

E73 Create Virtual Tours Using Google® Tour Creator for Remote Instruction

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Learning Overview: The goals of this presentation are to: (1) examine the use of virtual tours in online instruction; (2) describe the benefits of virtual tours in a learning environment; and (3) create a virtual tour of spaces to promote learning.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by developing an understanding of how virtual tours and field trips can be used in forensic science education. This presentation will allow attendees to learn the benefits of virtual tours as well as see examples of how virtual tours are created. This will impact the forensic education community by teaching how to create remote learning experiences for learners and how implantation of virtual tours can be used as a learning experience.

A part of the learning experience is being able to physically see places, whether a geographic location, historical buildings, or a working environment. Having the ability to take students on field trips is a popular learning tool used in the K-12 school system, but why not in higher education or training programs? Usually, there are multiple restraints such as space limitations, travel and location, or other factors. However, there is a way to create virtual field trips and tours of locations for students. Students can benefit from seeing a real forensic laboratory, seeing first hand the instrumentation used in the crime lab, different units of the lab, and safety features of the lab. This project started for online learners because of the non-presence in a laboratory setting. Students needed to be exposed to safety features in the laboratory as well as waste management and common equipment and tools used in the lab. However, this can be applied to all learning environments as well as a marketing tool.

Two separate forensic labs in Indianapolis, IN, were visited by only the instructor and instructional online course designers. Photographs of various lab units were taken with a 360° camera as well as still photographs of equipment, specific features of the lab space, and tools used in evidence analysis. Using the Google® Tour Creator program, virtual tours of both the Indiana State Police Crime Lab and Indiana State Department of Toxicology Lab were created. This has created a multi-dimensional experience for the learners. Each tour includes many scenes that lay out the lab space. Within each scene, specific areas in the lab or instrumentation used in evidence analysis is highlighted with close-up photographs and descriptions. Students are able to go through the forensic laboratory space to see the equipment and learn about how that piece of equipment is used in forensic analysis.

This tool can also be used to highlight educational space and create virtual tours for potential students. Highlighting the instrumentation, lab space, and equipment is a great marketing tool that can be used to show what universities have to offer. Many potential students want to see classrooms and laboratory spaces before deciding on where to attend college as well as graduate students wanting to see the research lab space. Travel may not be possible for students from a greater distance, and this will provide a way to show potential students teaching and learning spaces.

Throughout this presentation the ways in which virtual tours of local crime laboratories and teaching laboratory space were created will be shared. A simple use of photographs and descriptions were used to create a virtual learning experience for students. This is used as a learning tool in online courses where students are asked to identify equipment and learn the use of various tools in the lab. Just because traveling to a location cannot happen does not mean that students cannot visit a real crime laboratory.

Forensic Education, Virtual Tours, Online Learning