



Ten Ways You Can Use the NCSTL Web Site

by Diana Botluk

Where do you go when you need to know more about a type of forensic science or a particular scientific evidentiary issue? Whether you are a law enforcement professional looking for information on voice analysis, a lawyer preparing a forensic anthropologist for trial, an academic doing research on forensic linguistics, or a person who just wants to know if the latest story line on *CSI: Miami* could possibly be true, there is a Web site that can help.

The National Clearinghouse for Science, Technology and the Law at Stetson University College of Law offers a resource for judges, lawyers, scientists, law enforcement officials, academics and others who seek information about the nexus between law, science and technology. Sponsored by a grant from the National Institute of Justice, the Web site (www.ncstl.org) is free to everyone. Users who register can save searches or stop in the middle of a

session and come back to it later. Search results can be shared through e-mail or posted on another Web site, allowing click-throughs to specific search results. Here are some of the resources the NCSTL Web site provides.

1. Search the Database

Do you need to understand the latest forensics regarding text messaging or access research on arson and fire investigation? The NCSTL database contains thousands of bibliographic records for forensic and criminal justice resources. Search results provide an abstract for each record as well as the URL to the full text if it is available online. Searches are more targeted than using a general Web search engine because information in the NCSTL database is hand-picked by professional researchers.

2. Browse the Calendar

Are you looking for a conference on cybercrime or entomology? NCSTL's calendar provides dates, locations and descriptions for conferences and seminars on a wide range of forensics.

3. It's Evident

NCSTL's quarterly newsletter, *It's Evident*, features articles on the latest topics and trends in forensic science. For example, a recent issue showcased articles on "Cutting Edge 'Spoof Proof' Biometrics," "The 4nsics of Txt Msgs" and "Electronically Stored Information: A Primer — A Litigator's Guide." The newsletter can be e-mailed or found online; archives of newsletters are located in the "About" section.

4. Expert Witnesses

See a video of NCSTL Director and past President of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences Carol Henderson presenting *Digging Up Dirt on Experts*. She explains how to find an expert in a particular field or locate background information on an expert witness. The video is accompanied by a list of other resources.

5. Prepare for Trial

Expert witnesses who are preparing for trial will want to look at *Expert Testimony: Resources for Expert Witnesses*, which discusses the deposition and trial processes and offers tips — and references to other resources — for presenting testimony.

6. Learn the Law

Coming soon to the Web site: a free interactive course, *Law 101: Legal Guide for the Forensic Expert*, designed to inform non-lawyers about policies, procedures and protocols in serving as an expert witness. Available now is "Related Links," through which users can locate specific case law and legislation regarding scientific evidence. For example, there is a page devoted to

NCSTL Database Topics

Here are some of the forensic disciplines that the NCSTL database covers:

- Biometrics
- Bioterrorism
- Blood Pattern Analysis
- Cybercrime
- Entomology
- Fingerprints
- Linguistics
- Toxicology

www.ncstl.org

post-conviction DNA legislation and policy as well as links to rules of evidence about expert testimony.

7. Attend an Online Lecture

NCSTL hosts live seminars on Stetson University College of Law's campus in Gulfport, Fla. — and these seminars are also available online. NCSTL has hosted many internationally renowned forensic experts, such as Henry Lee, founder and professor of the forensic science program at the University of New Haven,

and renowned forensic pathologist Michael Baden. NCSTL has twice hosted the National Conference on Science, Technology and the Law, featuring experts in cutting-edge forensic issues. Search the database for other online presentations and seminars as well as audio and video resources on a wide range of forensic sciences.

8. Link to Resources

“Related Links” provides links from general forensic information to specific resources, such as the recently released report from the National Research

Council, *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States*. The “Education & Training” section contains information devoted to locating cold case resources, called the “Cold Case Toolkit.”

9. Follow Up With Bibliographies

Under “Education & Training,” the database contains many bibliographies, including those related to a guest lecture or a specific NCSTL project. Many of these readings can be found online or in NCSTL’s special collection in the Stetson Law Library. If the full text is not online, check with a local librarian, who can use the Interlibrary Loan system in which Stetson participates.

10. Connect to Organizations and Associations

The “Related Links” page also contains information regarding forensics-related organizations and educational programs, along with a directory of state crime labs; also check the “Calendar” for upcoming events.

About the Author

Diana Botluk, J.D., is the director of research for the National Clearinghouse for Science, Technology and the Law at Stetson University College of Law. She received a J.D. from Catholic University Law School in 1984 and taught at Catholic University and the University of Maryland. Her workshops and demonstrations are based on her 20 years of experience in legal research and use of online resources. In 1999, Botluk was named one of the top online legal researchers in the country in *Law of the Super Searchers: The Online Secrets of Top Legal Researchers*.

NCJ 226876