

Chapter 5

Records and Files: Investigative Uses and Sources

Title

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Investigative Aids

- From the day someone is born, people establish a series of records that are logged on virtually every aspect of one's life.
 - Birth certificate
 - Driver's license
 - Education credentials
 - Medical history
 - Criminal record
 - Travel info, purchases, and assets
 - Mail trail

Overview of information that can be uncovered through records:

- Link a person to an object, such as as a gun, through purchase or ownership.
- Link one person to another, i.e. marriage licenses, phone records, etc.
- Link person to a place or time period, also can discover certain habits and tendencies.
- Records provide additional leads or follow ups.
- Can identify the perpetrator, also can track a suspect, criminal, or witness.
- Recover stolen or lost property.

Follow Up or Create New Leads

- Credit card and fraudulent check files can serve the follow up purposes of law-enforcement
- License plate registration files
- Telephone records

To identify the perpetrator

Useful files:

- Fingerprint records
- Criminal photos (also called the “Rogues Gallery” or “mug shot” file)
- *Modus Operandi* (MO)
- DNA files (from all 50 states)

Tracing and locating suspects, criminals, victims and witnesses

- The investigation should be based on the knowledge that people are gregarious and seek out familiarity, such as other people, places, routines, etc.
- People can be found through public records. Such as bank account information and utility bills. They can also be found by way of their children's school records.
- Placing relatives and friends of the fugitive under careful surveillance can also be successful.
- In some instances, “wanted” notices are released.

Concerning physical evidence...

- Two distinct kinds of information are sought when physical evidence is discovered at a crime scene.
 - Tracing ownership
 - Kennedy assassination rifle was traced to Oswald through govt. records on distribution and sale of firearms.
 - Recognition and Identification of physical evidence
 - What it is, what it's used for, and where it's made and distributed.
 - Baby Assault File

Law Enforcement Agencies

Yield greatest amount of info and offer immediate access to investigators

- DNA Files
- Fingerprint Files
- Arrest and Conviction (rap sheet)
- *Modus Operandi*
- Rogues gallery (mug shot)
- Lost and stolen property
- Nicknames or Aliases
- Credit Reports
- Field Contact Reports
- Pawnbrokers and secondhand dealers
- Known habitual criminals
 - Sex offenders
 - Arsonists
 - Robbers
 - Terrorists or violent group offenders

Credit Reporting Agencies

- Information is compiled on a historical basis
- Reports how bills were paid
- Out of the many file-based credit reporting companies, only a few are investigative that operate nationally
 - Dun and Bradstreet, Inc.
 - Retail Credit Co.
 - Hooper Holmes Inc.
 - Experian
- Agencies will sometimes have a photo of an individual
- Whereabouts can be checked if credit card was used
- Fall of multi-state serial killer Ted Bundy can be attributed to credit card records
 - Gas receipts

In the Disappearance of Witnesses...

- In order to escape retribution for agreeing to testify against a defendant, a witness and his family suddenly disappeared.
- They finally were discovered by way of a request for the transfer of school records asked for by the father.
- Witnesses were easily located and when offered protection, they readily agreed to testify.

Google It...

Computers and the internet are becoming one of the more valuable tools for an investigator. Information found through search engines such as google, is ever-growing and makes it possible to search for an individual's name, address, phone number, groups, organizations, and other topics.

Types and Sources of Recorded Information (Ranked in proportion to potential usefulness)

This helps aid detectives to reach a record source quickly and follow up on a potential clue or even to develop a new clue.

- Files of law enforcement agencies
- Files of other government agencies
- Records of business organizations
- Miscellaneous sources

Using Records and Files

The contribution records and files make to an investigation can be affected in the following ways:

- The time and order in which the information is received and evaluated
 - Fruit of the bad tree
- How well it dovetails with or supplements other facts already developed through evidence or people

Case Illustrations of Using Records and Files

- Use of Rogues Gallery file in the case of “Shorty” and murdered taxi driver
- Rape victim and the use of a utility company's meter records
- Rape victim and the use of city automobile records
- Baby Assault