



THE Connection

Official Newsletter of the Georgia Association of Professional Private Investigators, Inc.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

The Next
GAPPI Atlanta
Upcoming Meeting

September 10, 2013

General Membership
Meeting at
Nemoe's
6025 Peachtree Parkway
in Norcross

Networking and lunch
from
11:30 a.m.—12:00 noon
Meeting from
12:00 noon—1p.m.

The cost is \$15.00 for
GAPPI members

\$20 for non-members
(includes lunch and
beverage)

\$10 for meeting only -
no lunch

Students and potential
members are always
welcome.

"We look forward to
seeing you all there!"

Tips for Conducting a Nationwide and Statewide Background Check

Searching a subject's history through all 50 states requires detailed investigation, and it can't all be done in person. Logistically, there are some investigative tools that can't be applied, like a road trip down the East Coast to check all of the courthouse records. We spoke with two experienced professionals, Pamela Hay of Broad Range Investigators and Brian Willingham of Diligentia Group, about the best ways to conduct nationwide and statewide searches. Both investigators agree that it's not possible to manually check every record, nor can online databases be fully relied upon.

An investigator must always assume the files in an online database have errors and that they are never truly being provided with all the records available. These issues can trickle down to statewide searches as well. Investigators are busy, and a state tour doesn't always fit into the schedule or time frame of a case. So, if it's not possible for investigators to get to every county that the subject of the background check has lived in, but they can't rely on online databases --

How are nationwide and statewide background checks possible?

Our guests have ample experience in both nationwide and statewide investigations. Pamela Hay has top secret clearance with the state government to perform civil background investigations, she also teaches a professional investigations course at Boston University. Willingham has been an investigator for more than 11 years and has performed thousands of background checks. His company, Diligentia Group, specializes in background investigations as well. Each investigator had some interesting things to say about nationwide and statewide investigations.

When beginning a nationwide search, "the first thing you want to do is identify where a person has lived and worked," Willingham suggests, "those are the most critical places where you need to conduct your research." Once you have done this, checking a nationwide database is a good idea. The important thing is to understand how these nationwide databases work, and to what extent an investigator can rely on their content.

"There is a little bit of a catch to, what they call these, nationwide databases" Willingham explains. "Typically they are not really nationwide. They don't cover every jurisdiction." Essentially, these databases are hubs that states can report criminal offenses and court records to. Some states send in their filings, and some states don't. In other words, this isn't something investigators can rely on for providing everything that's out there. With that being said, these databases can yield some powerful results. "Somebody could have gone to Florida and been arrested for drinking in public," Willingham proposes. "The person may

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have never lived, worked, or resided there, and have no connection to that place,” but an online database could hold that arrest record. If an investigator were to find a record such as Willingham described, an online database would be one of the only places to find it, aside from visiting every courthouse in the nation.

Hay added some noteworthy advice: Although these databases can be a gold mine of information, the investigator must always check the validity of the record. This can be done a number of ways. If possible, the investigator can go to the location and pull the record to review it. If travel is not possible, the investigator can hire someone to pull the record and either send it back or review it and send back a report. Records need to be verified with the physical document to confirm their validity. Willingham likes to multi source documents and information for verification. In other words, if an investigator knows that one piece of information, such as a birthdate, is factual, he or she can verify a new document by double checking that the birth date is listed correctly.

Once investigators have the records from the nationwide databases, the research moves to investigating within the specific states where they can flesh out the information. This is where it becomes important to stay updated on each state’s public record laws. They are not all the same, and violating a state-public record law is a serious offense. Hay is well-versed in how to keep updated and abide by state-record laws. “The secretary of state, in every state,” she explains, “is the keeper of records.”

Each state has a handbook dictating what is publicly available and what isn’t, and how an investigator can go about retrieving public files. “I know that I have a handbook here in my state about what is public and what is not; and what you can do if someone does not comply with you to give you the information that you need,” Hay adds.

Starting a statewide search with an online-database check can also be a good way to assess the situation and how much leg work needs to be done. And like nationwide-online-database checks, all the same rules apply: the investigator needs to take all the precautions of checking that the files found are valid through multi-sourcing and manually pulling documents. Once the mission and goals have been determined via talking to the client, checking what’s available online, deciphering how much review those files will need, and how much work will be done out in the field, the investigation can start retrieving files his or herself.

In theory, all investigative work is deductive reasoning. An investigator can start with as little as a name or a workplace, and through practiced strategy and technique, uncover everything about an individual’s history, financial situation, and his or her personality traits. Starting with the big picture in an online database and fine-tuning the results to move forward into the field of investigation are the skeletal parts of a successful, comprehensive background check.

This article was written by Amy Thomson and was originally published on PInow.com.

Using Social Media As An Investigative Tool

It's no question that social media has changed what we know about our "friends" within our networks. At the click of a mouse, Facebook users can check in on someone, who they may not have seen or spoken to in 10 years and see where he or she is living, working, and quite possibly what he or she had for lunch. Although this isn't always the case with privacy settings, generally users on social media have the option of knowing a lot about a person, simply by following their posts online. As an investigator, this can be a very useful tool.

We hosted Brian Willingham and Pamela Hay to talk about background checks, where we discussed social media in the investigation. Willingham has been a private detective for more than 11 years, and has conducted thousands of background investigations. He also owns The Diligentia Group, which specializes in background checks. Hay is president of Broad Range Investigations, specializing in criminal and civil investigation, and a professor at Boston University. She has top secret clearance with the government to conduct background checks on civil authorities, as well.

Hay considers social media "an amazing investigative tool." She has discovered a lot of valuable information just by searching a subject's online profile. "It opens a window into a person's life that you wouldn't necessarily see," Willingham agrees, "what they do on a daily basis, where they go, who they're friends with." Social Media certainly isn't an investigative tool to ignore.

Here are a few different brands of social media and what information they normally hold:

Facebook

Facebook, being the most common, has the most diverse amount of content. The investigator can scroll back through years of posts and photos to see . . .

- Photos the user posted



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- What cities the person has traveled to
- What cities the person has lived in
- What events he or she has attended
- What content he or she posts on their page
- Who the person interacts with on their profile most frequently
- Who they are friends with

Along with Facebook content, people also connect their other social media outlets (such as Instagram, Foursquare, and Twitter) to post onto their Facebook pages -- making it one of the most comprehensive sites out there. If a user is active on Facebook, the investigator will be able to see into his or her daily life, and if he or she is active on other social media sites.

Twitter

Twitter allows users to post short (120 character) messages where they can . . .

- Link to content that is interesting to them
- Tell a joke
- Re-post information and content from their friends
- Post where they are

It's a very public, and usually impersonal social media. Users tend to follow celebrities and big names they don't know personally along with their friends. With an informal platform, users are more likely to post a message that is unflattering or linked to something that they wouldn't want their Facebook friends (more likely to include family members, and professional connections) to know. Investigators will be able to see the user's interests, hobbies, and connections.

Google+

Google+ is a social network organized by "circles." The user groups his or her friends into circles for work, family, etc. A Google+ profile allows users to post

- All of the cities where they have lived
- All of their emails where they can be reached
- Links to all other social media sites they are active on
- An investigator can use a subject's profile as a quick way to see his or her residential history, see what other social media platforms he or she uses, and through circle groups, the specific relationship to his or her friends.

Instagram

Instagram is a photo hub where users take and edit photos and post to their follower's feeds. The appeal is the editing capabilities within the program that allow users to give the pictures filters for a vintage effect, black and white, etc. To an investigator, this is a photo library of where the subject has been (geographical tagging is available), what he or she is interested in, who the person hangs out with, and more.

Foursquare

Foursquare's platform is based entirely on where the user frequents. Every time the user goes to a restaurant or any public location, he or she "checks in" online. The location can choose how to interact with users who check in. Restaurants, for example, feature deals such as a half-price appetizer for checking in and gift cards when someone has checked in a certain number of times. This gives an appeal for a user to publicize where he or she is at all times of day. A couple examples of how this could be helpful to an investigator are: he or she could easily conduct surveillance activity through Foursquare check ins or learn

where a subject travels to frequently to begin checking records in cities the subject visits.

It's important to note that with the popularity of social media comes more advanced privacy settings. Users have the option of being completely private, even unsearchable within the site if they choose. Users also tend to be more careful with what they post nowadays. Hay shared with us that she works with attorneys who tell their clients not to post anything on social media during cases because "It's become known that investigators are looking and searching on the internet."

On the other side of the spectrum, some social media profiles can be too saturated to validate the time and effort it would take to review them. "While it's interesting in a lot of cases, in some cases it's a complete waste of time," Brian adds. He tells a story about investigating a subject with more than 10,000 tweets over just a few years. "For me to review all of those," he says, "it's absurd."

Overall, social media is certainly something to keep updated on, and review when appropriate. It could be as simple as confirming a person's travel history on Facebook that it was, in fact, his or her arrest in Vegas. Monitoring social media and online capabilities keeps investigators up to date on surveillance and investigation techniques, and how to further their practice.

This article was written by Amy Thomson and was originally published on PInow.com.

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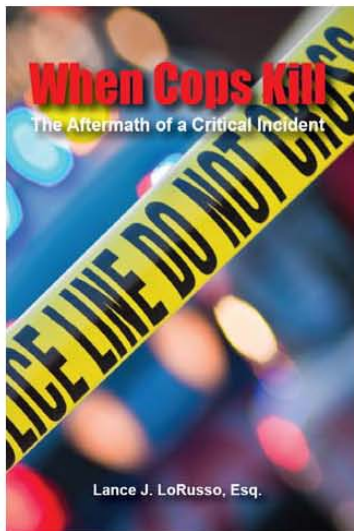
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WHEN COPS KILL: THE AFTERMATH OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Lance LoRusso's new book is a must-read for any LEO, their families, and those in the management of public safety. Lance takes you through an officer involved shooting and the years after.

- What does it mean to be sued as a law enforcement officer?
- What will happen during the internal affairs investigation?
- Should you speak with the homicide division?
- Will the state licensing agency investigate as well?
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Lance LoRusso removes the fear of the unknown and replaces that fear with the power that comes from knowledge and understanding. LoRusso is uniquely qualified to educate the honorable profession of law enforcement. He is a former law enforcement officer who has become an attorney. While many peace officers tend to look at attorneys as enemies, Lance LoRusso is one lawyer who is solely concerned with protecting the rights of his fellow sisters and brothers in blue. LoRusso is a former Cobb County cop who practices within the community he used to serve as a sworn officer.

When Cops Kill should be on every rookie and veteran officer's bookshelf to read BEFORE they are involved in a shooting incident. **"This book provides a law enforcement perspective written by someone who has walked in our shoes," says Chuck Canterbury, National President Fraternal Order of Police. "I plan to recommend it to all law enforcement professionals as required reading."**

"This is my personal effort to educate the law enforcement profession about the realities of the use of deadly force," says LoRusso. "The profits will benefit law enforcement charities to further support our profession." The book is based upon his own experiences as a cop and trainer, his work as an attorney representing LEOs on the scene and after shootings, and the personal words of LEOs who have been involved in deadly force situations on the street.



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Membership Drive

We are offering a special deal on membership for new members and members who have let their membership lapse. If someone signs up between now and the end of the year or renews their dues, then they will get the rest of the year and all of next year or the normal dues fee of \$100. For more details contact Lisa at 404-766-1632.

Nominations

Nominations for President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and one At Large Board Member position are now being taken. If you would like to nominate someone please forward your nominations to vernon@ahqi.com. Nominations will be closed on September 15 so that ballots can go out on October 1.

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