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News, Resources, and Useful Information for the Online Investigative and OSINT Professional from Toddington International Inc.

**Toddington International Inc.****Online Research and Intelligence Newsletter****JANUARY 2020 EDITION**

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Welcome to the Newsletter

Welcome to our first newsletter of this new decade!

We are off to a busy start this year with our teams focused on curriculum development and the launch of a number of new online and classroom-based training courses in the coming months.

On January 30-31, we will be delivering our highly-acclaimed [Social Media Intelligence & Online Investigations](#) course in Vancouver, facilitated by TII's resident Social Media Expert and Lead Intelligence Analyst, [Julie Tillotson](#). Registration will soon be closing and seats are limited, so be sure to [sign up](#) or [reserve your seat](#) as soon as possible if

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Over the past two years, we have been paying significant attention to the importance of essential Critical Thinking skills for investigators and analysts; in this edition of the newsletter, David Toddington and Julie Tillotson share their article, "*Critical Thinking: What Can We Learn From House Hippos and a Tree Octopus.*"

Often overlooked, yet essential for front-line practitioners and managers alike, you can learn about, and develop your critical thinking skills in our brand new **Critical Thinking for Investigators** course in [Vancouver on March 23rd & 24th](#), or in [Toronto on March 30th & 31st](#). Click [here](#) to find out more and reserve your space.

E-Learning Graduates

Congratulations to the following students who are among those who successfully completed an e-learning program with TII this month:

- Sergii Tokar
- Christine P.
- Miloš Tomin
- Julie Sloan
- Daniel Longo
- Shelly Evans
- Sammy Lam
- Van Nguyen
- Silvie DiNunzio
- Danielle Down
- Tara Andrew
- Tasha Halldorson
- Bruce Leonard
- Jennifer Parra
- Joyce Pearson
- Dustin Hughes
- Brianna Hurley
- Blake Leeson
- Jesse Butlin
- Daniel Sørensen
- Olivia Gill
- Cerys Palmer
- Aaron Cook

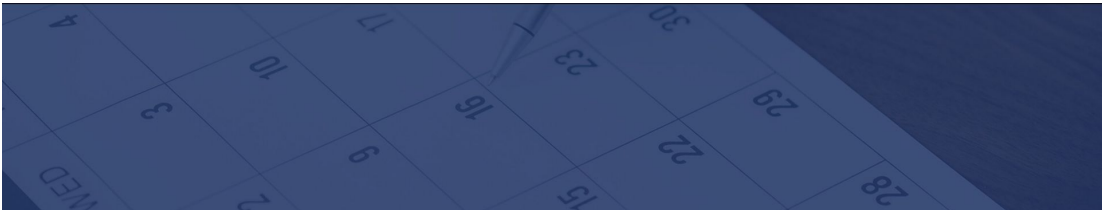
Important Note: As we respect the privacy of our students, we only publish the names of students who have provided express permission to do so. Many of our students are unable to share their completion due to the nature of their employment, or due to online privacy concerns. If your name did not appear in

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Upcoming Select Public Courses



Dates	Location	Courses
Jan 30 - 31, 2020	Vancouver, BC	Social Media Intelligence & Investigation
Mar 12 - 13, 2020	Vancouver, BC	Advanced Internet Intelligence & Online Investigations
Mar 19 - 20, 2020	Toronto, ON	Advanced Internet Intelligence & Online Investigations
Mar 23 - 24, 2020	Vancouver, BC	Critical Thinking for Investigators
Mar 30 - 31, 2020	Toronto, ON	Critical Thinking for Investigators
May 7 - 8, 2020	Toronto, ON	Social Media Intelligence & Investigation

Don't see the course you're looking for? TII is pleased to offer a number of specialized and customizable in-house training programs for both the public and private sectors internationally. To learn more about what we can do to empower your workforce, [contact us](#).

Critical Thinking: What Can We Learn From House Hippos and a Tree Octopus?

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Co-Authored by TII's David Toddington & Julie Tillotson

In his most recent book *Talking to Strangers*, Malcolm Gladwell posits that we humans are terrible at detecting lies and are “natural believers” by default.

With the principal argument coming from University of Alabama researcher Tim Levine, Gladwell writes that this long-standing puzzle in psychology, our inability to detect deception, has been necessary to our evolution. “Evolution favoured the people who had trust in their fellow men and women” he states, “If you’re a trusting person, you can do a million things no one else can do. You can have warm and supportive relationships. You can participate in your community. You can start companies; you can put your child on a school bus and not spend the whole day wracked in worry. And because most people are honest, that’s a really good strategy.”

With a natural bias towards trust, all of us are going to be deceived from time to time, however, and if our job is analyzing data to produce accurate, actionable intelligence products, this is going to be not just problematic, it may also be dangerous.

How do we reconcile the “natural believer” default we all have with being effective at determining “what is” in an online world overwhelmed with misinformation, disinformation and propaganda? How do we develop a healthy skepticism and not become cynics in the process?

Our Default is to Believe What We See and That’s a Problem

Just over 20 years ago, a Public Service Announcement for the “[House Hippo](#)” was released by Concerned Children’s Advertisers and broadcast widely across Canada. In a 60 second spot, narrated in the style of the popular 1980’s *Hinterland Who's Who* PSAs, the parody piece described the behaviour of an elusive mouse-sized hippopotamus found throughout Canada and the eastern United States, and showed the extremely small hippo foraging for food crumbs in a kitchen, making a quick escape from a

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trying to get children to critically evaluate what they were seeing on various types of media.

The House Hippo was not the first attempt to challenge kids in this way. In 1998, Lyle Zapato launched an internet hoax urging the preservation of the “[Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus](#).” Although not created with education in mind, this hoax was used to conduct an empirical study on the ability of students in the United States to critically evaluate internet content.

The first study was conducted in 2007, where only 6 out of 27 students were able to identify the Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus as a hoax. When the study was replicated again in 2017, only 2 out of 27 students recognized the website as a hoax. What became clear through this research is that the ability to critically evaluate information is an important and a valuable skill that is not being adequately taught in schools.

Critical Thinking is a Necessary Skill and It’s Not Our Default

Critical thinking (CT) skills are generally defined as “the ability to evaluate sources of information, challenge assumptions, understand context, and analyze arguments” (Brookfield; King & Kitchener; Kurfiss).

In their book, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*, Arum and Roksa examined data on 2,300 undergraduates at 24 institutions and concluded that 45% of students demonstrated no significant improvement in a range of skills—including CT, complex reasoning, and writing—during their first two years of college, and 36% of students experienced no significant improvement in learning over four years of schooling. Moreover, students majoring in business, education, social work, and communications had the lowest measurable gains.

What About Technological Solutions to Generate Better intelligence?

Consider Bill Gates’ observation, that “the first rule of any technology used in a business is that automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify the efficiency. The second is that automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify the inefficiency.” Now think about the old computer science adage “garbage in garbage out” – enter bad inputs and get bad outputs as a result.

This leaves us in a place where that while they are potentially beneficial for doing the “heavy lifting,” intelligence analysis algorithms and products alone are not the answer – we still need trained professionals for these vital tasks.

Without good critical thinking skills, however, analysts and investigators are not able to effectively and consistently draw the right conclusions from the data they have. Not only

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won't be able to do their job effectively.

Human Biases Working Against Us

While there are dozens of biases an investigator and/or analyst must be aware of, **Confirmation Bias**, or our tendency to latch onto the first possible explanation, is a key challenge, especially for the intelligence professional facing tight deadlines or a lack of resources. One way to break free from this bias is to apply critical thinking analytical techniques, and to this end, training directed toward improving creative thinking will ultimately assist leadership decision-making, and ensure online information is evaluated and assessed in a timely manner.

Web literacy requires new knowledge and skills to locate, evaluate, synthesize, organize, and communicate information found online (Leu, Forzani, Timbrell, & Maykel, 2015; November, 2008). By learning how to use advanced search techniques, researchers can conduct effective data collection and locate relevant information. However, once information is located, investigators or analysts must evaluate the mass amount of information to assess if the information is valid or reliable.

There are a variety of techniques and strategies that can be incorporated to better examine online content, rather than taking information at face value.

“Just Google It” and Critical Thinking in Everyday Life

Michael Bugeja coined the phrase “Google Syndrome” to refer to when people accept what they read, and believe what they see online is fact when it is not. When faced with the deluge of information online, it is so often difficult to filter through the vast amount of information to assess what is valid or reliable information. Most of us go no further than Google's top ten results, and all of us are all guilty of taking shortcuts and falling victim to all sorts of cognitive traps from time to time.

Critical thinking is more than just another tool in the toolbox. Rather, it is a practised skill and is an essential requirement for effectively evaluating the information being gathered online to decode fact from fiction. To be Web literate, readers need to become healthy skeptics (Leu, 2017) and use reasoning to identify fake news and valid sources of information in an ever-growing technical world that is becoming solely reliant on online information.

Bottom line: thinking is hard work and we will almost always take the path of least resistance. We simply can't rely on emotion, intuition, or “common sense” to determine the truth. Only through deliberate, careful, and intentional thinking will we be able to ask the right questions and come to the right conclusions.

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detecting deception as adults than they were as teenagers?

About the Authors:

- *David Toddington is the Founder and CEO of Toddington International. Learn more about David Toddington and his work [here](#).*
- *Julie Tillotson is a career Criminal Intelligence Analyst and Toddington International's Social Media Expert. Learn more about Julie Tillotson and her work [here](#).*

To book training with TII's David Toddington or Julie Tillotson for your team, please [contact us](#).

Tools and Resources for the OSINT Professional



[MyAllSearch](#) - Meta search tool, providing results from Google, Bing, Dogpile, and more search engines from a single interface

[TweeterID](#) - Tool for converting a Twitter username (handle) to a Twitter ID and vice versa

[Brave](#) - Based on the Chromium Web browser, Brave is a free, open-source Web browser that blocks ads and website trackers. It supports Tor in Private Browsing mode and is available for Windows, MacOS, Linux, Android and iOS.

[Private.sh](#) - An encrypted proxy-based private search engine

[CrowdTangle](#) - Content discovery and social monitoring platform

[DataMiner](#) - Data scraping tool that extracts data from HTML webpages and imports it into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets

[Shodan](#) - Search engine that indexes all devices connected to the internet

[FileZilla](#) - A free cross-platform FTP application

[Facebook Audience Insights](#) - Facebook Audience Insights provides information about people using Facebook and those connected to your page

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[CC Search Browser Extension](#) - A search tool that allows you to look for free content in the Public Domain which is under Creative Commons licence

[RezRising](#) - Business database including over 500 small Native American businesses

[The Informant](#) - Reporting on hate and extremism in America

[Qwant](#) - French Web search engine that respects your privacy

[Water, Peace and Security](#) - Tool used to predict water-related violence

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Comprehensive E-Learning Program:

"Using the Internet as an Investigative Research Tool™"



Take Your Online Research and Intelligence Skills to New Levels with TII's Industry-Recognized E-Learning Course

The most comprehensive and up-to-date internet research and investigation e-learning program available, "[Using the Internet as an Investigative Research Tool™](#)" is designed to enable investigators, researchers, and intelligence professionals to find better online information, in less time, at less cost, with less risk™.

For a fraction of the cost of classroom-based training, our flexible and interactive virtual classroom environment allows candidates to progress at their own pace and competency level, with a qualified personal instructor on hand at all times to ensure success. Initially launched in 1998, this highly-acclaimed and continually updated online course has been successfully completed by well over eight thousand investigators and knowledge workers around the world.

Enrolment takes only a few moments; online credit card payments are accepted, and group discounts and licensing options are available for five or more registrants. Visit the

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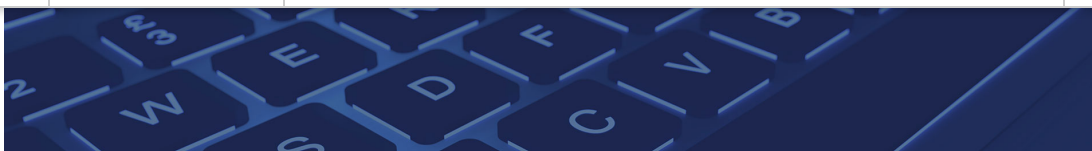
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Bonus: Tuition fee includes special access to select OSINT resources.

As a HRSDC certified educational institution, TII provides Canadian students with a T2202A Tuition Tax Receipt.

More Online Training

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Introduction to Intelligence Analysis

40-Hour E-Learning Program

This program provides a rich and interesting opportunity to explore the key concepts and intellectual foundations which inform intelligence analysis activity. Students will develop awareness of, and gain experience in, using common tools and methodologies to conduct analysis assignments, as well as learn how to fashion one's insights and ideas in a way that communicates effectively to clients and other intelligence consumers. **Sign up or learn more [here](#).**

Criminal Intelligence Analysis

40-Hour E-Learning Program

This program is designed to equip aspiring and inexperienced analysts, as well as other interested law enforcement and investigative professionals, with the knowledge and skills required to undertake criminal intelligence analysis work, and to understand criminal intelligence analysis products when encountered. **Sign up or learn more [here](#).**

Strategic Intelligence Analysis

40-Hour E-Learning Program

This program is intended for professionals working in public sector enforcement, intelligence, national security, and regulatory compliance roles, or those aspiring to do so. Students will be equipped with the skills and knowledge required to effectively conceive, plan, and implement strategic analysis projects, and deliver impactful strategic advice to clients and other end users. **Sign up or learn more [here](#).**

"How-To's" and Articles of Interest for the OSINT Professional



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["World Map of Social Networks, showing the most popular social networking sites by country"](#)

["I ditched Google for DuckDuckGo. Here's why you should too"](#)

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