nz
Myspace.com
Orkut.com
Technorati.com
Icerocket.com
Ebay.com
Friendwise.com
Blogs.com
Lococitato.com
Yoname.com
Hi5.com
Archive.org
Zoominfo.com
Xanga.com
Guidestar.org
Monitter.com

*Don't forget to search video and photo sites such as YouTube and Flickr.

References

Webinar Recording- Online Investigations Using Deep Web Searches with Cynthia Hetherington