Chapter 19
Analysis of a Training Package for Law Enforcement to Conduct Open Source Research

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ABSTRACT

Law enforcement officials (LEOs) in the UK conduct open source research (OSR) as part of their routine online investigations. OSR, in this instance, refers to publicly available information that is accessed via the Internet. As part of the research, identifying and tracing the electronic suspect (RITES) course provided by the UK's College of Policing, LEOs are introduced to the open source internet research tool (OSIRT); a free software tool designed to assist LEOs with OSR investigations. This article draws on analyses from questionnaires and observations from a RITES course; mapping them to Kirkpatrick's evaluation model. Results showed the positive impact the RITES course had in transferring knowledge back on-the-job, with LEOs applying knowledge learned to real-life investigative scenarios. Additionally, results showed OSIRT integrated both in the RITES course and into the LEOs investigative routine.

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INTRODUCTION

The World Wide Web plays host to a veritable breadcrumb trail of potential evidence which could provide intelligence to Law Enforcement Officials (LEOs). From Facebook posts to Tweets, all are avenues that may prove useful and warrant exploration. One tool to help navigate these routes is Open Source Research (OSR). OSR is concisely defined by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) as "The collection, evaluation and analysis of materials from sources available to the public, whether on payment or otherwise, to use as intelligence or evidence within investigations" (ACPO, 2013, p.8).

To aid digital investigators in conducting OSR, the UK's College of Policing, a professional training body for police in England and Wales, runs a five-day Researching, Identifying and Tracing the Electronic Suspect (RITES) course. The RITES course provides an opportunity for LEOs, regardless of skill-level, to gain proficiency in lawfully obtaining intelligence and artefacts from the web. In addition to investigatory skills, the RITES course adopts the usage of the free and open source investigative software package Open Source Internet Research Tool (OSIRT); a tool designed specifically to assist in conducting OSR.

A growing trend for the use of OSR is continuously expanding among UK law enforcement agencies. In order to conduct rigorous OSR investigations, law enforcement require a multitude of tools and techniques. A problem surrounding OSR is the cost associated with software tools, along with the legal, ethical, and procedural issues that are exacerbated by the reduction in police funding. It is imperative, then, that the training LEOs receive is robust and applicable in the digital age. The objective of this study is to offer an insight into how LEOs are trained to conduct OSR and whether the training package, in conjunction with OSIRT, is effective for those officers both during the course and when they are back on the job.

BACKGROUND

Designing Training Courses for Law Enforcement and Applying Learning Styles

Similarly to courses structured for training law enforcement in digital forensic investigations (Genoe, Toolan, & McGourty, 2014; Stephens, 2012), the RITES course requires an ability to problem solve, pay attention to detail, and have a mindset for investigation and intelligence. Considerations are directed by course aims "to provide investigating officers with the skills necessary to obtain, evaluate and use

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