

Professional Project Concept Paper

April 28, 2003

James D. Ruotolo  
ECM 651.4. Professional Project

## **I. Project Description**

To satisfy the Professional Project requirement for ECM 651.4 of the Economic Crime Management master's program at Utica College, I propose to author an instructional manual or handbook for investigators and analysts on how to conduct investigative research on the Internet. This handbook would provide a description of the various types of information that is available on the Internet and World Wide Web and how that information may be useful to investigators. Additionally, detailed instructions on how to properly use and exploit the myriad search tools that are available on the Internet will be provided. Anticipated sections of the manual could include:

- Developing an information search strategy
- Advanced search techniques
- Finding information on people, businesses, and locations
- Determining ownership of websites
- Accessing and searching the "Deep Web"
- Web bots, agents, and other tools that aid in Internet searching
- Anonymous surfing & covert identities
- Chat & Instant Messaging
- Newsgroups, Listservs, and Online Communities
- Privacy & legal issues
- Evidence collection procedures

## **II. Interest in the Topic**

As a Sr. Business Analyst for the Special Investigation Unit at a large disability insurance carrier, I frequently assist analysts and investigators in conducting online research in association with ongoing fraud investigations. I have taken a personal interest in this area and have been developing tools and resources in this area for several months. Additionally, I have presented some of this information to a larger audience. I gave a presentation on Online Resources & Strategies for Investigating Disability Fraud Cases at the National Healthcare Anti-Fraud Association's (NHCAA) annual training conference in November of 2002. The program was well received and I have been asked to present a similar session at the 2003 conference. Also, I am scheduled to present online investigation seminars at the International Association of Law

Enforcement Intelligence Analysts (IALEIA) meeting in Boston on May 28, 2003 and at the International Association of Special Investigation Units (IASIU) in Orlando this September. Working on this project will help me prepare and improve the presentations I will be giving in the upcoming months.

### **III. Gap in Knowledge**

Currently, there are very few, if any, handbooks of this type available. There are courses available in Internet searching but they do not present information from an investigator's perspective. I have attended the "Internet for Investigators" seminar from David Vine Associates in an attempt to improve my Internet Research skills. I found the seminar to be elementary and too basic to be of much use. Most other presentations of this type center around a list of links. Presenters often throw a voluminous list of URLs at attendees. My proposal is, rather than give readers a long list links that they will probably never use, provide readers with the instruction on how to use a few important tools that will allow them to find nearly anything they are looking for. The key to this project – the gap that will be addressed – is the training on how investigators can effectively use common (and perhaps uncommon) Internet tools for investigative purposes.

### **IV. Feasibility & Practicability of the Project**

This project is feasible for two key reasons: First, I have some basic knowledge in the subject matter and second, the project is highly scalable. It is designed to be modular so that each section can be produced and presented independently of the others so that if major obstacles are encountered (e.g. time constraints) the project can be adapted accordingly. It is, however, important to spend a significant amount of time and effort on each section so as to avoid wide but shallow coverage of the topic areas. Also, the project is flexible in terms of presentation methods. The information gathered during this project could be presented in one (or several) of the following ways: Print, presentation, website, interactive training, or electronic document.

### **V. Obstacles**

There are very few obstacles to this project. Time is always a factor but proper planning should help minimize the effects of such issues. I believe that this project can be completed in the

available time. There are minimal costs associated with the project itself except perhaps the purchase of some software tools for evaluation purposes. One major concern is the presentation method. Creating a printed document, electronic document, or presentation is within the scope of my current skill set. However, creating an interactive training program or website with this information would require some additional tools, training, and resources.