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# Adult Guardianship

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Artifacts in Puerto Rico  
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Using FOIAs to UNLOCK  
HIDDEN INFORMATION

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# A DIGITAL FORENSICS PLAYBOOK: A Living Document

BY **ROBERT B. FRIED**, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT & GLOBAL HEAD OF FORENSICS AND INVESTIGATIONS, SANDLINE GLOBAL  
BY **RICHARD PERRILLO**, SENIOR MANAGER, FORENSICS & INVESTIGATIONS, SANDLINE GLOBAL

**W**e each bring our individual experiences and skill sets to an investigation. Whether we work alone or with a team, how we investigate, including our role(s) and responsibilities, the policies we adhere to, and the methodologies/workflows we use, is important. To ensure consistency, many agencies maintain an investigator's playbook, which includes this information, in an organized format. In digital forensics, compiling and maintaining a playbook is vital – it is a living document.

A digital forensics playbook serves as an indispensable tool, providing practitioners with guidance and best practices on various topics, including but not limited to the handling of electronic evidence, chain of custody, forensic imaging/data collection, and the forensic examination of electronic evidence.

## HOW DO YOU HANDLE THAT?

Regarding the handling of electronic evidence, here are some examples of the types of information that may be contained within a playbook:

- Place a mobile device in airplane mode prior to performing a forensic data collection.
- Obtain the necessary decryption information/key, for an external storage device, to ensure access to its contents.
- Document any screen activity on a powered-on device, prior to taking any further action.
- Generate a working copy of a forensic image or forensic collection, for redundancy purposes.



## DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT

Documentation is a primary element, within a digital forensics playbook; specifically, it includes current versions of frequently used documents, information about when to use them, and how to complete them thoroughly and accurately. The following documents are among those that are likely to be found in a digital forensics playbook:

- **Chain of Custody Form:** records the transfer of custody, between parties, of electronic devices and/or storage media.
- **Forensic Acquisition Form:** records the methodologies/workflows, tools used to preserve and forensically image/collect a data source (including the results).
- **Data Collections Log:** lists all the data sources that were forensically imaged/collected for the matter.

## LET'S DO A WALKTHROUGH

Another element of a digital forensics playbook is frequently used methodologies/workflows for the forensic imaging/collection and examination of electronic evidence. Regarding forensic data collections, a playbook may include, for example, a comprehensive walkthrough of how to obtain access, search, and subsequently export messages from a Microsoft 365 email account to a Microsoft Outlook PST file. Data sources are constantly evolving; therefore, a playbook should include methodologies/workflows, including forensic hardware and software tools to use, and how to configure them, to forensically image/collect from a variety of data sources (i.e. computer workstations, mobile devices, email, cloud storage services), wearables (i.e. smartwatches, smart rings, and smart glasses), Internet of Things (IoT), etc. Regarding forensic examinations, a playbook may include the specific forensic software to use, how it must be configured, the different reports that should be generated, and their formats.



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## PLANNING AHEAD

Beyond the technical aspects of digital forensics, a playbook may provide guidance regarding the planning and logistics for matters. For example, it may discuss team members' roles and responsibilities, address local laws (i.e. data privacy/protection laws), specify equipment to be used on site, in-lab, or remotely, establish communication protocols, and highlight operational requirements (i.e. software license restrictions).

Each element that comprises the digital forensics playbook is carefully compiled to ensure that methodologies/workflows are performed consistently and systematically, with a high degree of thoroughness, and in compliance with legal and organizational standards. The playbook should stand as a testament to the meticulous nature of the field of digital forensics, while guiding practitioners through the inevitable complexities that may be encountered in the digital world.

## DEVIATION FROM STANDARDS

Despite the desire to adhere to standard methodologies/workflows, deviations will be necessary for specific scenarios; not everything fits into a pre-determined framework. Therefore, it is important that a playbook includes language to address the flexibility that may be required. For example, a playbook should include the steps necessary to obtain the approval to proceed with an alternative methodology/workflow. These actions ensure transparency and help to maintain the integrity of the investigative process.

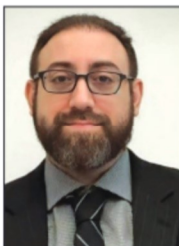
## A DYNAMIC COMPANION

A digital forensics playbook is a cohesive guide, and a dynamic companion for practitioners. Its existence is vital in the ever-evolving field of digital forensics. Its usage and ongoing maintenance help foster team collaboration and professional development. Its purpose is paramount to digital forensics, as it ensures consistent, defensible, and efficient methodologies/workflows are adhered to, while allowing for flexibility, as needed. **PI**



*Robert B. Fried is a seasoned expert and industry thought leader, with 22 years of experience performing data collections and forensic investigations of electronic evidence. Robert is a licensed Professional Investigator in Michigan and is a licensed Private Investigator in New York and South Carolina. He is a frequent speaker at industry events and a featured guest on industry podcasts. Robert is the author of the books, Forensic Data Collections 2.0:*

*The Guide for Defensible & Efficient Processes and Forensic Data Collections 2.0: A Selection of Trusted Digital Forensics Content. His work also appears in PI Magazine's CyberSleuthing Department, where he shares insightful content on topics relating to digital forensics, eDiscovery, data privacy, and cybersecurity.*



*Richard Perrillo is an experienced digital forensics professional with over twenty years in the field. He specializes in digital forensics and eDiscovery, offering his expertise to top legal firms, corporations, and private investigators. Perrillo has worked on numerous high-profile projects and is known for his ability to think outside the box, a skill that allows him to excel in fast-paced and high-pressure environments. Committed to staying abreast of new forensic techniques and technologies, Perrillo ensures his clients receive innovative and cutting-edge support, crucial for their investigative endeavors.*

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