International Association of Crime Analysts

Modus Operandi

Tips & Tricks

By Shauna Bent, Crime Analyst, Business Intelligence & Analytics Unit, Toronto Police Services

Develop Key Skills

All tactical, operational, and strategic analytical products will require some or all of these skills.

- Spatial analysis (ArcGIS)
- Data analysis (SQL)
- Link analysis (i2 Analyst Notebook)
- Report writing, including preparing comprehensive reports and/or brief synopses for Senior Managers, Deputy Chiefs, and Chiefs
- Presentations and oral briefings
- Dashboard development (Tableau, PowerBI, etc.)

Shauna Bent gives advice about skills analysts will need in their day-to-day work: develop key skills, get involved, learn key terms and practices, and stay up to date.

Contribute

We would love to hear from you! If you have suggestions for content or articles you would like to submit to the newsletter, please contact the Publications Committee at publications@iaca.net.

Upcoming Topics

- Evidence Based Policing Society
- Text Analysis

Interested in prior newsletters? View them at https://iaca.net/newsletter/

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About the Author

Shauna Bent has been with the Toronto Police Service for 15 years and currently works as a Crime Analyst with the Strategy Management – Business Intelligence & Analytics Unit (BIAU). Prior to joining the BIAU, Shauna worked as an Intelligence Researcher in the Urban Organized Crime Squad at the Intelligence Unit for 5 years. Some of her duties included generating strategic and tactical products in order to support resource management and covert operations.

Since joining the BIAU, Shauna has worked on several analytics-driven projects such as the Annual Statistics Report, Shooting Reports, Major Crime Indicator dashboards, maps as well as supporting maintenance of the Service's Public Safety Data Portal. Additionally, Shauna supports the analytical needs of the Toronto Police Operation Centre, Command as well as front-line officers and analysts. Shauna also supports and assists in delivering analytical training to divisional and intelligence analysts.

Before immigrating to Canada in 2000, Shauna completed a double major Bachelors of Science degree in Zoology and Botony graduating with honours, after which she completed three years of post-graduate MPhil research and analysis in Environmental Sciences (Freshwater Ecology). Shauna is currently pursuing a Master of Science degree in Crime Science from the Jill Dando Institute at the University College of London in the UK.

Take Training

ESRI is a world leader in Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and many agencies all over the World are making the switch to the ArcMap GIS platform to perform powerful spatial analysis. ESRI offers a 21-day free trial for their desktop application along with many free courses and tutorials on how to use the software. Courses with certificates are, of course, preferred as you can include the formal training on your resume. However, if you're just starting out with GIS, downloading the trial version of ArcMap and watching tutorial videos is a great way to get started. Create an ArcGIS Online account and explore what other government agencies have produced (such as their Operations Dashboards for example) and what analytic and mapping products are available in the ArcGIS community.

Coursera.org offers a lot of free courses on data mining, MS Excel for Analytics, MS Access, SQL Server, and much more. Certificate courses are also available for a fee.

The International Association of Crime Analysts (IACA) and the International Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Analysts (IALEIA) both have excellent analyst's resources available on their respective websites. There are several Crime Analysis/Intelligence Analysis certificates available from various universities and colleges across North America and the UK. Conduct some research online and canvass other analysts to find out what analysis courses or certificates they completed prior to getting hired – specifically what they liked and disliked about each course. Improve your capacity for critical thinking and problem solving by training your brain to seek and find patterns. This can reasonably be done by practicing logic-based Q&A style quizzes, and puzzle solving. The Mensa IQ tests are a good option.

Get Involved

- Become an IACA and/or IALEIA member.
- Explore the GIS Ambassador programme (ESRI) in your area.
- Attend user conferences (ESRI, IACA, etc.). There is usually a cost to attend (registration fee, transportation, etc.), but there are often multiple hands-on technical training sessions included, especially if it's a multi-day conference. You'll also make a lot of solid contacts during plenary and break-out sessions.
- Volunteer at a local police agency or fire department. Discover a problem and suggest a solution. Your local community might be interested in where bike thefts are occurring, or the local fire station may benefit from seeing where all their historical fires have occurred. If you are able to access their data, create a dashboard/map to answer those types of questions.
- Consider job-shadowing experienced analysts if feasible.
- Interview veteran detectives and dispatchers if their agency allows it. Find out what they wish they had in their "tool chest" to do their jobs faster and more efficiently.
- Create a profile on LinkedIn and be sure to connect with other crime and intelligence analysts in other police services. Although some analysts may not be able to accommodate a site visit with their respective agencies due to security protocols and clearance, many would be happy to give you career advice and share their experiences.

Tips & Tricks

Learn Key Terms and Practices

If you want to pursue a career in crime or intelligence analysis, become familiar with key terms, products, and practices that are common in the field. A good analyst will already be aware of most of these, but a great analyst will know how to produce or use all of the following items and more:

1. Probation conditions

2. Threat/risk assessments

3. Crime bulletins, alerts, and BOLO's

4. Intelligence cycle

5. Crime patterns, series, and trends

6. SARA model

7. Operational plans

8. Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED)

9. Repeat offender/recidivism

10. Open source intelligence (OSINT)

11. Repeat victimization

12. Intelligence reports

13. Crime detractors, generators, and attractors

14. Protected levels/classifications

15. Offender profile sheets

16. Hotspot mapping

17. Crime rate calculations

18. Interactive dashboards

19. Percent change calculations

20. Metrics and scoring

Stay up-to-date

It's essential for all aspiring and current analysts to stay up-to-date on key changes in legislation, such as Supreme Court rulings, and keep up with new technology such as "Big Data," "Open Data" artificial intelligence, and machine learning. Also consider challenges to the technology used by law enforcement, i.e. human rights violations and lawsuits. It's worth knowing potential impacts to your ability to conduct your work because, at the end of the day, the ultimate goal is public and officer safety.

IACA Forums

The new forums are live, and can be accessed at https://iaca.net/forums/forum/technology/. The forums allow IACA members to sign in and post and answer questions. This will ultimately replace the listserve. Below are the forum posting guidelines.

Forum Posting Guidelines

- You may post messages about upcoming training (whether it be for-profit or non-profit) to the training forum, but please only one message for each training.
- Corporate or vendor members may post one message about a product or service. Advertising messages should not exceed one per month per corporation.
- We encourage our vendor partners to participate in IACA Forum Discussions; however such participation should not be used as a pretext to promote or advertise the vendor's fee-based products. Unless the member has specified otherwise (e.g. "No vendor replies"), the vendor representative is encouraged to relay specific fee-based product information off-forum and directly to the member.
- Please use a descriptive subject to help others understand the nature of your post. "Requesting Assistance with Gang Symbol Identification" is more effective than "Need Help" or "I have a question".
- It is acceptable to relay posts on behalf of non-IACA members so long as you accept any replies the post may generate. For example, you may post jobs or relevant event announcements (conferences); however, you may not post a request for information where the replies are directed to a third party who is not an IACA member. If you post it and do not direct members to reply to someone else, it will be approved.
- As a courtesy to your fellow international members, please identify yourself by including contact information and your affiliation (agency, school, company) in your email signature.
- Please do not submit messages where the sole content is a holiday greeting or similar general sentiment. Though well-intended and appreciated, these posts unnecessarily increase the post volume for thousands of recipients.

Please keep in mind our Forum Moderators do their best to review pending posts, however, on occasion, inappropriate posts may be approved accidentally. This is a reminder to all of our members that this is not a secure forum and many of our members are not affiliated with law enforcement. Please do not share confidential or sensitive information through the IACA Forum Discussions. If you need to disseminate such information, please use the member directory to identify recipients and contact them directly.

Regional Training

The Wisconsin Law Enforcement Analyst Network (WILEAN) is hosting a one day training event. Talented local, state, and private sectore professionals will be presenting on a variety of available resources and tools for law enforcement analysts.

Date: Thursday, October 10th 2019
Time: 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM
Location: Madison Police Department Training Center, 5702 Femrite Drive, Madison WI 53718
Cost: WILEAN members $25, Non-Members $55
Lunch: Lunch is includered with the attendance fee, and will consist of Qdobda burrito bar
Deadline: Register by Friday, September 27, 2019
Registration: Register **and pay** online at http://www.wilean.org (You can also register to become a WILEAN member at this site.) **NOTE: There is a $1 processing fee for credit card payments.**

If unable to pay by credit card, please send an email to wileanetwork@gmail.com