



E117 Improving Forensic Science Information Seeking

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Learning Overview: The goal of this presentation is to describe the findings from a survey of forensic science professionals from a variety of disciplines on how they search for information related to their occupation. The researchers aim to discover how libraries can serve as gateways to provide assistance when seeking information, such as scholarly materials.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by presenting strategies to potentially enhance the ability to locate scholarly materials applicable to their profession. Such skills could lead to efficient skills for also assessing these materials.

In order to provide the forensic science community with effective and useful educational materials, this survey was the first stage of an investigation on forensic science professionals' information search strategies. The researchers wanted to uncover how forensic scientists think about finding information in their specific fields, tease out strengths that could be shared throughout the forensic science community as a whole, and identify knowledge gaps in search strategies that could be improved upon and brought to the community through learning modules.

A survey created in Qualtrics®, comprised of 13 questions, was sent out on August 19, 2017, via the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) listserv. The survey was open for responses until November 8, 2017. There was a total of 547 responses, and the dataset consists of the 333 completed surveys. Multiple choice response analysis was provided by Qualtrics®, while open response questions were coded using central themes for each question independently and analyzed.

While most forensic science professionals surveyed do not search for research material daily, many need to find information on a monthly or weekly basis. For those positions and disciplines that need to conduct research, a majority said they often could not access articles they located and would like to use due to paywalls. Those that did not have problems accessing articles were usually affiliated with a university.

Results of the survey indicate some forensic science professionals are in need of training for effectively locating scholarly research material. Three themes developed from this research. The first is that libraries and researchers have different definitions for information seeking terminology that need to be bridged. The second theme was a need for guidance on where to find quality materials and how to find open access (freely available research) materials for those who do not subscribe to journals. The last theme that emerged was the need for direction on how to create an effective search strategy using keywords and Boolean operators.

This project will determine how forensic scientists locate and evaluate information to allow the researchers to develop educational materials aimed at improving these skills and their efficiency with locating quality literature. Attendees will learn strategies potentially enhancing their ability to locate scholarly materials applicable to their profession.

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