

FIND THAT GUY!

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Expert witnesses are used regularly in litigation and their opinions can often make or break a case. Over the past few years, there have been many stories in the news focusing on experts blatantly lied or misrepresented their credentials. As a result, it is even more important that attorneys utilize as many resources as possible to find the right experts and effectively evaluate their credentials. *Note: In addition to verifying credentials, many of the resources in this article can be used to locate individuals generally.*

When researching an expert, the following topics should be covered:

- Identity and residence;
- License status;
- Educational background;
- Publications; and
- News/Social Media.

This article will cover some of the most important resources that should be checked when researching your own expert witness or opposing counsel's expert witness. Other topics you may want to consider researching outside the scope of the article include: jury verdict reports, litigation and agency opinions involving your expert, transcripts, and any disciplinary actions.

IDENTITY & RESIDENCE

Performing a public records search to obtain general background information on an expert can be very helpful and reveal a great deal of information. If your expert has an unusually high number of previous addresses in multiple states, this may indicate licensing or litigation problems. Be sure to check each state and county in which the expert resided for license information and potential litigation.

Below are some resources that can be used to locate address information on an expert:

Google - www.google.com

Google is an outstanding site for locating telephone numbers and address information. In order to search for an

individual by name, input the first name (or first initial) and a combination of either the last name and city, state, area code, or zip code in order to obtain results. Google will also perform reverse telephone searches by entering a phone number in the search box.

Pipl - <http://www.pipl.com>

Pipl is a free resource for uncovering information on individuals and companies. It also does a great job of uncovering address information, relevant pictures, litigation and social media sites for an individual. Some resources listed in the results will require a fee for more information.

ReferenceUSA - <http://www.cincinnati-library.org/resources/referenceusa.asp>

This service has been discontinued through the Kenton County Public Library, however, it is still available through the Hamilton County Public Library at no charge for those with a library card. The service contains basic address and telephone information for an individual. No historical data is provided.

Merlin - <http://www.merlindata.com>

Although this service requires a subscription, Merlin is a very inexpensive transactional service and has a nice Investigator Background Report for \$4.00. Criminal searches may be added for an additional fee. The Investigator Background Report contains the following information:

- Current & historical residential address and telephone listings (Historical phone listings date back to 1999);
- Property ownership information for each current and historical address;
- Neighbors for each current and previous address (residences & businesses), their phone numbers and addresses;
- Possible relatives; and
- Bankruptcies, judgments and tax liens.

TLO Online Investigative Systems - www.tlo.com

This is a relatively new service and re-

quires a subscription. Like Merlin, it is a transactional service with basic people searches (.25 cents) as well as comprehensive reports (\$5.00) which provide the following information:

- Names, aliases, and SSNs;
- Current and historical addresses;
- Phone numbers including listed and unlisted landlines and cell phones;
- Verification of bankruptcies, foreclosures, liens, judgments, and some criminal history;
- Relatives, neighbors, and associates;
- Assets including property, vehicles, and more;
- Licenses including professional, driver's, and more; and
- Email addresses and some social networking information.

LICENSING INFORMATION

Since licensing information is easier than ever to obtain, it is vital to determine if the information presented by the expert is correct. In order to do this, there are several free and low cost resources available.

AMA's Doctor Finder - <https://extapps.ama-assn.org/doctorfinder/recaptcha.jsp>

Website provides contact information and basic biographical information for U.S. doctors.

Avvo - <http://www.avvo.com/find-a-doctor>

This resource provides basic contact and biographical information for doctors. It can also provide patient feedback and doctor ratings.

DocInfo - (www.docinfo.org) and Choice Trust (www.choicetrust.com) are fee based services that allow you to purchase disciplinary information on various



types of doctors using a credit card for less than \$10.00.

BRB Publications - <http://www.brbspub.com/freeresources/pubrecsitesOccStates.aspx>

This free resource links to over 4,000 state occupational licensing boards that permit name searching online. Clicking on the relevant state will link you to a listing of all the professions that have searchable databases available for verifying a license.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Verifying the educational background of an expert is also a very important aspect of the background check. This can be done by contacting the Registrar's Office of the designated educational institution or you can use a service to perform the search for you. Many schools will no longer verify attendance or degrees over the phone. They require that you contact Degree Check (www.degreecheck.com) or the National Student Clearinghouse (www.studentclearinghouse.com). Each school has its own policy on what is required to release records, so you may need to obtain approval from your expert beforehand. If you are performing a background check on your expert, a release form can easily be included as part of the retention agreement. Checking on opposing counsel's expert may prove more difficult.

PUBLICATIONS

When researching an expert, you will want to find and/or verify all articles or publications written by the expert and locate any other relevant works that may not have been revealed. Listed below are a number of excellent resources that can be used to find publications written by your expert.

Amazon.com - <http://www.amazon.com>

Barnes & Noble - www.barnesandnoble.com

Library of Congress Online Catalog - <http://catalog.loc.gov/>

HeinOnline - <http://www.heinonline.com>

Law review authors often include citations to expert testimony. It's always a good idea to run an expert's name through several law review databases to see what can be found. Heinonline is a fee based service but can be accessed at no charge through the Cincinnati Law Library and at the Salmon P. Chase College of Law. In addition, the University Law Project provides free access to law journals on the Internet. (<http://www.lawreview.org>).

National Library of Medicine (NLM) - <http://www.nlm.nih.gov>

First published in 1993, the NLM website is an excellent place to find medical and health care articles. Articles can be accessed through Medline and PubMed. One benefit to NLM is that full text articles are becoming more prevalent throughout the service.

WorldCat - <http://www.cincinnatiilibrary.org/resources/oclcfs.asp?db=WorldCat>

WorldCat is available through the Hamilton County and Kenton County public libraries. It is an online catalog of books and other materials (recordings, software, magazines, etc.) owned by libraries around the world. If you locate a publication of interest, WorldCat will let you know which libraries across the country own the item.

NEWS & SOCIAL MEDIA

The growing acceptance and popularity of blogs and social media make them a must when researching an expert witness. You should always check to see if your expert maintains a blog, a LinkedIn or Twitter site.

Google News - <http://www.news.google.com>

Although Google News does not contain as many resources as Lexis and Westlaw, it is a good resource for locating news stories. Don't forget that you can also use Google to set up an alert on an individual to track anytime their name or

company name appears in the news or on someone else's website.

Google Groups - <http://groups.google.com>

Google Groups hosts a variety of current groups as well as an archive of Usenet postings dating back to 1985. This is an excellent resource to locate postings from Internet discussion groups which could potentially be helpful to you.

Google Blog Search - <http://blogsearch.google.com>

Google Blog Search indexes only those blogs using site feeds (RSS technology), which is checked more frequently for new content than standard web searches. As a result, the search engine is very current and comprehensive. Results can be sorted by date or relevance, and blogs may be searched in multiple languages.

YouTube - <http://www.youtube.com>

Access to video material is becoming more common place. It is not uncommon to find depositions or video of your expert witness on YouTube.com. As a result, video searches on an individual or expert should never be overlooked.

Addictomatic - <http://www.addictomatic.com>

Addictomatic is like a meta-search engine for social media. It searches all of the best social media sites on the web at one time and returns the results in a dashboard format.

Snap Bird - <http://www.snapbird.org>

Snap Bird provides searchable access to Twitter tweets that were posted within the last three months. Snap Bird will often pull tweets that are older than three months.

Ms. Wagner serves as the Director of Information Resources at Keating Muething & Klekamp. She is responsible for managing all aspects of the firm's Information Resource Center. In addition, Ms. Wagner has published numerous articles and frequently lectures on Internet legal research.