

Spreading the Word About Field Search

Field Search, a suite of software products developed by the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC), is well-known in the criminal justice community for being easy to use and available at no charge. The software also has another distinguishing characteristic: its own group of ambassadors.

The NLECTC System is a program of the Office of Justice Programs' National Institute of Justice (NIJ). NLECTC-Rocky Mountain originally offered classes to train individuals on the use of Field Search, but in 2009, the Center switched to a wider approach, offering train-the-trainer classes that graduate Certified Field Search Instructors (CFSIs). These CFSIs in turn spread the training through teaching classes for other criminal justice professionals. As part of the recent reorganization of the NLECTC System, Field Search maintenance now falls under the Corrections Technology Center of Excellence (CoE), which continues to offer CFSI training.

"Basically the idea is that this growing group has become our ambassadors, or our training arm," says Joe Russo, Corrections Technology CoE director. "NIJ gets more 'bang for their buck' using this approach."

Field Search was designed specifically for use in the field by criminal justice professionals who are not trained in the discipline of computer forensics. The software enables them to quickly and efficiently search target computers and creates a detailed report of findings. The software rapidly locates and reports on Internet histories, images, multimedia files and results from text searches.

Although Field Search was originally designed to assist probation and parole officers with sex offender management, criminal justice professionals, including law enforcement officers, have found it to be effective when examining computers for evidence of other crimes. Versions for both Macintosh and Windows are available for download from the NLECTC System website, JUSTNET (<http://www.justnet.org>).

Russo says that when the NLECTC System moved away from classes to train individuals on Field Search use, it implemented a two-pronged approach that includes a one-hour video training component available through JUSTNET, along with the CFSI program.

"We select experienced power users for a two-day training session," Russo explains. "They must pass a pretest to ensure they have skills needed during the CFSI training and they must agree to become the designated trainer for Field Search at their agency. Many of them also offer training classes to staff from other agencies as well."

SUCCESS COMES FAST WITH FIELD SEARCH

Erik McCauley of the Orange County Probation and Parole Department shared an "immediate" success story with Corrections Technology Center of Excellence Director Joe Russo in the following e-mail:

"[In December 2010] I taught a Field Search class at LA Clear in Los Angeles to a group of about 20 students: Many different folks, Federal Port Police, Riverside Sheriff, LA School police, Seal Beach PD and Federal Pre-trial Probation, who has been very active of late in pursuing our cyber criminals . . . anyway, the class was good, very engaged and most everyone got 95 or 100 on the test, again a great class. So I just got a call from someone who was in the class and is a Federal Probation PO. This is less than three hours after the course. He had one of his sex offenders in custody after going to his home and discovering he was in violation.

"He said that when he walked into the home, the probationer already had wiping software running on the computer. The officer noticed it and stopped the application, but then the computer "spontaneously" shut down. The probationer was reluctant to provide the

Individuals who complete the training receive a sample curriculum and test cases they can use in offering training classes. The CoE offers two CFSI sessions each year, with up to 20 students per session; more details can be found on JUSTNET. The next training will take place Aug. 22-23, 2011, in Denver, Colo. Training is free, but students must pay their own travel and lodging expenses. Some individuals are so eager to take the training they pay the expenses out of their own pockets, and even use personal leave time, if their agencies are unable to fund the training, Russo says.

“Implementing CFSI training allowed us to far exceed what we could have accomplished in the same timeframe by continuing the previous approach. Many of these individuals have trained hundreds of other users,” he adds.

One such individual is Erik J. McCauley of the Orange County (Calif.) probation department, who estimates he has trained 1,000 criminal justice professionals in the use of Field Search since December 2009. This includes 193 Orange County probation officers and private classes for other probation, parole and law enforcement officers throughout California. In a year’s time, he taught 25 sessions. Although McCauley’s job calls for him to do more thorough computer forensics in a laboratory setting, he became interested in Field Search because he also recognized the need for a tool that officers could use in the field. Nothing else compares to Field Search for ease of use, he says, and he has been able to expand its use to searching cellular phones, digital cameras and even GPS navigation systems.

“This has been all-consuming for me for the past year. I create custom thumb drives for my students, put together handouts, and give them a small laminated reference card for quick refreshes so they don’t have to go back through the whole manual,” McCauley says. “I constantly get creative and useful ideas from the students in my class too. They say, ‘I used it for this’ or ‘Have you tried that?’ Everyone benefits.”

For more information on Field Search or to locate a Certified Field Search Instructor in your area, visit <http://www.justnet.org/Pages/fieldsearch.aspx>. At NJ, contact Program Manager Jack Harne at (202) 616-2911 or jack.harne@usdoj.gov.

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Success Comes Fast With Field Search (continued)

username and password, and after providing multiple false possibilities, he offered that perhaps he could “do it better” by himself. So he entered the password and voila, it worked (strange eh?). So they got into the machine and noticed the guy had a detailed Internet history including various purchases of “cyber books” for the Kindle from Amazon. The officer then used a play straight from the . . . playbook to question the probationer based on the material he discovered. The probationer was not evasive when asked if he owned a Kindle, and when asked if he had read any good books lately, he said he had and named them. The names corresponded with Internet artifacts the officer had also obtained, indicating the probationer had accessed the Internet to purchase the e-books only a few days ago, in direct violation of the terms of his probation.

“When the officer called I could hear the excitement in his voice. The thrill of being able to hone one’s professional skills while holding people accountable for their deviant and illegal behavior . . . again, only three hours after the class. Very cool.

“Gentlemen, I cannot thank you enough for being part of this project. I’ve trained more than 100 good men and women who now take that technology into the field to protect our communities . . . what an honor. I can only dream of the future as this technology continues to roll out across the nation. I just thought you would get a kick out of this story.”



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