

Forensic Science and the Internet — Current Utilization and Future Potential

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ABSTRACT: The Internet has become a very powerful and inexpensive tool for the free distribution of knowledge and information. It is a learning and research tool, a virtual library without borders and membership requirements, a help desk, and a publication house providing newspapers with current information and journals with instant publication. Very soon, when live audio and video transmission is perfected, the Internet (popularly referred to as the Net) also will be a live classroom and everyday conference site. This article provides a brief overview of the basic structure and essential components of the Internet. A limited number of home pages/Web sites that are already made available on the Net by scientists, laboratories, and colleges in the forensic science community are presented in table forms. Home pages/Web sites containing useful information pertinent to different disciplines of forensic science are also categorized in various tables. The ease and benefits of the Internet use are exemplified by the author's personal experience. Currently, only a few forensic scientists and institutions have made their presence felt. More participation and active contribution and the creation of on-line searchable databases in all specialties of forensic science are urgently needed. Leading forensic journals should take the lead and create on-line searchable indexes with abstracts. Creating Internet repositories of unpublished papers is an idea worth looking into. Leading forensic science institutions should also develop use of the Net to provide training and retraining opportunities for forensic scientists.

KEY WORDS: E-mail, home pages, Internet, on-line search, searchable databases, Web sites.
