

**SEAKER:**  
**A Mobile Digital Forensic Triage Device**

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The Faculty of the Computer Science Department  
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In (Partial) Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science in Computer Science

by

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April 2019

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# SEAKER:

## A Mobile Digital Forensic Triage Device

Eric Elwood Gentry

April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019

**Keywords:** Digital Forensics, Digital Forensics Triage, Mobile Digital Forensics, Digital Evidence, Forensic Tools, Raspberry Pi

### **Abstract**

As our world of digital devices continues to expand, the potential for digital evidence available to law enforcement during case investigation is ever increasing. The growing amount of digital evidence, along with the considerable lack of Digital Forensic Investigators [9] is causing a backlog to form at many of the digital forensics labs around the world. This backlog leads to delays in evidence analysis and reporting, causing investigators and prosecutors to postpone or even drop on-going cases.

The SEAKER device is a digital forensic triage tool that is designed to be simple, portable, inexpensive, robust, and easy to use. SEAKER is an acronym for Storage Evaluator and Knowledge Extraction Reader. Utilizing a Raspberry Pi, this digital forensic triage device is a novel approach to providing immediate feedback to investigators. It is also intended to help stem the backlog problem in digital forensics labs worldwide [9]. It was originally developed for on-scene investigations that require immediate feedback, especially in time-sensitive investigations. It also appears to be an excellent tool to help reduce the digital evidence backlog by preventing over-collection of digital evidence. SEAKER is not meant to replace a fully-functional digital forensic lab, but instead to augment the initial triage and help reduce the backlog. This research and device overview have led to the development of the inexpensive, mobile, digital triage device called SEAKER.

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## Glossary

**IP** An Internet Protocol address that identifies a particular network connection for a computer. 12, 33, 42, 70, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81

**Raspberry Pi** A small, affordable computer created with the intention of providing low-cost computing power to the masses. 5, 36, 37, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 52, 53, 54, 55, 58, 59, 61, 63, 64, 65, 67, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81

**SATA** An input/output standard for connecting the computer bus interface to mass storage devices, like hard drives (Serial Advanced Technology Attachment). 40, 41, 53

**search warrant** A legal document authorizing a law enforcement official to enter and search a specific premises for specific things. 2, 3, 4, 6, 11, 16, 20, 21, 24, 34, 36, 37, 38, 84

**SSH** A software program that enables encrypted, command-line communication with another networked computer. (Secure Shell). 41, 58, 59, 77, 78, 81

**USB** An input/output standard for a cable interface and protocols between computers and devices (Universal Serial Bus). 23, 24, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 45, 53

**WIFI** A wireless network or access point allowing computers, smart phones, and other devices to connect with each other and the Internet. 5, 24, 32, 37, 52, 64, 70, 71, 79, 82

# Acronyms

**CFFTPM** Computer Forensics Field Triage Process Model. 6, 12, 15, 16, 27

**CSUCI** California State University Channel Islands. 4, 5, 6, 39, 59

**DOJ** United States Department of Justice. 6, 10, 11

**FBI** United States Federal Bureau of Investigation. 6

**IDIP** Integrated Digital Investigation Process. 10, 11, 12

**IoE** Internet of Everything. 1

**IoT** Internet of Things. 1, 17, 18, 22, 30, 32

**ISO** International Standards Organization. 8, 13, 25, 26

**NIST** National Institute of Standards and Technologies. 7, 8, 22, 26

**SCHTTF** Southern California High Technology Task Force. 4, 5, 34, 38, 39, 40,  
57, 59, 60, 70

**TCU** Technological Crime Unit. 24, 26, 27, 31

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# 1 Introduction and Literature Review

## 1.1 Introduction

Law enforcement investigations involve many aspects of criminality and need carefully thought-out procedures and practices. These procedures and practices are essential to finding the evidentiary information necessary to determine criminal liability. They are also in place to ensure that the evidence collected is not tainted and is sound, viable, admissible court evidence. Establishing and retaining the forensic integrity of the evidence is a required and crucial part of the investigator's task.

Performing investigations is also a noteworthy endeavor. There are many steps involved that require special training to be performed properly. One primary example is the *chain of custody*. This refers to the step-by-step documentation record regarding evidence that includes details such as who had custody of the evidence, when they had custody, who it was transferred to, who analyzed it, etc. Another is the exacting science of collecting, labeling, itemizing, and acquiring of evidence. For instance, collecting physical evidence requires the use of gloves, evidence bags, fingerprint-dusting equipment, etc., to prevent cross-contamination, fingerprint smudging, DNA evidence mishandling, and a multitude of other potential evidence tainting. Without the proper adherence to guidelines, even conclusive evidence may not be admissible during a trial.

Digital evidence is very essential to many investigations and cases in the mod-

ern world. With each passing year, more and more digital devices are collecting, storing, and uploading data. As well, electronic devices for personal use appropriately labelled the Internet of Things (IoT) or the Internet of Everything (IoE) are becoming more and more ubiquitous in our everyday lives. IoT devices are now everyday household items like GoPro<sup>TM</sup> cameras, refrigerators, thermostats, light bulbs, window coverings, garage door openers, keys, clothes, and much more. These devices and the massive amount of digital information that is being generated and collected are often helpful in criminal investigations. The data can be used to construct timeframes of activity, locations of individuals, Internet activity, computer users and usages, and other potential digital information.

One growing and particularly helpful aspect of an investigation is digital forensics. This involves collecting potential digital evidence, analyzing, and reporting procedures. Collecting and analyzing evidence almost always requires a search warrant - a court-ordered search and seizure of potential evidence of a location where a suspect resides, works, or may be storing it. A search warrant is executed after it has been obtained from a judge and can involve physical and digital evidence, as well as other items of consequence.

Search warrant investigations are often fraught with danger, intentional obscurity, hidden evidence, and the potential mishandling of evidence. Before anything can be done, the location must be considered secure and free of potential threats for the investigators. Once a scene is secured at a location involving electronic evidence, three activities may take place simultaneously: the search for physical

evidence, the search of the physical evidence itself for electronic evidence, and the interviewing of involved parties.

The physical and digital evidence can guide the interviewing of the suspect(s), but also has the potential to have both positive and negative effects on the outcome of the investigation. If investigators do not locate any physical evidence for an examiner to evaluate, then intelligence is not gathered, and the interviewer has less information with which to confront the suspect(s). If investigators present physical evidence to an examiner who is able to evaluate it quickly in the field, then the interviewer (who is oftentimes also the lead investigator on the case) can confront the suspects and potentially secure statements that lead to prosecution.

This leads to the need for digital forensics specialists to bring their lab equipment into the field, especially when serving a search warrant. The lab equipment is specialized software and hardware designed to analyze, report, and maintain forensic integrity on potential digital evidence. This equipment often involves a laptop, a write-blocking device, media imaging storage devices, expensive software, and associated cabling for connection and power. As well, this software is designed for extensive and in-depth searching and often takes hours or days to analyze the evidence. Many of the reports from these systems are designed to be thorough and may take a skilled digital forensic examiner days to pour over the material produced. Oftentimes, this equipment is not brought into the field and the digital evidence is simply collected for later analysis at the law enforcement facilities.



A more field-friendly digital forensic *triage* solution like SEAKER will assist in the initial investigation tasks in multiple ways:

1. It enforces a structured procedure and approach that is user-friendly to *non-digital forensic trained investigators* with the goal of simple instructions for use and very simple evidence location.
2. It enables investigators, especially interrogators, a very fast digital-evidence overview into the types of files and information being accessed and stored on the computer equipment at the site of the search warrant.
3. It limits the number of devices and therefore the amount of data required for the in-depth analysis phase at the lab.
4. It minimizes the impact and inconvenience to other parties at the site of the search warrant. The devices that are searched and found to have no evidentiary value can be deemed inconsequential to the case and not be taken into custody.
5. It may be used to provide initial, albeit simplified, analysis results on potential digital evidence received by digital forensic labs.

This paper presents a portable, inexpensive, efficient device, named SEAKER, that is intended to overcome the need for a full digital forensic lab equipment suite to be brought into the field. The SEAKER device was conceived and produced at the California State University Channel Islands (CSUCI) campus in a Masters level Cyber Security class (COMP 524, Summer 2017) in direct collaboration with the Southern California High Technology Task Force (SCHTTF) division of the

Ventura County Distric Attorney's Office.

### **1.1.1 Author's Contributions**

The author's direct contributions to the SEAKER device project:

1. Developed the bash script to turn a standard Raspberry Pi into a SEAKER device by programmatically installing Raspbian software packages, setting up WIFI as a wireless access point, adding a web server, and preparing the running environment with the proper file set
2. Wrote a custom executable using the C programming language to increase the SEAKER device's searching efficiency in lieu of slower, native operating system solutions for finding content on digital media
3. Co-presented and demonstrated the initial SEAKER prototype for the Summer 2017 Masters level CSUCI Security class project to SCHTTF, CSUCI department heads, and local community leaders
4. Presented the SEAKER device as a thesis project at the April 2018 CSUCI Cyber Security Event to CSUCI President Erika Beck, California State Assembly Member Jacqui Irwin, Ventura County Sheriff's Department, and other local community leaders
5. Co-authored a conference paper [8] on the SEAKER project and the technology behind it
6. Updated and enhanced the SEAKER device functionality to support the latest Raspbian operating system (Stretch Lite, April 2018 release), including

enabling ethernet passthrough to the wireless access point

7. Co-authored a United States Department of Justice (DOJ) grant proposal [6], providing Logic Models for (SEAKER) and Voyager (another digital forensic tool project at CSUCI)

## **1.2 Literature Review**

### **1.2.1 History of Digital Evidence**

The digital forensics field began in the mid 1980s with an understanding from several law enforcement agencies that computers would play a critical role in future criminal investigations. In 1993, the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) hosted an international conference on computer evidence in Virginia. This was the first major conference on the subject and had attendees from 26 different countries. Much of the original computer forensics at that time related to recovering information from local computers.

Among the early pioneers in the digital forensics field, there was a common understanding that a system of processes and procedures were needed to locate, record, analyze and report information. This process would have to be similar to how non-digital physical evidence was handled, but also include other computer specific preservation methods to ensure the integrity of evidence found. Those processes and procedures have increased in complexity over time and have suffered from the lack of unanimous adoption to a single standard.

In 2006, Rogers et al proposed a standardization model for a portion of the entire process called triage for digital forensic examiners to follow: Computer Forensics Field Triage Process Model (CFFTPM) [15]. The authors of the CFFTPM noted the important legal and technical considerations prior to implementing CFFTPM on a particular investigation. The legal considerations include issues related to search warrant scope and its limitations, U.S. Constitutional 4th Amendment rights, etc. The technical considerations include type of case, criticality of timeliness, skillset of the on-site digital forensic examiner, skillset of the suspect, having proper lab equipment on-site, scene control, etc.

Even as late as 2013, Shaw et al points out that neither digital forensic triage examination nor digital forensic full examination are well defined [16]. Digital forensic triage may mean something completely different to two digital forensic examiners. As well, full digital forensic examination has no robust standard to follow, although there has been no shortage of attempts.

National Institute of Standards and Technologies (NIST) is a technological, non-regulatory federal agency under the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC). The NIST process model (labeled NIST SP 800-101) lays out the digital evidence procedures in four steps [1]:

1. *Preservation* – searching, recognition, documentation, and collection of digital evidence
2. *Acquisition* – creating a copy of the digital media and storing the original device

3. *Examination and Analysis* – process of uncovering digital evidence and analyzing the results (typically done in a digital forensics lab environment)
4. *Reporting* – detailed summary of all steps taken and analysis conclusions (includes information about tools and techniques utilized in the entire process)

These four steps provide the forensic steps for the digital evidence process model as a suggested way to evaluate mobile device information.

The NIST guidelines [2] documenting a digital forensics process were published in 2014 and included several different types of digital evidence such as mobile phones and computers. However, NIST focuses on the analysis portion of the science, but leaves the collection and reporting aspects unexplored.

The International Standards Organization (ISO) published a set of guidelines [10] in 2012 that primarily focused on collection and handling aspects of digital evidence.

Ajjola et al provided a thorough review in 2014 [1] of the NIST SP 800-101 Revision 1 guidelines titled Guidelines on Mobile Devices Forensics and ISO/IEC 27037 titled Guidelines for Identification, Collection, Acquisition, and Preservation of Digital Evidence. Their recommendation was a combined approach that incorporates both guidelines for maximum effect. Even with the recommendation of a combined guidelines approach, the solution was still not fully formed.

Recently some specialized training is available to those investigators who want to become digital forensic investigators. The typical learning takes place over a full year of classes and hands-on work through one of several federal or law enforcement agencies. These lead to certifications like Digital Evidence First Responder (DEFR), Digital Evidence Specialist (DES), or Digital Forensic Investigator (DFI). This training is not standardized across the world, but serves as a good standard within the community of those it certifies.

### **1.2.2 Process and Procedure Standardization**

Over the years, several different approaches have been proposed as universal processes and procedures to gathering, reviewing, and presenting digital evidence. These approaches range in number of steps, process coverage, and overall methodology, but all have the common goal of finding usable digital evidence for preventing future harm to society and preserving the potential digital evidence's integrity for means of presentation in court cases.

In the early years (circa 1990), some research facilities arose to help create and define the processes and procedures necessary. Among these were the Computer Analysis and Response Team (CART), the Scientific Working Group on Digital Evidence (SWGDE), the Technical Working Group on Digital Evidence (TWGDE), and the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). Since their respective inceptions, they have all strived and contributed to standardization on approaches and methods for the handling and processing of all digital evidence [13].

In addition, the DOJ first published Electronic Crime Scene Investigation: A Guide to First Responders [3] in 2001 (with several revisions since) that outlines the necessary four steps for properly investigating digital evidence:

1. *Collection* – which involves physically searching for digital evidence, deciphering what should be collected, acquiring the media devices, and chain of custody documentation.
2. *Examination* – which includes searching the digital media and attempting to reveal the evidence, especially when it is hidden or obscured.
3. *Analysis* – intending to review the evidence for important legal infringements.
4. *Reporting* – for documenting the process used and evidence uncovered in the investigation.

Another approach to investigating digital evidence was the 2003 Integrated Digital Investigation Process (IDIP) [5], proposed by Carrier, et al. This was different from the DOJ proposal and is a model that in their own words:

“uses the theory that a computer is itself a crime scene, called the digital crime scene, and applies crime scene investigation techniques.”

It consists of five main phases (in addition, see Figure 1):

1. *Readiness* – training, preparedness, infrastructure and resources preparation before any investigation even begins.
2. *Deployment* – which is intended to capture the process for when an incident requires digital evidence procedures and assignment of resources.
3. *Physical Crime Scene Investigation* – for processing the physical evidence from the search warrant location.
4. *Digital Crime Scene Investigation* – for collecting and analyzing the digital evidence that exists in the virtual environment.
5. *Review* – for examining the process used in the investigation and potential areas for improvements.

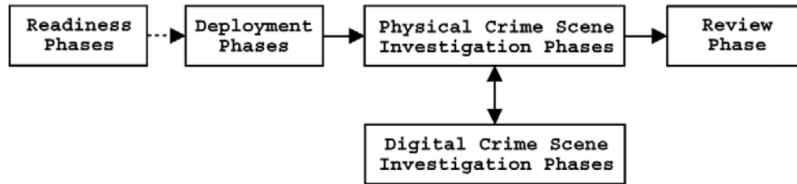


Figure 1: Integrated Digital Investigation Process Model (IDIP)

Baryamureeba and Tushabe proposed a new model based on the best parts of the DOJ's Electronic Crime Scene Investigation, the Abstract Digital Forensics Model, and the IDIP model. Their proposal was called the Enhanced Integrated digital Investigation Process (EIDIP) [4]. This model was proposed in 2004 at the annual Digital Forensic Research conference (DFRWS) [4] and included the following phases:



1. *Readiness* – same as IDIP.
2. *Deployment* – which encompasses the Deployment, Physical Crime Scene Investigation, and Digital Crime Scene Investigation phases from IDIP.
3. *Traceback* – that includes connecting the evidence collected in the previous phase to the suspect(s). Typically, this is done with IP addresses and requires the authority to gather this information.
4. *Dynamite* – which includes the reconstruction of the events suggested by the evidence and the documentation and submission to the appropriate legal authorities.
5. *Review* – same as IDIP.

In 2006, Rogers et al proposed a reliable, repeatable process model designed specifically for digital evidence triage called CFFTPM [15]. It was created in partnership with Purdue University’s Cyber Forensics and Computer and Information Technology Departments, along with the National White-Collar Crime Center. The process was derived from several other military and law enforcement models including IDIP, Digital Crime Scene Analysis (DCSA), and a military Operations Order (OpOrd). In coordination with the Southern Indiana Assistant U.S. Attorney’s office and USADA Steve Debrot, Rogers et al implemented and reported on the success of the CFFTPM [15]. This amalgamation of approaches is still inspiring the latest trends in Digital Forensic approaches.

Another researcher, Shaw et al, analyzed the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and focused on the second step (Capture) as the primary guideline for evidential integrity [16]. They strongly suggest compliance with digital forensics best practices, like the ones provided in the ACPO. Their final approach and recommendation was to combine Linux utilities with a simplistic interface to standardize the output and enable investigators who may not have full digital forensic backgrounds to perform triage on potential digital evidence.

The ACPO, a private company that helped establish and develop policing practices in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland for many years, put together a Good Practice Guide for Digital Evidence [18] in 2012 that outlines some recommended procedures for dealing with digital evidence. As with other methodologies, this guide explains utilizing a four-step approach: Plan, Capture, Analyze, Present.

The ISO/IEC 27037 guidelines (completed in 2012) provide an attempt at an internationally recognized approach, with the goal of making it easier to compare, combine, and contrast results for out-of-jurisdiction cases and for data scientists' research [10]. It provides a common reference line for digital forensics [1]. But it is not meant to replace laws or regulations. The main purpose is to provide practical assistance for investigations involving potential digital evidence, while preventing digital evidence corruption. This process facilitates the usability of evidence by other jurisdictions. This guideline provided four steps for handling potential digital evidence: Identification, Collection, Acquisition, and Preservation. However, this is incomplete, as it only addresses gathering, not actually evaluating or pro-

viding results to law enforcement investigators.

All of these different guidelines and approaches are intended to help find and gather digital evidence. They are also intended to maintain the forensic integrity of the media devices. Unfortunately, there is not a universally agreed upon approach. Some organizations combine these approaches into a system of processes and procedures intended for use in their own facilities. Many organizations have home-grown solutions passed down from senior members of the digital forensics team to the newer team members. Not having a universally recognized and accepted standard leads to complications and difficulties when digital evidence needs to be shared across other jurisdictions and boundaries [1].

The SEAKER device could be utilized to standardize an approach to the triage phase of digital media device investigation. It is also easily altered to conform to an existing reporting standard, if circumstances warrant it.

### **1.2.3 Reactive Digital Forensic Investigation Processes**

*Reactive* digital forensic investigation processes are utilized after an offense has been committed to help identify the charges and suspects. This is the most common process for digital forensics.

The SEAKER digital evidence triage tool is designed to help the reactive process. It is based on the reactive digital forensic investigation process with the goal

of reducing the digital forensic lab backlogs across the world in two ways. The first way is to reduce the amount of digital evidence acquired for the digital forensics lab. This is done by enabling efficient and effective on-site triage to occur by combining digital evidence collection and analysis into a single step. The SEAKER device enables an initial collection of information and subsequent searches by any number of local, on-scene investigators. These investigators do not need extensive training in digital forensics to utilize it.

The second way SEAKER will reduce digital forensics backlogs is by enabling a faster, more streamlined approach to initial potential evidence gathering and reporting. This approach utilizes the SEAKER digital evidence triage tool to perform an initial acquisition and analysis on every existing case to provide a “first-look” at the information. Within a few minutes of plugging in digital evidence media, SEAKER will enable digital forensic investigators a quick review of materials. The process will help with prioritization of evidence, a basic analysis and potentially initial evidence in the form of a report that can be provided to investigators and prosecutors.

#### **1.2.4 Digital Evidence Triage**

Rogers et al (2006) seems to be among the first researchers to formally propose a triage phase in digital forensic investigations [15]. The process (CFFTPM) is broken up into phases (see Figure 2) and specifically focused on the Microsoft Windows<sup>TM</sup> platform, as it was the prevailing home computer operating system

at the time. The main phases consist of Planning, Triage, Usage/User Profiles, Chronology/Timeline, Internet Activity, and Case-Specific Evidence. Usage/User Profiles are broken down into three sub-phases: Home Directory, File Properties, and Registry. These are important and help distinguish user specific activity and permissions. The Internet Activity phase is also broken down into three sub-phases: Browser Artifacts, Email Artifacts, and Instant Messenger Artifacts. These also help establish user activity. Some importance is explicitly stated to skip based on type of investigation and prioritizing the investigation.

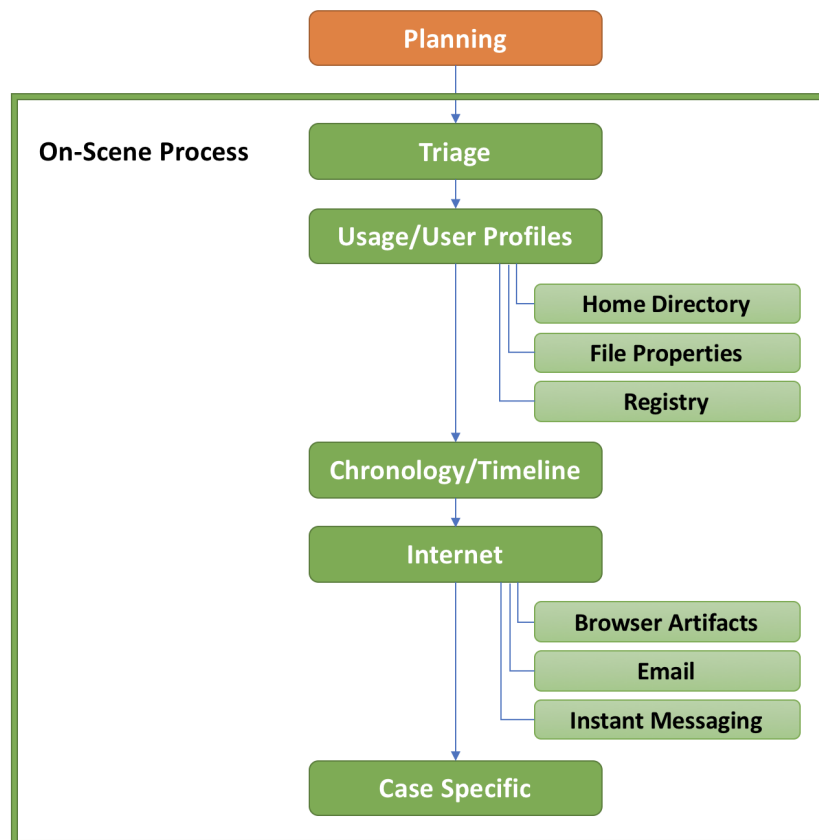


Figure 2: Computer Forensic Field Triage Process Model (CFFTPM)

The process of triaging digital evidence is an especially effective method when implemented on-scene at search warrant execution time. The CFFTPM proposed by Rogers et al was created to enhance the investigators ability to obtain useful information at execution time of a warrant at the suspect’s dwelling or place of work [15]. The process is designed to be used in the first few hours of the investigation, especially during the first suspect interview and search execution phase of the investigation. It is known that suspects are more likely to divulge more information and be more cooperative in that environment (Yeschke 2003 [19]). As well, location of and presentation with suspect “triggers” from the potential evidence increase the suspect’s willingness to talk and cooperate while on site [15].

The research done by Hitchcock et al also concludes that on-scene triage is useful [9]. They sought to expedite the process of sending digital evidence for analysis and results. One of their goals is to enable more field triage of digital evidence to reduce the amount collected, and act specifically, on pertinent digital information. They recommended that some front-line crime scene investigators (non-forensic analysts) be trained in the implementation of digital evidence triage and evaluation. These trained individuals would be DFT experts and have the ability perform field-level digital evidence triage. This triage would specifically weed out the benign from the consequential digital evidence with high certainty, while also protecting the digital evidence from spoilage and preserving evidentiary integrity.

Utilizing triage helps reduce the potential backlog and associated delays in

digital evidence gathering. With the proliferation of IoT devices and cloud storage, the field of digital forensics continues to expand. These areas pose a great challenge, but also new opportunities for investigative research and potential understanding of cases. Lillis et al researched cloud storage and found some areas of opportunity to expand the digital forensics landscape, for instance parallel processing, distributed computing, GPU/FPGA utilization, and others [12]. These areas for increasing the efficiency of digital forensics can be explored further due to the substantially reduced I/O limitations in cloud storage.

Another potential augmentation to the digital evidence triage method was proposed by Shaw et al and seeks to standardize on an approach they dubbed *enhanced previewing* [16]. Enhanced previewing seeks to solve some of the problems associated with typical triage approaches, but may fall short due to the extended time necessary to complete the processing involved [11].

Shaw's et al enhanced previewing starts with an open source, CD-bootable image of GNU/Linux and enhances its features to include boot-time application launching, and a simple to use interface with minimal ability to deviate from task [16]. This bootable CD is intended to be placed into evidentiary computer systems and booted using a series of BIOS modifications or boot-time interruptions. This mechanism to boot the system off of a bootable CD is difficult, and where the typical problems with untrained users of the enhanced previewing will happen.

This process of enhanced previewing does not take into account any IoT de-

vices or cloud-based storage. It also assumes that there is a DVD drive or USB port available and working, as well as the ability to access the computer's BIOS settings, as those connections are not typically setup to boot by default.

There are also other existing triage software such as EnCase, Blacklight, Forensic Explorer and Internet Evidence Finder. These also require use of the existing computers at the scene and are not among the explored topics here.

As is the case in other research, Shaw et al extolls the need to reduce digital forensic evidence analysis backlogs, especially with the evolution of big data and the proliferation of digital devices [16].

The enhanced previewing concept has valuable merit, in that the collection mechanisms are thorough. Using the GNU/Linux based system and having written code for it, Shaw et al utilized some well-thought-out approaches [16]. First, all hard drives from the evidentiary system are mounted into the GNU/Linux filesystem as read-only, thereby eliminating the need for write-blockers. As well, the entire hard drive is evaluated, including the file system, all partitions, unallocated space, deleted files, and compressed files. In addition, other mechanisms are employed that continue to enhance the previewing are employed.

Shaw's et al proposal for a practical and robust enhanced previewing methodology aims to stem the concerns of a typical triage process. Risks still exist, for instance overlooking digital evidence, but it is argued that those risks are outweighed by the risks of a lengthy process due to large backlogs and the associated delays in



evaluating that evidence. Another concern exists that inadequately trained people will be charged with performing on-scene digital evidence triage and mishandling or incorrectly evaluating results will cause evidence spoilage. Other concerns are the potential high cost of software and training [16].

### 1.2.5 Acquisition Methodology

*Acquisition* has multiple definitions across the digital forensic universe. Some define this as the process of gathering the digital devices, logging them using the *chain of custody* paperwork, and removing them from the location denoted in the search warrant. Others define this as the collection of potential evidence from the digital devices. However, in this case it is meant to imply the entire set of processes and procedures. These include training the digital forensic examiners and SEAKER users, collecting the media that potential digital evidence may be stored on, and gathering of potential evidence from each digital device.

The SEAKER tool is designed specifically for the triage phase of digital forensic investigations. As a general approach, this research will split the act of dealing with digital evidence into two separate methodologies: *acquisition* and *analysis* (discussed in the next section). These are the main foci since the SEAKER device is designed to do both in a very timely fashion, with comprehensive searching results.

When a search warrant is being executed, the SEAKER device is intended to

be used to help manage the triage process of the potential digital evidence. This helps on-scene investigators determine priority, potential to contain crime-related evidence, whether or not to seize the device into custody, and documentation of the digital media [9].

The set of processes and procedures for training and usage of the SEAKER device is well documented in the appendix, but could also be supplemented by more specific guidelines that combine the digital forensic lab's procedures with the usage documents.

The collection phase of acquisition specifically highlighted here is the gathering of physical digital media information and the capturing of potential digital evidence content in the triage environment. The setup and training materials for creating and using the SEAKER device are referenced in the appendix.

### **1.2.6 Analysis Methodology**

Comprehensive forensic analysis of digital media is an arduous and time-consuming task. A full analysis could take many hours or even days and is not the first priority when serving a search warrant. The SEAKER device is intended to reduce the time this takes down to minutes, especially during the triage stage of a search warrant execution.

The *analysis* methodology is considered the second phase in the SEAKER ap-

proach and can consist of both the triage analysis stage and the full analysis stage. Specifically, this research and the SEAKER device focus on the triage stage of Analysis. This stage can be applied in the field or at the digital forensics lab, while the full analysis is unlikely to be accomplished in the field.

Digital evidence triage analysis is a very useful part of an investigation and can be implemented using the SEAKER device. The triage analysis stage is considered in this research to consist of an interactive web page that detectives and investigators can use to lookup search terms from the digital evidence collected from suspect devices plugged into the SEAKER device. It also consists of the reports that are generated and stored on the SEAKER device. The reports consist mainly of the metadata about the digital media and the collection statistics but does not include specific digital media content.

Previous versions of analysis included specific types of operating systems. Rogers' et al research in 2006 covered the primary machine type at the time: the standard Windows machine [15]. Unfortunately, focusing on a single operating system leads to an outdated model over time, since the processes and procedures become obsolete as new technology arises. Along with the proliferation of IoT devices, new technologies also have emerged as more mainstream that need to be incorporated into a more generalized approach. More operating systems are being utilized on a regular basis, like Linux, UNIX versions, and Apple OS. In fact, even our SEAKER device is an IoT device based on a variant of Debian.

Other versions of analysis research deal directly with specific types of devices. Ajjola et al reviewed the NIST guidelines that provide an in-depth look into mobile devices, helping to explain the technology involved and its relationship to the forensic process [1]. This is useful, but not a complete analysis guideline for law enforcement investigators.

The SEAKER device currently supports multiple operating systems, as well as multiple device types (provided there is a way to adapt the device to USB). It achieves the goal of being device and operating system independent in terms of being able to collect content information from digital media. The only limitation to the SEAKER device's ability to read the content is the availability of a device driver that allows mounting on Raspbian Lite's operating system.

### **1.2.7 Combined acquisition and Analysis Methodologies**

The SEAKER project is intended to cover the areas of *acquisition* and *analysis* with regards to the triage stage of an investigation. In order to simplify the process and enable non-digital evidence specialists to utilize the SEAKER device, both the acquisition and analysis phases are combined.

In addition, the users are well guided along the path of acquisition. Most of this process is automated for ease of use and successful digital media content gathering. The acquisition steps involved are:

1. Plug in the SEAKER device
2. Wait 20-30 seconds
3. Plug in the potential evidence via USB to the SEAKER device
4. Wait until the light stops flashing

The analysis side of the equation is also simple and well guided. The user interface is designed to be very easy to use (see the Appendix section for exact usage details). The steps involved here are:

1. Connect to the SEAKER WIFI Access Point
2. Bring up the webpage: `http://seaker01.local`
3. Choose which digital media devices to search
4. **Search** based on default or custom search criteria
5. View results (expand/collapse tree-based format)

The combination of these two phases and the straightforward nature of the procedures to use the SEAKER device make it an ideal digital forensics triage device. The ability for non-digital forensic specialists to apply this technology is crucial to its feasibility. Hitchcock et al proposed and evaluated a “tiered forensic methodology” model that defines a process of digital forensic triage utilizing non-digital evidence specialists [9]. They would be considered the first tier of

investigation and their contributions are considered extremely helpful in the initial stages of a search warrant. The next tier is when the already-triaged digital evidence is sent for full evaluation from a fully trained and qualified digital evidence specialist. The potential evidence would be sent to a certified facility that can perform full digital forensic analysis, called a Technological Crime Unit (TCU).

This tiered approach is based on a Computer Forensic Field Triage Process Model proposed by Rogers et al [15] and the international standard ISO 27037 (Information Technology - Security Techniques - Guidelines for identification, collection, acquisition, and presentation of digital evidence). The process model breaks down the six phases of digital evidence categorization, which Hitchcock et al loosely based their four-phase approach on [9]. The four phases are: planning, assessment, reporting, and threshold. The ISO 27037 standard specifically attempts to address the need to minimize the risk of potential digital evidence being spoiled by mishandling, while also attempting to maximize the evidentiary value of digital evidence collection.

Utilizing a tiered approach is not without risks. One concern is the accidental exclusion of an item of digital evidence that is important to the investigation. Another is the level of computer skills and training of the Digital Field Triage (DFT) expert. An attempt could be made to mitigate the latter with training and management process, while providing evidence that the former is a common misconception in most cases [15].

Of course, the simplification of acquisition and analysis for use in a triage phase is also not a full analysis. Certain factors related to recent advancement in technologies can cause the SEAKER device to under-inform and potentially miss critical information. One example of missing potential evidence is when encrypted, compressed files or folders are located [16]. Others include hidden or encrypted partitions, password protected files and folders, images and videos obscured by significantly altering the filenames and extensions, and use of rare, specialized operating systems. However, these issues can all easily be overcome by marking the digital media as suspect and noting it for review in the second tier at the lab.

This process cannot and does not supersede the ability or need to perform a full forensic examination at a full-featured digital forensic lab [15] or TCU. This step is essential and necessary to fully consider all of the digital evidence that can be obtained by full analysis.

Other research also indicates that combining the best pieces of process models and reviewing latest digital forensic devices and methods are great ways to maintain adherence to good practices [1]. In 2014, Ajijola et al proposed a new process model that is a hybrid of both NIST recommendations and ISO standards with the resulting combination being much more effective than either of its individual parts [1].

In the research for combining the NIST and ISO guidelines, Ajijola et al explores the commonality, differences, and limitations of each model [1]. Although

both models follow the Auditability, Repeatability, Reproducibility, and Justifiability requirements, as well as the Confidentiality, Integrity, and Availability standards, they individually lack some necessary phases to enable them to be used separately. The NIST process model lacks the Identification and Collection phases, while the ISO process model lacks Examination, Analysis, and Reporting aspects of a full Digital Evidence processing model.

The combination of these two approaches, as suggested by Ajijola et al, provides a new five step approach: Identification, Collection and Acquisition, Preservation, Examination and Analysis, and Reporting [1]. These steps provide a more comprehensive approach that law enforcement can use to fulfill its evidentiary duties in an investigation. When both process methods are used, the goals approach a full set of tasks from initial on-scene evaluation to the end of the in-lab digital forensics investigation.

The combining of steps, approaches, and methodologies is encouraged. The combination of acquisition and analysis works well in the SEAKER model because they are closely related, function well as a pair, and encourage everyone to be able to use the tool for initial digital media investigation. The SEAKER project combines the triage acquisition phase proposed here along with the analysis phase, which is the rest of the CFFTPM on-scene process, into the full functionality of the device.



### 1.2.8 Digital Evidence Backlog

Digital forensic labs and TCUs are currently heavily inundated with cases needing analysis and reporting of digital evidence. To compound the problem, the amount of data being created is growing astronomically. The International Data Corporation (IDC) forecasts that by 2025 the global data-sphere will grow to 163ZB (see Figure 3) (that is a trillion gigabytes) [17]. That's ten times the 16.1ZB of data generated in 2016. All this data will unlock unique user experiences and a new world of business opportunities.

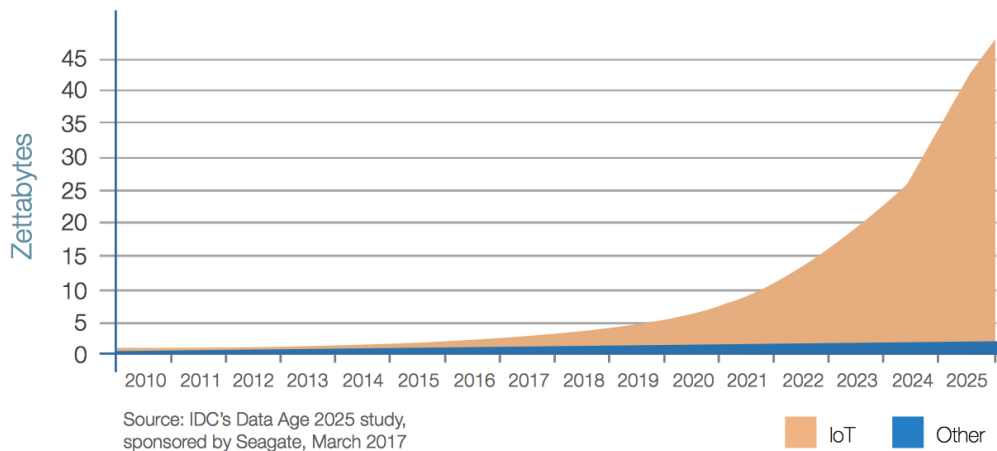


Figure 3: IOT Device Data Growth

Some of the current challenges in digital forensic investigations are directly related to the amount of data being created. As Lillis et al explores in their research, there are three main factors involved in the digital forensic backlog: increasing number of devices seized per case, increased number of cases involving digital evidence, and the increasing volume of data per digital media [12]. This

has led to a growing and already substantial backlog in digital forensic investigations.

As well, in Hitchcock's et al research [9], they identified a large and growing backlog of digital evidence. They indicated that the extra time required due to the backlog has led to problems in the law enforcement community with regards to collecting, analyzing, reporting, and prosecuting.

Another effect of this increased delay and backlog is that cases become inactive, waiting for new leads. A more aggressive approach to solving the backlog could help prevent dismissals, cold cases, and future societal harm from unprosecuted criminals.

Raghavan has accumulated a list of 5 major challenges that the digital forensics community is facing and continue to add to the backlog problem [14]. The first is the complexity of binary data acquisition, i.e. low level data acquisition through digital media duplication. This challenge causes the need for sophisticated data reduction techniques.

Another complexity is the diversity of data and lack of standard examination techniques. The plethora of operating systems and file formats has been increasing and is posing a more and more significant challenge over time.

Raghavan explored the second major challenge of consistency and correlation.

This is a problem resulting from the current digital media investigation triage tools not providing the entire picture to investigators. Only part of the whole picture is provided when triage tools are utilized to find digital evidence. The digital evidence from the full digital forensic investigation, usually performed in a lab environment, must be understood in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the crime(s).

Another issue that Raghavan proposed is the volume of data to sort through [14]. The sheer amount of data that exists per user is increasing at an alarming rate [15], and has led to a very large backlog of digital evidence to investigate. These delays have even caused some cases to be dismissed. This challenge is exacerbated by the lack of adequate automation for digesting the data.

The last challenge proposed by Raghavan is the timeline synchronization issue with digital evidence [14]. Since the evidence could be collected in different time zones, with different timestamp formats, clock skew, etc., lining up the events in order can be challenging or infeasible.

These are all contributing factors, but some are reduced or eliminated when the digital evidence triage phase is implemented. Even more issues are taken care of when digital media devices are prioritized, excluded (due to lack of evidentiary leads), and the digital forensics backlog can be reduced.

The IoT also poses new challenges and could significantly increase the backlog.

IoT devices are estimated to number more than 40 billion by 2020 [7], contributing to the overwhelming amount of digital data. Since these devices tend to have more non-persistent memory and less storage, this causes added complexity for gathering and analysis. This is a good case for expanding the potential uses of the SEAKER device to include more digital media devices. In addition, a portion of IoT devices are battery operated and computationally challenged, leading to loss of data over time, and the necessity of implementing on-scene triage.

The backlog and delays in case reporting are contributing to a common problem of time sensitivity [9], especially related to being charged with a crime and the legal process. Some countries have given their citizens a right to a “speedy” trial. As well, some of the same countries have statutes of limitation (limits on how long after the crime was committed to resolve the case) for most crimes. Some administrative situations are also contributors to the backlog problem, for instance whether the case prioritization is based on chronological filing, crime severity, or victim needs.

Everything that can be done to reduce or eliminate backlogs at digital forensic labs or TCUs should be fully utilized. The SEAKER device is a great option for many law enforcement organizations to begin that process.

### 1.2.9 How SEAKER Can Help

Instead of attempting to put together an alternate operating system that uses the potentially tainted computer system, the SEAKER device evaluates individual digital media devices after being removed from the computer system it was originally from. This eliminates the possibility of self-deleting media, virus infection, and other potential hardware-related problems that may exist as evidence eliminating utilities.

The SEAKER device is portable in size, inexpensive to obtain (even in multiples), simple to create and easy to use. It is effective in on-scene triage, efficient in collecting and searching digital media, and very well suited to handle the required purview of a digital forensic device.

Digital forensics triage, especially with the SEAKER device, has the opportunity to expand its influence on the initial investigation phase by expanding to incorporate digital evidence from IoT and cloud storage devices.

The research of Hitchcock et al [9] should be referenced as a good process starting point for new digital forensic labs. As well, the SEAKER device is a great tool to enhance the existing law enforcement arsenal of digital forensic tools.

The SEAKER portable triage device can help by evaluating crucial aspects of the file system and prevent the on-site investigators from skipping or de-prioritizing critical potential evidence [15]. This is done by collecting all of the filenames and

locations of the entire media device and preparing the SEAKER search mechanism. The search mechanism is accessed via WIFI from investigator phones, tablets, or laptops. Once connected to the SEAKER's WIFI access point, the main web-page allows the media devices that have been attached to be selected and shows an editable, default list of keywords to search for. Once **Search** is selected, the SEAKER device finds all matching keywords from the filename and location list and returns any results found. The results are well formatted for browsing in an expandable tree-sectioned web page.

The SEAKER portable triage device can help eliminate some of the existing and potential future problems that many jurisdictions face. With shrinking budgets, the lack of digital forensics specialists, coupled with the lack of technical prowess of the on-site investigators and proper on-scene lab equipment [15], this new technology can easily and immediately benefit the law enforcement community.

## 2 Background

In a laboratory environment, digital forensics investigators have the ability to discover a tremendous amount of material that is potential evidence. This includes anything digitally stored on the evidentiary media from explicitly illegal files, to IP address connections, to a digital chronology of events [14] [15]. The software and hardware necessary to perform the in-depth, full evaluation of the media are specialized for digital forensics work, but typically are costly, don't travel well, and

can take many hours for results from a single digital media device.

In the field environment, digital forensics investigators are likely to not have the time, equipment, or proper environment to obtain evidence from the digital devices found during the execution of a search warrant. In some cases, due to various reasons, digital forensics investigators are not able to attend and therefore all of the digital media is taken into custody for analysis at the digital forensics lab. When they are able to attend, they typically bring a subset of their lab environment with them to start deciphering the digital information and attempt to perform a triage analysis.

In a coordinated effort with the supervising investigator at SCHTTF and his team, this research is an attempt to help solve some of the field environment limitations of digital forensics investigators.

## **2.1 Legal Details**

In order for digital forensic investigators to obtain the data from a digital device, a search warrant for that device must usually be obtained. Other means for proper search are court order, as a condition of probation or parole, or direct consent from the owner. As well, law enforcement must usually obtain a search warrant to acquire the device for searching in the first place. Law enforcement must provide probable cause that a crime was committed and that items connected to that crime are likely to be found in the place specified by the warrant. A judge will review the matter and if they are in agreement, will typically authorize law enforcement

to search a particular location for specific items which are declared in the search warrant.

After a digital device has been acquired by digital forensic investigators, they must take special care not to alter the device's information in any way. This requirement figuratively mimics the care a physical forensic investigator must take to preserve physical evidence. Special processes must be followed to ensure that the potential digital evidence is not altered and, in fact, must be able to be proven if the matter ends up in a trial. This is critical to ensure that the evidence obtained from the device is admissible in court.

One device to aid in the proper handling of digital evidence is called a write-blocker. Digital forensic investigators use this device as an intermediary between the devices and the computer systems they plug the devices into for investigation. The typical first step when a device is acquired by a digital forensic lab is for the device to be imaged (or copied bit by bit) so that the image can be used for further evidence searching. This provides an extra level of abstraction, so that the actual device is kept in pristine digital condition.

Write-blocking has been implemented in digital forensics labs with an in-line piece of hardware. Companies like Guidance Software and others have created write-blocking devices that are added to the list of hardware necessary to prevent modification of any kind to the potential digital evidence. The Tableau product line is a great set of these types of devices. Although they are made to be simple



and easy to use, they create yet another piece of the lab that must be carried into the field and required to be plugged-in and used. As well, there are software write-blockers that can be installed on forensic laptops.

For this research, the SEAKER device is intended to be used for triage investigation on digital devices to perform an initial search for potential digital evidence. Instead of having a separate write-blocking device, the Raspberry Pi is set up with write-blocking capabilities when digital devices are connected to it. This configuration enables the SEAKER's own system to act as a software-write-blocker to prevent any digital alteration to the device. This eliminates the need for the extra write-blocking device and reduces the footprint required to bring to search warrant execution.

## **2.2 Technical Details**

Choosing the Raspberry Pi as the base platform for the SEAKER device was intentional due to its low cost, extreme portability, and the ability to adapt it for use as a digital forensic device.

Raspberry Pi is manufactured by the Raspberry Pi Foundation in the United Kingdom for the purpose of teaching Computer Science in schools and around the world. It is a fully functional CPU with RAM, status lights, and input and output connections. It has the ability to be powered by batteries, USB, or an electrical wall socket connection. The form factor is small, and the cost is kept to a min-

imum for ease of acquisition, use, and adaptability. As of this writing, the most powerful version of the Raspberry Pi is \$35 USD.

The SEAKER device project is an example of how the Raspberry Pi device can be converted into a working model. Through the setup script, it is transformed into a fully featured digital evidence triage device.

A goal of the SEAKER project is to enable investigators without digital evidence training and/or with limited computer training to utilize it on-site at the execution of a search warrant. The SEAKER device is designed to be self-sufficient and automatically self-preparing when it is plugged into a power source. The device will boot, prepare the web server, the WIFI hotspot and be enabled to handle digital devices that are attached to its USB port. Once a digital device is plugged in, it is automatically mounted and scanned. A web-page interface was created for accessing the scanned devices when a portable WIFI-enabled phone or tablet are connected to SEAKER.

These attempts to make the process as simple as possible are intentional and make the process of digital evidence triage acquisition and analysis accessible to investigators with or without specialized computer knowledge or training.

### 3 Development of SEAKER Device

The SEAKER device concept is very novel, not only in its capacity as a digital forensics evidence triage device, but also in the fact that it is low cost, highly available, simple to setup and use, and provides very fast results.

There are other digital triage tools on the market, but almost every one is a software solution that involves either a separate laptop or a bootable CD, DVD or USB drive to enable the interaction. These types of software tools typically require advanced computer knowledge and digital forensics specialists to be involved.

Since the SEAKER device project was a collaboration with SCHTTF, it already has built-in law enforcement acumen related to digital forensics. The requirements were provided the SCHTTF team. They provided input during and after the development of the initial prototype. As a digital forensics evidence triage device, it could be shaping the way investigators handle computers and other digital equipment during execution of a search warrant.

#### 3.1 Conception

The proposal for the SEAKER device project initially came from the SCHTTF. They wanted a device that could quickly ascertain potential evidence and enable on-scene investigators to search devices while questioning suspects. This process of searching the digital devices immediately is called triage. With it, investigators are able to provide actionable intelligence quickly, prioritize devices to be previewed,

reduce preview setup time, and triage larger amounts of devices.

The SEAKER device project specification was presented in the master's level Cyber Security class (COMP 524) at CSUCI in the summer semester of 2017. It was proposed to the class by professor Dr. Michael Soltys during one of the initial lectures as the final project for the course. The attending students liked the idea and work began on it immediately. Dr. Soltys broke down the problem into categories so that student teams could form and work on each piece individually. The categories were:

- Connecting a digital media device to a Raspberry Pi, sensing OS and mounting (2 teams together)
- Searching in the mounted file system (2 teams together)
- Sending report to an iPad/laptop/handheld
- Documentation and troubleshooting
- Testing

This breakdown helped guide each team to get started on their contribution to the final project. Before the students could begin, a few decisions needed to be made: the device platform to use, the technology methods for input and output, and an agreed on feature set.

The device platform chosen was the Raspberry Pi. This enabled the students to work on the platform independently, due to the inexpensive nature of it. As well, two Raspberry Pis were provided for the classroom by SCHTTF and Dr. Soltys, respectively.

The input method chosen was setup for two types of input. The first type was connecting the digital devices to the SEAKER device. This was agreed upon to be either with the USB port that was built into the Raspberry Pi or via a USB to SATA converter cable. This enabled the digital device to be mounted by the Raspbian Operating System and automatically searched for content via the mounting rules. The second type of input was human input for a set of terms to search. The search terms were agreed to be put into a web form that would be submitted to the on-board web-server.

The output method clearly needed to match the input method in terms of technology, so the use of the on-board web-server was chosen to be the output method. When investigators are using the SEAKER device, they would be shown a webpage asking them to submit a set of search criteria. The results would be given back to the phone or tablet in HTML. This also enabled the quick building of the HTML framework and response mechanisms.

Finally, the feature set needed to be agreed upon. With direct guidance from the SCHTTF, specifically, Frank Lyu, the class agreed to the following:

- Write-blocking of attached digital evidence devices
- SATA and USB storage devices
- FAT, NTFS and EXT\* file systems to be read from storage devices
- Filename-keyword filter
  - Prepopulated keyword list
  - Customization of keyword list
- Status lights for power, and device status
- Wireless connection to a phone or tablet for keyword input and results
- Ability to find and display search results and digital device hardware information

## 3.2 Setup Script For Raspberry Pi

The idea of a setup script for the Raspberry Pi was conceived by the author very quickly after the project was presented to the class, since each team was assigned to work independently, and the deadline of implementation was extremely short. In order to get everyone in the class up and running and able to do work on their individual pieces, there needed to be a baseline for everyone to start working with. Starting with the base operating system image, called Raspbian, the setup script was meant to modify it to handle the scenarios we were attempting to create.

First, there needed to be some initial setup for keyboard, timezone, SSH, host-name, and installing some additional packages. To prevent unnecessary software from occupying the local Micro SD card, the “Lite” version of Raspbian was chosen as the base operating system. However, that meant that additional Raspbian packages needed to be added; for instance, the Apache web server, a DHCP server, PHP, the software to convert the wireless NIC card to an access point, and the device drivers for FAT32, NTFS, HFS, EXT\*, etc.

Next, the setup script needed to customize the SEAKER device based on user parameters. These include hostname, IP address, DHCP supported range, the default Raspbian user’s (pi) password, and the wireless access point password.

The setup script then prepares the Raspberry Pi access point configuration, web server configuration, mounting rules, default web-pages, and compiles the custom C code for searching (listed in appendix).

Finally, in order to avoid simple hacking and password locations, the setup script clears the history, sets itself up to be deleted at boot time, and removes any other remnants from the original setup.

Once the author finished programming the setup script to properly configuring the device with a majority of the features, it was published to the class so that they could begin using the Raspberry Pi as a SEAKER device and complete the minor bits of functionality left.

### 3.2.1 Web Server

The author chose the Apache web server, since it is a standard Unix-based operating system choice for serving web pages and can easily be included in the Raspberry Pi environment using the Raspbian package manager command line: `apt-get install apache2`. It also supports backend coding opportunities when coupled with a server-side code execution program like PHP. Setting this up was done by the author and was included as a part of the setup script.

A few steps were needed to implement the web server. The first was to load the Apache and PHP packages coinciding with the Raspbian operating system. Since it is a branch off of the Debian operating system, these were easily found and worked well. The next step was to load all of the files that were needed for the HTML and PHP to display and operate properly. The final step was to modify the access to each of the files to be specifically accessible by the web server daemon account. This was necessary to ensure the files could be read and served up by the web server when requested.

In addition, the *acquisition* code for searching the drive needed to have access to a shared location for the filename and folder searching algorithm. The `\tmp` folder was chosen by the author as a suitable location, since both the collection program and the web server have access to it. An extra feature of using `\tmp` is that the operating system clears out the entire folder every time it boots up,



causing the previous data to no longer show up.

### **3.2.2 WIFI Setup**

The wireless NIC also needed to be setup to be a wireless access point so that investigators could connect with a phone or tablet and use the web page access to perform searches on the digital devices. The main idea here was to have a password-protected closed network where the potential evidence could be searched. This was included as a part of the setup script.

The steps involved here were complicated and difficult to set up properly. As with the web server, the proper Raspbian operating system packages needed to be acquired and installed. In addition, the setup of those packages required setting up DHCP, WPA, the wireless NIC, and the access point daemon. Setting these up mainly required adding and altering text configuration files. As is common in the Computer Science field, researching the Internet was not much help. This led the author to experiment extensively with these packages' settings, using trial and error to ensure the system was correctly configured to the specifications of the SEAKER device.

Finally, this process required a reboot, which was able to be postponed until the end of the setup script.

### 3.3 Rules For Mounting

Mounting is the process by which the Raspbian Lite operating system attaches a media device, providing access to the file system on that device.

During the setup script for the SEAKER device, auto-mounting is setup to automatically mount new digital media devices that are plugged into the USB port. Another script was written to handle the post-mounting *acquisition* of the applicable drive contents. The post-mounting script is also configured to run once any new digital media devices are plugged in.

In order to accommodate the request to ensure the forensic integrity of the suspected digital evidence, special mounting options were required. There are two different aspects for how drive contents can be modified. The first is the standard *writable* option, which allows the files and folders to be created, deleted, and modified. The second is called *journaling*, which is an operating system concept for logging when and what the OS did to the drive. Both options, `ro` and `noatime`, are applied to the mounting options. This makes the SEAKER device functionally consistent with a write-blocking device, as mentioned earlier in Chapter 2.

### 3.4 Code for Searching Device

The code for searching the digital devices was specifically aimed at gathering every filename and location into a searchable file and storing it so that those drive contents could be searched, even after the digital device had been disconnected

from the SEAKER device.

There were several options for searching for files. The simplest way is to use the built-in operating system mechanisms, for instance `ls` or `find`. Another way is to code a simple C program that does the same thing. There is another built-in operating system mechanism that is much faster when used on standard UNIX-based environments called `locate`, however, that utilizes an index that is built up over time and does not work well with newly attached devices.

Since one of the goals of the SEAKER project was speed of collection, a test was performed by the author that measured the built-in mechanisms vs the simple C program. The simple C program was by far the fastest, beating the other two methods by an average of 26% (see Table 2 on page 90 for data). The author's theory on why this is the case is that the other programs have many built-in options and functionalities that are not utilized. Those extra functionalities have unnecessary code switches and therefore extra execution paths that are not necessary for this file and directory collection application.

### 3.5 Web Code

HTML and PHP were chosen as a simple interface for quick development. It also allows for easy access via many different devices through a standard web browser.

The main page (Figure 4) was designed to be very easy to use and as auto-

matic as possible. The list of searchable devices is populated at the load-time of the page. As well, the page refreshes itself until searchable media is found. The default keyword search list is also shown on the page. Each keyword is searched independently and are entered one per line on the input keyword text form. The keyword search list is read in using PHP from a pre-determined file that resides on the Micro SD card.



Figure 4: Main Page

When triggered using a **Search** button, the media list and the keyword list to search are passed to the web server via a webpage POST. The results page is then dynamically created using PHP to read each media's file and directory list

and write the matching results to the returned webpage. The Raspbian operating system built-in command **grep** is utilized to find the results on the server side.

The resulting page (Figure 5) is then displayed to the user using a simple HTML expand/collapse tool. Each media searched and each search criteria are accessible via this tree-like tool.

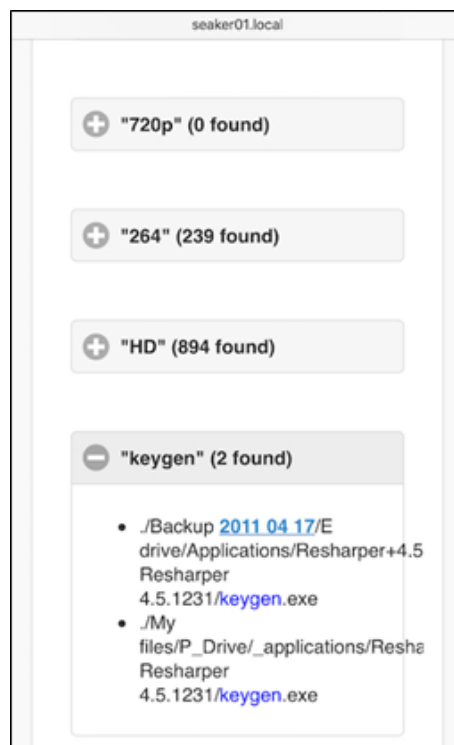


Figure 5: Results Page

In addition, some special keywords can also be used to obtain information about the media. The search term **driveinfo** can be used to list the exact details

of the media, including serial number, size, and other information. The search term `searchtime` can also be used to show the time needed to find the full drive information as well as the time for the particular search.

An administration page was also created for editing the initial search keywords that appear by default. This page was intended to be password protected, but was instead concealed by not providing a link to it. The full path to it (<http://seaker01.local/keywords.php>) is required for access. Once changed, the default search keywords remain permanently altered for the SEAKER device. See Figure 6:



Figure 6: Default Keywords page

### 3.6 Process Flow

The SEAKER device usage involves two main flows. The first is the process of *acquisition*, which involves plugging it in to power and then attaching digital media devices to it to be scanned. The second process is *analysis*, as discussed in a previous section. See Figure 7 for details.

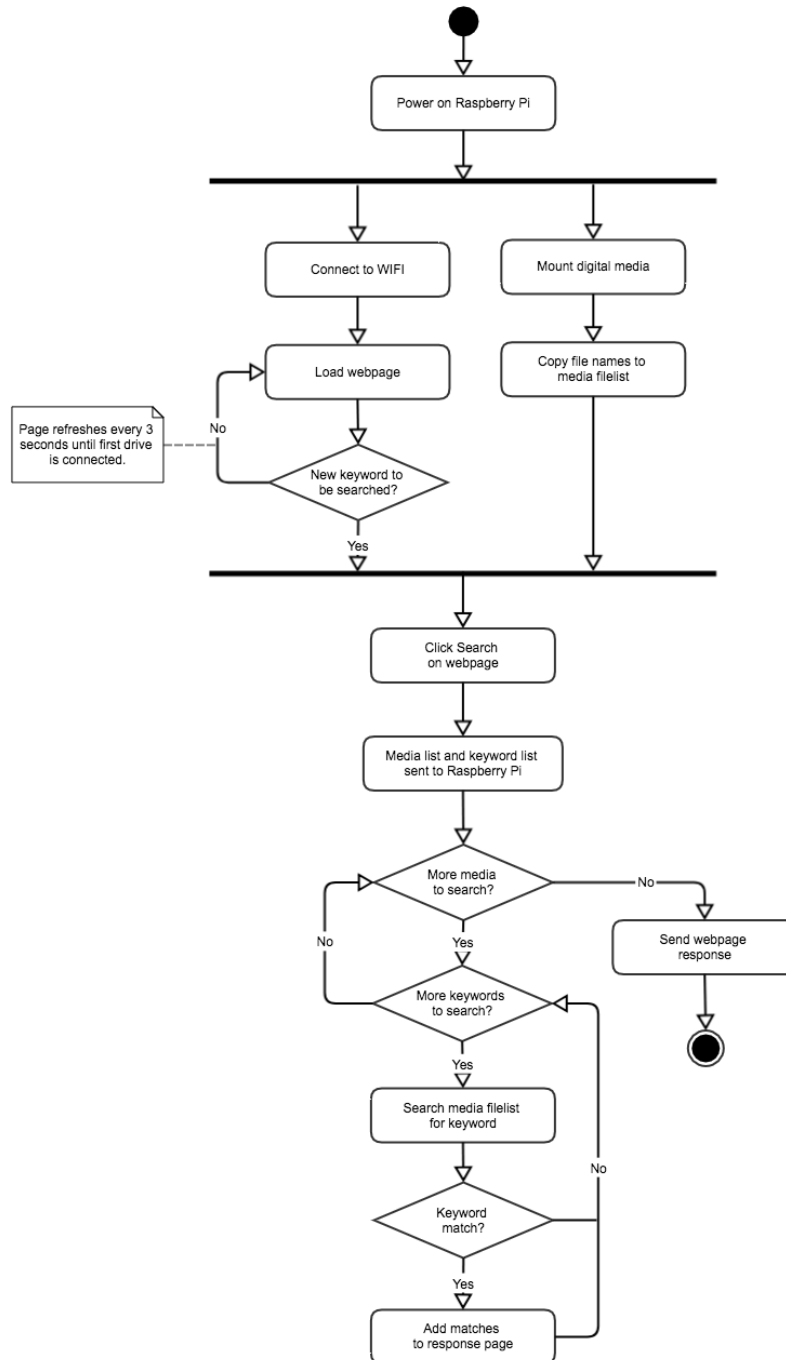


Figure 7: General Process Flow



The process flow of SEAKER is a very simple design. After turning on the Raspberry Pi, the two processes happen simultaneously. Immediately when the drive(s) are connected to the Raspberry Pi, the file names and their paths are collected and copied to a text file. Meanwhile, the user must connect to the Raspberry Pi via WIFI on a separate wireless-enabled device. The user must then open the SEAKER web page. As shown in General Process Flow of Figure 7, the web page will refresh every 3 seconds, looking for new drives to be connected to the Raspberry Pi. The first drive will be automatically added to the list of drives available on the webpage to be searched. All additional drives will appear in the list when the user refreshes the page manually.

All user selected drives will then go through the search process as shown in the lower section of the General Process Flow of Figure 7. Each drive will be processed one at a time. For example, the list of files for the drive will be scanned for any matches to the first keyword in the list. The search is done using the regular expression tool embedded in the Raspbian Linux operating system called **grep**. All files that are found to match that keyword will be added to the output HTML. Once the entire file list has been searched for that keyword, the process will begin again with the next keyword in the list. This process will continue until there are no more keywords to be searched. If multiple drives have been selected to be searched, the same process will repeat itself for each drive. Finally, the PHP engine will finish processing and the HTML response page is finalized and sent back to the user's mobile device.

## 3.7 Tools Used for Development

### 3.7.1 Hardware

(1) *Raspberry Pi and power cord* - An affordable, very small form-factor computer with average computing power. It is a powerful educational and research tool that follows the standard “von Neumann architecture” by incorporating three main components: input/output devices, memory, and a central processing unit. Models 3 and 3B+ of the Raspberry Pi were used for creation and testing of the SEAKER project. More information can be found at <http://raspberrypi.org>.

(2) *Micro SD Card* - A solid state storage device that when combined with a Raspberry Pi becomes a local hard drive for operating system, programs, and storage while the SEAKER device is powered on. The range of Micro SD cards available are sorted by storage size and speed of reading and writing (denoted by “class” designation). For the SEAKER device, the faster the write speed, the faster the collection phase happens because of having to store the results. A “class 10” or better cards have produced results more quickly than other cards with slower write speeds.

(3) *Powered USB to SATA adaptor* - These devices are fairly common, and allow a SATA style hard drive to be connected to a computer through the standard USB port. This enables SATA style hard drives to be connected to the SEAKER device. It is important to note that the USB ports alone on the Raspberry Pi do not have enough power to support the power requirements of larger hard drives. A standard “powered” USB to SATA adaptor will enable the drives to be searched.

(4) *Router or switch* - A router or switch allows multiple computers to connect to each other using specialized software through network interface cards. During

the setup phase of the SEAKER device, one of these is necessary to be able to connect to Raspberry Pi with another computer. Remotely logging into the Raspberry Pi and running the setup script is a required step (see setup steps in the appendix).

(5) *Ethernet cable* - This is a hard-wire cable designed to connect a computer to a network. Since the setup process alters the wireless network interface card, using the wireless interface of the Raspberry Pi to connect to it is not an option for the SEAKER device.

### 3.7.2 Programming Languages and Scripting

(1) *bash* - A UNIX-based shell, command language, and shell scripting language used to gather and run a set of operating system commands together. Bash is used in several places in the SEAKER project, including the setup script, as an auto-mount script for automatic *acquisition* and in the PHP code to obtain and push search details to the output HTML.

(2) *C* - The C programming language is a mid-to-high level language for writing computer programs. This was used for two applications: a program for digital media content collection (see the code in Appendix section 6.3.1 on page 88), and for a late-addition feature to control a light-bar of LEDs that plugs into a controllable, customizable I/O port of the Raspberry Pi.

(3) *HTML* - A tag (or element) based system of organizing information to be shown in a web browser.

(4) *CSS* - An HTML styling language that simplifies the ability to modify how HTML is displayed in modern web browsers.

(5) *PHP* - A server-side programming language, typically associated with dynamic web page creation. For the SEAKER project, this was a vital component of creating the search and results web pages.

(6) *JavaScript* - A client-side programming language that enables web developers to make web pages more interactive without having to access server-side resources.

(7) *JQuery* - A standard JavaScript library of useful functions to simplify and expand the ability to make a web page more interactive.

(8) *Regular Expressions via grep* - Regular expressions are a complex way to specify a search or replace pattern. A UNIX-based operating system command-line utility, **grep**, is used to search for regular expression patterns in plain-text files. This is a very critical part of the SEAKER device, since the searching mechanism plays a vital role in the project.

### 3.7.3 Raspbian Operating System

(1) *Raspbian Linux (a Debian distribution)* - One of the standard operating systems that support the Raspberry Pi hardware. It is derived from the Debian operating system. There are two versions available for every release: Full and Lite. The full version provides lots of useful default packages, a built-in user interface and a very simple to use guided setup. The Lite version provides only a minimum of packages, no built-in user interface (with the exception of a command line), and no initial guided setup. In order to keep the SEAKER project as uncomplicated as possible, the Lite version of the Raspbian operating system was chosen. The releases called *Jessie* (2017) and *Stretch* (2018) were the most recent at the time

and were both supported.

(2) *grep* - A command-line utility included with almost every UNIX-based operating system. It is widely known as a very powerful tool for finding regular expression patterns in plain-text files. In the Raspbian operating system, the initial configuration contains some useful features that colorize the results of **grep**. Unfortunately, this also slows down the **grep** mechanism due to the extra code burden. The SEAKER setup script removes the color features of **grep** to enable the fastest searching experience. It also changes the default searching mechanism to ASCII search, enabling an even faster **grep** result.

(3) *apt-get for Raspbian packages* - Advanced Packaging Tool packages are automatically searched, downloaded, and installed using the apt-get command-line utility. It is a tool based on the Debian software packaging system. The SEAKER project uses this tool inside the setup script to add necessary packages to the Raspbian Lite operating system.

(4) *Apache HTTP server* - An industry standard web server application that is open source and cross platform.

(5) *PHP add-on for Apache* - Hypertext Preprocessor utility that enables a programming language for server-side coding.

(6) *Rules file for auto-mounting* - The *udev* utility is a user-space device manager for Linux-based operating systems. One mechanism of device control is to write a simple script file called a “rules file” (similar to a shell script; see the code in Appendix section 6.3.2 on page 89) that enables the device manager to automatically control the specified device(s). Because the SEAKER project is intended to auto-mount digital media and launch a collection script to gather the

information from it, a rules file was created during the setup script that enables the device manager to automatically perform these tasks. As this project progresses to support more digital media types, this file will be the main area of focus.

### 3.7.4 Collaboration Tools

The collaboration tools were mainly utilized during the initial development process to allow the students, professor, and SCHATTF staff to communicate, exchange information, and plan activities. Some of the use of these tools were continued to be used for deployment of the setup script, versioning control systems for the codebase, and communication of the SEAKER project progress.

(1) *Gliffy* - A free Google Chrome application that enables the diagramming of charts, graphs, flowcharts, and other drawing templates. This tool has a simple drag and drop interface that allows for online collaboration and sharing during diagram creation. The SEAKER project participants utilized this for creating flowcharts describing the user and process flows.

(2) *Slack* - An online instant messaging and group chatting platform freely available for simple use. The SEAKER project participants utilized this for collaborating, setting up meetings, online video discussions, and some initial document sharing.

(3) *AWS S3* - Amazon Web Services' Simple Storage Service (S3) is for online storage of files. The SEAKER project utilized this for beta versions of the setup script and eventually storage of the final working version along with the documentation to accompany it.

(4) *GitHub* - An online code sharing, repository, and version control system. It is widely known to host many open source projects and repositories. The SEAKER project used it during development to share the code base and create an informational readme file that is displayed in *GitHub* on the main repository page.

(5) *Dropbox Paper* - An online document repository and collaboration tool that enables multiple people to edit the same document simultaneously. The SEAKER project team utilized this tool for writing up the setup guide, user guide, technical specification, and presentations.

### 3.7.5 Setup Tools

(1) *Hardwire Connection to the Internet* - The SEAKER setup script requires a connection to the internet in order to download the necessary operating system packages. The ideal SEAKER setup environment is to connect the Raspberry Pi to a router or switch that is also connected to the internet without a proxy server. This allows another computer to securely connect to it as well as having a connection to the Internet.

(2) *Apple Computer System: Etcher, Paragon NTFS, terminal, SSH* - If the secondary computer required to remotely access the Raspberry Pi in order to run the setup script is an Apple computer, a program like *Etcher* will load the initial Raspbian Lite operating system onto the Micro SD card. It is a tool for copying a disk image from an image file to a Micro SD card. Another tool is an NTFS reader/writer driver like *Paragon NTFS*. It is necessary in order to access the newly copied image of Raspbian Lite on the Micro SD card. This is used to copy the setup script and enable SSH access to the Raspberry Pi. Finally, a command

line program like *terminal* can be used to remotely and securely connect to the Raspberry Pi after the Micro SD card is installed and the system is booted.

(3) *Windows Computer System: Win32DiskImager, Windows Explorer, Putty*

- If the secondary computer required to remotely access the Raspberry Pi in order to run the setup script is a Windows computer, a program like *Win32DiskImager* is used to load the initial Raspbian Lite operating system onto the Micro SD card. It is a tool for copying a disk image from a file onto a Micro SD card. Another required action is to access the newly copied image of Raspbian Lite on the Micro SD card. This is necessary to copy the setup script and enable SSH access to the Raspberry Pi. Finally, a SSH program like *Putty* can be used to remotely and securely connect to the Raspberry Pi after the Micro SD card is installed and the system is booted.

## 4 Experimental Results

### 4.1 Prototype Demonstration

As the final project in the summer 2017 Cyber Security class, the SEAKER device project was presented to the SCHTTF representatives and other faculty and administration from CSUCI.

The SEAKER device presentation consisted of an introduction from Dr. Soltys, a slide presentation from every student team, and a recommendation for hardware to use for real-world SEAKER implementations. It also included a live demonstration of SEAKER's functionalities with digital media provided by the SCHTTF. In



advance, SCHTTF prepared one external hard drive and two USB thumb drives for the class to collect files on in real-time during the presentation. These devices had not been seen by the students prior to the demonstration.

The live demonstration was intended to be fully functional and prove that a prototype could be created using the described parameters and features requested. In addition to the three devices SCHTTF provided, the audience was also encouraged to participate as “detectives” using their personal phones to experience the SEAKER functionality first hand. An Apple iPad was also used by the presenters to participate as “detectives” and had the experience projected on a screen for the audience. This allowed everyone to see the SEAKER working in real-time.

The demonstration began with an initial test using a hard drive that had previously been tested and found to be able to be acquired and analyzed. After attaching it to the SEAKER device, the auto-mount script ran automatically and the information was properly collected and searchable. The auto-refresh functionality on the webpage worked as expected and showed the attached media as a selectable drive. A quick search also was successful, and the product was demonstrated without flaw.

The SCHTTF prepared digital media devices were tested next. All three devices were able to be auto-mounted, collected, and searched. SCHTTF then provided search criteria after the drive information was collected. The final phase was to perform the search and see if the proper file set was exposed in the results.

The conclusion of the live demonstration was that the file set was properly found and the SEAKER device was properly working and ready to experiment more in a real-world situation.

SEAKER also proved very successful as a WIFI access point to the “detectives” in the audience. Multiple different phones were used to connect and search. All were successful in utilizing the SEAKER, as well as the iPad used in the demonstration.

## 4.2 Results

### 4.2.1 Data Saturation and Its Effect on Collection Latency

The results of this collection timing (Figure 8) were gathered using the SEAKER device and a single hard drive for the media device. Only one media device was used to reduce the variables in the experiment and focus solely on the data size and collection timing.

Experiment details:

- *Hardware* – Raspberry Pi 3B+, Class 10 Micro SD card
- *Operating System* – Raspbian Stretch Lite, version 2018-06-27
- *Media Device* – Western Digital My Passport<sup>TM</sup>, 500GB
- *Drive Format Type* – NTFS

- *Setup* – All time measurements are using the Linux command `time` from the start of the execution of the `collect_files` program until it completed. `collect_files` was run automatically using the standard operation of the SEAKER device (i.e. plugging in the hard drive via USB to the Raspberry Pi).
- *Reference Data* – The experiment data is listed in Table 3 on page 91

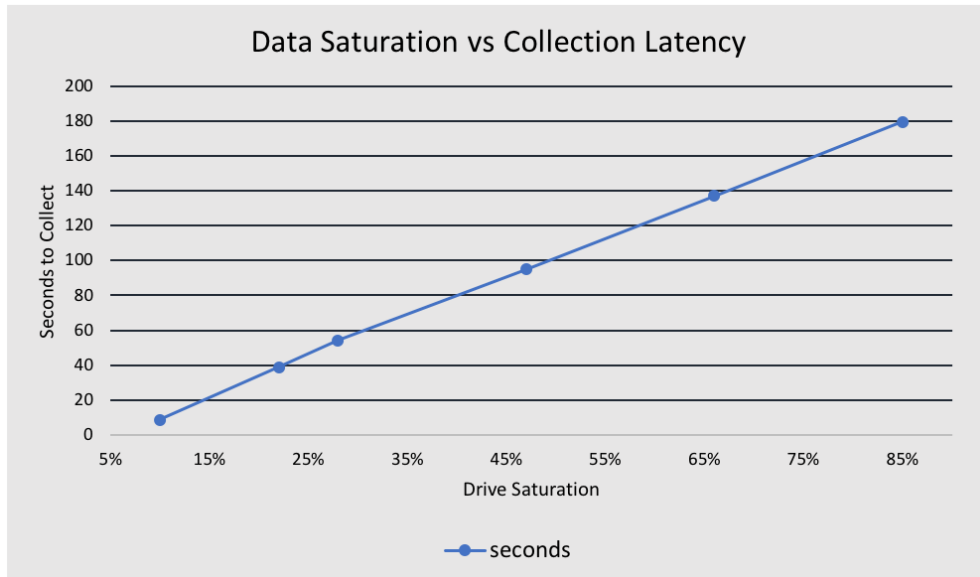


Figure 8: Data Saturation vs Collection Latency

As expected, the time necessary to collect the file and directory information directly correlates to the amount consumed on the digital media device. The linear relationship gives us good information about increasing data size and how it affects the time required for the collection code to complete.

### 4.2.2 Drive Format Type Comparisons

The results of the drive format type comparisons (Figure 9) were gathered using the SEAKER device and a single hard drive for the media device. Only one media device was used to reduce the variables in the experiment and focus solely on the timing for each drive format type.

Experiment details:

- *Hardware* – Raspberry Pi 3B+, Class 10 Micro SD card
- *Operating System* – Raspbian Stretch Lite, version 2018-06-27
- *Media Device* – Western Digital My Passport<sup>TM</sup>, 500GB
- *Setup* – All time measurements are using the Linux command `time` from the start of the execution of the `collect_files` program until it completed. `collect_files` was run automatically using the standard operation of the SEAKER device (i.e. plugging in the hard drive via USB to the Raspberry Pi).
- *Reference Data* – The experiment data is listed in Table 4 on page 92

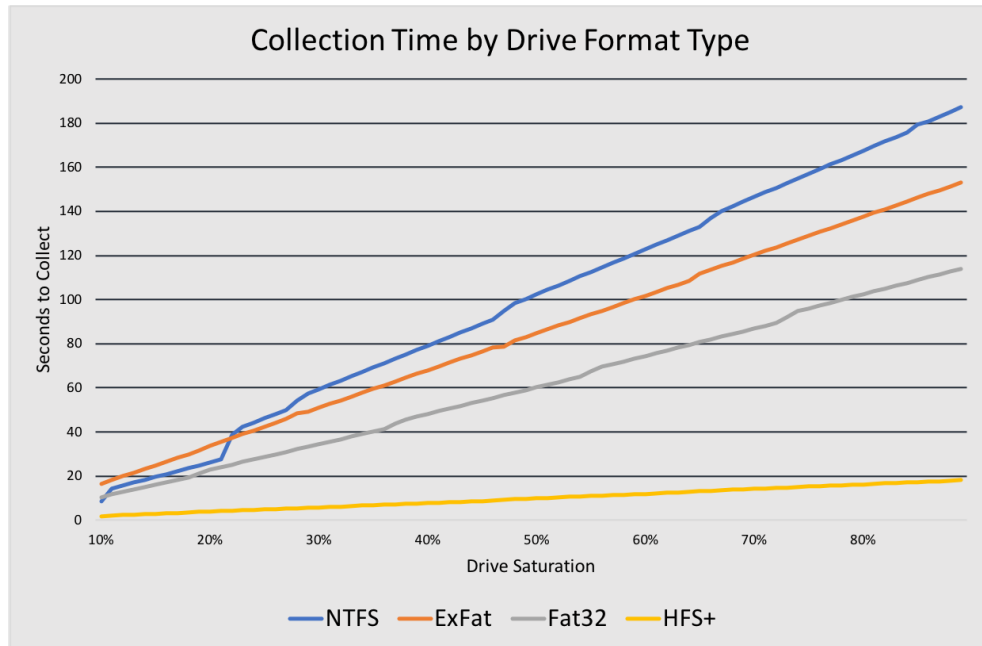


Figure 9: Collection Time by Drive Format Type

The resulting times of the different format types all go up linearly with the amount of data, as indicated in the collection timing graph (Figure 8). The one surprise is the HFS+ format type, which is significantly faster when collecting the filenames and folders on the drive. This can be attributed to the fact that HFS+ maintains a Catalog File which contains the entire file and folder structure. Other operating systems rely on system or user level indexing that is not integrated into the filesystem itself.

## 5 Conclusions and Future Work

The SEAKER device was successfully created with the agreed upon functionality. It properly acquires digital media content and enables analysis by investigators via WIFI connections to the Raspberry Pi. It collects potential digital evidence without the fear of tainting the evidentiary integrity. And, it keeps a log of devices that have been acquired.

It shows promise for real world law enforcement via digital forensics triage. The SEAKER device is useful for on-scene investigations during search warrant execution. It is also useful for helping reduce the backlogs at digital forensics labs.

The SEAKER project was a successful collaboration between two different institutions in the public sector: law enforcement and academia. The former has many interesting problems to offer, but as they are overwhelmed with cases they typically do not have the man power to do research and development. The latter is happy to do the research and development, as it enhances the educational experience of the students to be learning in the context of applications to real life problems. It is a fortuitous and symbiotic relationship, and we plan to embark on other such projects in the future.

SEAKER is also the testament to the fact that supremely useful devices, meeting the needs of practitioners, can be constructed from relatively simple components; what is required is expertise and enthusiasm, which in the best cases academia possesses in ample measure. Raspberry Pis are a revolution in embed-

ded controllers, and we are just scratching the surface of their applicability. They are inexpensive, but wield the power of the Linux Operating System.

The potential uses for the SEAKER device are great with the existing set of functionality. More so, the future potential functionalities are even greater.

The general implementation and code do have some limitations. For instance, in addition to the regular expressions, there could also be fuzzy matching, size grouping, internet browser data, registry, swap file, and email searching, and many others. These improvements may be implemented by future students, or by digital forensics professionals. We encourage anyone who implements them to share their work; the main bash script for the SEAKER device is available on github at <https://github.com/michaelsoltys/seaker>.

The SEAKER device only supports a few filesystems, whose contents can be collected (namely, NTFS and FAT (exfat, FAT32, FAT16...)). There may be unknown bugs to be worked out in the supported filesystems, and there is certainly work to be done in expanding the list of supported systems.

If an unsupported filesystem is found on the digital media, it may fail to mount and not show up on the SEAKER's search page at all. Similarly, digital media that cannot be read or are not supported do not appear; the search page displays them only after files have been collected. Here, there is opportunity for improvement: as opposed to displaying digital media for which collection is complete, SEAKER

could display all devices attempted with a status next to each. This status could be one of three states: failed search, collection in progress, and collection complete.

It can be difficult to match a hard drive to its corresponding search results. Partitions are uniquely identified by a UUID, and some properties (capacity, for example) are displayed with the search results, but these properties do not provide a perfect way to determine which physical device corresponds to which mounted partition or device. Storage devices generally have a serial number of sorts, but this serial number is not visible to SEAKER. This is a problem which requires some creativity to fully solve.

SEAKER could also take a picture when a drive is plugged in, and associate that picture with the search results, for instance, but this solution requires that investigators position each storage device in front of a camera. This approach requires a specialized camera, made exclusively for the Raspberry Pi. Moreover, it is tedious and error-prone, especially because many hard drives and digital media have the same look and may be difficult to visually distinguish.

When a search finds a hit (i.e., a matched expression or file extension), investigators may want to view the corresponding file. As SEAKER is currently set up, this would require them to manually find and open the file. Speed and ease of use are priorities, so it would be best if investigators could select a file in the search results and have SEAKER fetch a copy of it for them. This function inevitably requires that the storage device being queried is still connected, assuming that this



condition is met, copying and viewing a file should not be too complex.

Similarly, it would be useful if investigators could view thumbnails of images and videos in the search results. One example of the motivation here is child pornography cases; incriminating images may have innocuous names, but thumbnails would indicate the true content.

This leads to another issue: as incriminating files may be named innocuously, investigators will often want to search simply for all images, videos, etc. SEAKER could minimize the work necessary by allowing for preset groups of search terms, which can be created and edited by administrators. For example, an admin could create an “images” group which causes SEAKER to include jpg, pdf, png...

A very interesting area of future research is “Data Carving”. Data carving is the identification and extraction of files from unallocated clusters using file signatures. A file signature, also commonly referred to as a magic number is a constant numerical or text value used to identify a file format. The object of carving is to identify and extract (carve) the file based on this signature information alone. The main interest is in hidden files (which are sometimes easy to locate, as for example in UNIX with `ls -a` command) and deleted files, which is trickier as the files can be partially overwritten. A partially overwritten file may still constitute valuable evidence: for example, a portion of an image can be taken as solid evidence that the entire image was on the disk at some point. How can one establish whether a portion of an image comes from a particular image? It seems that the only way

to accomplish that is by visual inspection, and having an investigator recognize the original image. In order to automate this process, one could attempt one of two things: build a massive database of frequently-circulating illegal images, and hashing different formats of these images (.pdf, .jpg, .giff, .tiff, etc.), as well as different resolutions, and chunks of standard sizes (say, 64Kb). This still seems like a shot in the dark. The second approach is to define something akin to fuzzy hashes, the type of hashes that are used to recognize variants of the same malware. This new type of fuzzy hashing would be invariant under differing formats, or standard resolutions, and chunks of an image could be identified by close proximity to the original hash. Hits would be still confirmed visually to avoid false positives; a bigger issue would be false negatives.

Finally, documentation is important in any investigation. When triage reveals media that motivates investigators to confiscate the corresponding storage device, they should document this motivation. As such, it would aid investigators if SEAKER could generate a search report for a selected drive from the search results screen. This report could be downloaded to the investigators device or saved on the SEAKER unit for later access by an administrator. It should contain the search results along with some circumstantial information, such as the date, the name(s) of investigator(s) requesting the report, and their reason for confiscating the device.

Another potential area for improvements to existing code could be a location for entering passwords obtained from suspects. These could be used to unlock

entire drives, zip files, PDFs, user folders, files, email, website usage, etc. This could also be extended to find online account passwords, especially in the case of browsers that allow saving site-specific usernames and passwords.

The SCHTTF has asked for some new functionality as well. They would like the ability to search multiple partitions, local WIFI networks and access levels, thumbnails of images and videos, support newer operating systems (for instance APFS), and extract IP addresses from known suspect configuration files and other locations. These are just a few of the requests, but seemed to be at the top of their list.

There are also many different libraries that could be included and built into a searching algorithm. Be aware that these will slow down the gathering process and could be more useful if searched in stages. Here are a few:

- LibForensics (<http://code.google.com/p/libforensics/>) – a Python library for developing digital forensics applications and is licensed under the GNU Lesser General Public License
- Volatility (<https://github.com/volatilityfoundation/volatility>) – a memory extraction utility framework written in Python designed to obtain digital artifacts from volatile memory (RAM)
- WindowsSCOPE (<http://www.windowsscope.com/>) – a Microsoft Windows<sup>TM</sup> based memory forensics analysis tool designed specifically with security breaches in mind

- Oxygen Forensic Detective (<http://www.oxygen-forensic.com/en>) – all-in-one forensic software tool to extract and analyze data from mobile devices and their off-device related data

In researching this topic, a lot of other potential improvement features came to mind. This is by no means a comprehensive list, but it is a start:

- More supported media types
- Add AJAX (or similar technology) to give live feedback for search and collection
- Create web service calls for using the Raspberry Pi
- Clean up HTML code, use CSS
- Write SEAKER iPhone/iPad/Android apps to connect to Raspberry Pi and perform searches, edit keywords, etc.
- Use heap memory instead of stack memory for path
- Better way to skip current and parent directories ( . and .. ) by (possibly) skipping the first two directory entries
- Reduce size of file/directory listing file. This may involve changing how to `grep` or implementing custom `grep`
- Possibly store files in a database instead of a file
- Implement the ability to connect to Raspberry Pi using Bluetooth instead of WIFI
- Customize web pages for device type
- Use a better wireless network adapter for better range. These adapters are expensive.

- Implement Linux setup with puppet/cfengine/salt/etc.
- Better error messages about why drive could not be read
- Complete the Blinkt! light panel integration to show visual status of the Raspberry Pi
- Check the health (SMART status) of the hard drive before scanning
- Add support for RAID, mSATA, SCSI hard drives (**mdadm** is a RAID driver for Unix-based systems)
- Read directly from rawdisk to find file list to speed up collect
- Make SEAKER an available Raspbian/Debian package
- Support Unicode filenames
- Auto-unmount the hard drive at the end of collection
- Support multiple partitions gracefully
- Search for filename matches only
- Search for path matches only
- Offer option via checkbox for searching inside compressed files
- Offer option via checkbox for searching inside text files
- Find all deleted files (foremost, ntfsundelete)
- Search deleted partitions and unpartitioned space
- Build another web page for troubleshooting/access/administration/etc.
- Search on-media virtual hard drives (vhd, vdi, vmdk) (vmware, virtual pc, parallels, hyper-v)
- Search on-media hard drive images (.iso)

- Searching the raw drive instead of using the on-media operating system
- Online hard drive investigation (i.e. Cloud Forensics)
- Network Traffic Investigation
- Video segmentation and video image hashing
- Crime-specific searches:
  - financial crimes
  - credit card fraud
  - hacking
  - bullying
  - blackmail
  - espionage
  - fraud
  - customizable (corporate / military)
- OS lockdown (Raspbian)
- Decrypting encrypted devices (password entry location, assessment without password)
- Utilize forensics as a service
- Integrate with Microsoft's photoDNA cloud service
- Build an iPad app to provide simpler, more guided use
- Query Expansion - automatically searching for same query maybe in other contexts
- Synonym Matching - automatically searching for similar words to the query word
- Collect everything in UTC time for chronology matching

- Universal way of collecting hard drive hash value for verification of evidence integrity
- Data Visualizations:
  - present all data visualizations for a particular drive or all hard drives
  - graph - size vs number of files (one hard drive, and all hard drives)
  - graph - common details (like file type, etc.) maybe make it clickable!
  - graph/chart - files by date
  - graph/chart - files by file type
  - chart - website visits
  - digital image hashes list (stored and compared)
  - many others...
- Improve analysis speed: skip known OS files, known applications files, etc.
- Investigation Gathering rollup: (possibly stored online or in a report)
  - Database schema for storing case specific data
  - metadata
  - Unique “gathering ID”
  - case number
  - observation report
  - crimes severity
  - potential offenses
  - time gathered
  - gatherer
  - suspect list

- location gathered
  - suggestions for other research
  - which computer system it came from
  - Set of evidence
  - Digital Evidence item
  - images of item
  - unique item ID
  - file contents
  - ranking within set of evidence
  - image thumbnails
  - collection statistics
- Find encryption Keys
  - Thumb strips of videos
  - Predetermined search criteria (passwords, pw, etc.)
  - Output more file information: file owner, MAC times
  - Sorting ability, for instance make it based on user or access times
  - Ability to search by time, i.e. time=lastweek, time=5/5/18-5/15/18
  - Internet usage timeline
  - Auto-search / Auto-filter
  - For drug related crimes, search... Spreadsheets, documents, databases, internet purchase strives
  - For financial related crimes, search... Spreadsheets, databases, MSMoney, Quicken



- CRC of any acquired files (for later integrity comparison)

For the students, the experience was invaluable. Perhaps the most important aspect was non-technical: how to work well in a large team. There were eighteen students in the class; a composition of different backgrounds, talents and strengths.

Digital forensics and academia would both benefit greatly from increased collaboration; students can offer relatively inexpensive development in exchange for real-world experience and the opportunity to create something which will be used. As a side effect more students would consider digital forensics as a career, resulting in some level of alleviation of the problems mentioned in the second quote in the introduction [9].

## 6 Appendix

### 6.1 SEAKER Setup

The following set of instructions will detail how to setup the SEAKER environment for the first time. There are three install options that enable SEAKER creators to prepare the device. See Table 1 on page 78 for more details.

1. *Router* – This option is where the Raspberry Pi and the secondary computer are connected directly to the same router, thus allowing the same local DHCP to assign the IPs of both. The secondary computer is used to prepare the Micro SD card and to later remotely and securely connect to the Raspberry Pi to complete the setup.
2. *Direct Connect* – This option is where the Raspberry Pi is connected directly to a monitor and keyboard to enable direct user input via the terminal. The secondary computer is necessary to prepare the Micro SD card, but not used to remotely connect to the Raspberry Pi to complete the set up.

3. *Corporate LAN* – This option is almost identical to the *Router* option, but utilizes a corporate network instead of a local router to connect to the Raspberry Pi. This option is the most IT intensive, since the IP address assigned to the Raspberry Pi is often not easily found.

Option 1 (Router)	Option 2 (Direct Connect)	Option 3 (Corporate LAN)
Hardware Required		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Raspberry Pi</li> <li>•Mac or Windows Computer</li> <li>•Micro SD card</li> <li>•Router</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Raspberry Pi</li> <li>•Mac or Windows Computer</li> <li>•Micro SD card</li> <li>•Monitor</li> <li>•Keyboard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Raspberry Pi</li> <li>•Mac or Windows Computer</li> <li>•Micro SD card</li> </ul>
Software Required		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Raspbian Stretch Lite</li> <li>•SSH client</li> <li>•Disk Imaging software</li> <li>•IP Scanning software</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Raspbian Stretch Lite</li> <li>•SSH client</li> <li>•Disk Imaging software</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Raspbian Stretch Lite</li> <li>•SSH client</li> <li>•Disk Imaging software</li> </ul>

Table 1: SEAKER set up: Required Hardware and Software

The following creation process is required to setup the SEAKER device to the specifications outlined in this paper. Figure 10 outlines the general process, while the specific steps are listed below.

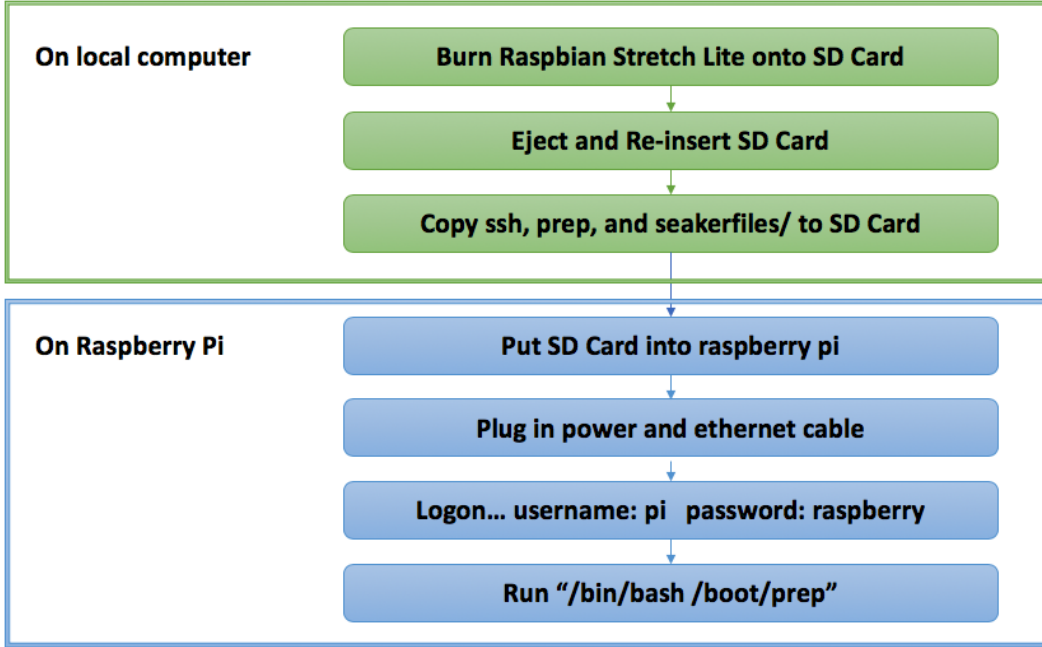


Figure 10: SEAKER Creation Process

1. Download the latest Raspbian Stretch Lite operating system (<https://www.raspberrypi.org/downloads/raspbian/>). Note the location where file is saved.
2. Download the most recent copy of `prep.sh`, `SSH`, and the folder called `seakerfiles`. These files contain SEAKER setup and running code.
  - `prep.sh` file location: <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/seaker/prep.sh>

- ssh file location: <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/seaker/ssh>
- seakerfiles location: <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/seaker/seakerfiles>

3. Open `prep.sh` and edit the default configuration information (shown below). At minimum it is recommended to change the Raspberry Pi and WIFI passwords.

```

1 # CONFIGURATION SETTINGS
2 # Raspberry Pi Password
3 PLPASSWORD="raspberry"
4 # WiFi Network Name
5 WIFLNAME="SEAKER01"
6 # WiFi Network Password:
7 WIFLPASSWORD="raspberry"
8 # IP address which is used to access SEAKER web page
9 WIFLROUTER_IP="192.168.101.1"
10 # DHCP Range (How many connections can be made simultaneously)
11 WIFLROUTER_DHCP_RANGE="192.168.101.50 192.168.101.100"

```

NOTE: It is recommended to change the WIFI Name and IP Address when setting up multiple SEAKER environments over time to ensure each environment has unique identifying information.

For example: If setting up three SEAKER environments, configuration could be:

- (a) Name: SEAKER01, IP Address: 192.168.101.1
- (b) Name: SEAKER02, IP Address: 192.168.102.1
- (c) Name: SEAKER03, IP Address: 192.168.103.1

4. Insert Micro SD card into computer (not the Raspberry Pi). An adapter will likely be required.
5. Open disk imaging software (Etcher for Mac, or SDFormatter and Win32 Disk Imager for Windows). Map to the Raspbian Stretch Lite file location, choose the Micro SD card as the destination, and select to burn the image. (Refer to the

chosen imaging software documentation for specific instructions on using this tool.)

Do not remove the Micro SD card from the computer.

6. Map to the Micro SD card (Finder for Mac, File Explorer for Windows). Copy `ssh`, `prep.sh`, and the `seakerfiles` folder onto the Micro SD card's *boot* partition.
7. Remove the Micro SD card from the computer.
8. Insert the card into the Raspberry Pi.
9. Power on the Raspberry Pi by plugging it in with the power cord.
10. Identify the local IP Address of the Raspberry Pi:

If installing with Option 1 (router):

- (a) Plug the Raspberry Pi into the same router being used by the Windows or Mac computer.
- (b) Use the IP Scanning tool on the computer to find the local IP Address of the Raspberry Pi. The Manufacturer should be Raspberry Pi Foundation.

If installing with Option 2 (Direct Connect):

- (a) Connect the monitor and keyboard to the Raspberry Pi.
- (b) Login using the default username (pi) and password (raspberrypi).
- (c) Enter the following command to retrieve the local IP Address:

```
ifconfig eth0
```

If installing with Option 3 (Corporate Network):

- (a) The MAC Address of the Raspberry Pi is required. This can be located on the original Raspberry Pi box.

- (b) For Windows systems, open a command prompt and enter the command below. Replace the “c8:26:3b:d2:63:d5” sequence with the MAC Address of the Raspberry Pi being configured. Use the following command:

```
arp -a | findstr "c8:26:3b:d2:63:d5"
```

- (c) For Unix or Linux systems such as Apple or Ubuntu, open a terminal window and enter the command below. Replace the “c8:26:3b:d2:63:d5” sequence with the MAC Address of the Raspberry Pi being configured. Use the following command:

```
arp -a | grep "c8:26:3b:d2:63:d5"
```

11. If installing with Option 1 or 3:

- SSH into the Raspberry Pi from the laptop or desktop computer.
  - If using a client such as Putty, enter the local IP address of the Raspberry Pi, choose SSH and connect. Click **OK** or **Yes** on the security warning.
  - If using a command line utility such as Bash enter the following at the prompt:

```
ssh pi@<ip_address> -l pi
```

- Login using the default username (**pi**) and password (**raspberrypi**).

12. Run the preparation script by typing the following on the command line:

```
/bin/bash /boot/prepare.sh
```

13. Wait for the Raspberry Pi to finish running the script and rebooting. The Raspberry Pi should now be configured as a SEAKER and be up and running.

## 6.2 SEAKER Usage

After collecting all the media devices at the scene, the investigator will triage them with SEAKER. Each step of the process is broken down and discussed in detail below.

(1) Connect the RP to the power and wait for about a minute to let it finish booting up. Connect to the RP's Wireless Access Point (WIFI network). Depending on the setup, the WIFI's SSID will be "SEAKER01" or "SEAKER02" etc. See Figure 11. Note that SEAKER's Wireless Access Point is password protected and matches the one specified in the prep.sh script file.

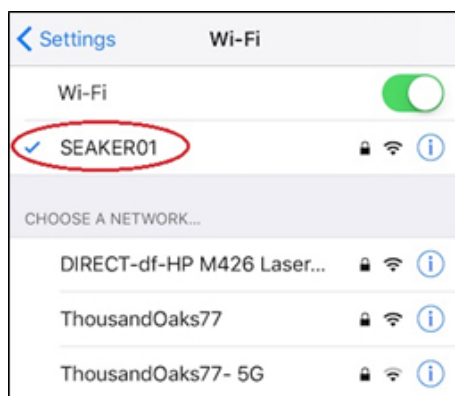


Figure 11: iPhone WIFI connection to SEAKER

(2) At the same time the investigator may connect all the media devices to the RP. This may be done concurrently with the previous step. Note that in order to examine a digital media it will need to be removed from the computer, and connected to the RP; this may be done through a write-blocker interface but it is not necessary.

(3) Once connected to the SEAKER's Wireless Access Point, the investigator will open any web browser on their connected device and direct it to go to <http://seaker01.local>.

Access is allowed through a web browser, as this is the most universal way to connect on any device (iPhone, iPad, Android, laptop, etc.). These devices and many more can connect to a Wireless Access Point and open a browser. Once the browser establishes the connection, the user will see Figure 12. Note that the keywords (or regular expression patterns) present in the “Type in Search Terms:” can be pre-loaded before arriving at the scene, or changed/updated at the scene.



Figure 12: Using a browser to connect to <http://seaker01.local>

The regular expression can be given using the syntax of the **grep** utility. For example, if we want to find occurrences of either ‘two’ or ‘too’, we use `t[wo]o`; if we want to find every word that start with capital letters, we use `^[A-Z]`; if we want to find words where number 9 is the last character of the line, we use `9$`. There are a vast number of



possibilities; we can also replace `grep` with `egrep` that has an even richer syntax.

(4) Once any storage media devices that are found at a search warrant scene are connected to the RP, the investigator will typically wait for a few minutes (with some times up to 10 minutes for 1Tb disks with millions of files) for the file list to be built. Searches can then be carried out very quickly; essentially, `grep` browses the file list, line by line, outputting those lines that conform to at least one pattern specified in the “Type in Search Terms:” window. Once this process completes, the investigator will have the results presented as in Figure 13.

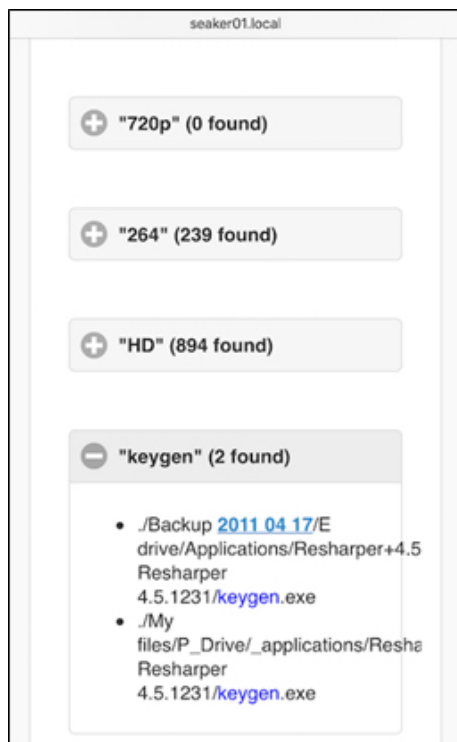


Figure 13: The results of the search of a particular device

The filenames themselves can be incriminating evidence, such as in Child Pornogra-

phy (CP) cases, where the material has a commonly used naming convention, e.g., “lolita” which can be found with the **grep** pattern `.*lolita.*` (‘.’ means the following: ‘.’ (period) matches any single character of any value, except a newline, and ‘\*’ (asterisk) matches zero or more of the preceding character or expression) or simply `lolita`. This can be used by the investigators to question the suspects. The questioning usually takes place at the same time as the forensic examiners triage the evidence, and one of the requirements of SEAKER was to be fast so that investigators can start getting intelligence quickly from the initial processing of the scene.

(5) The user process flow is documented in the following figure 14.

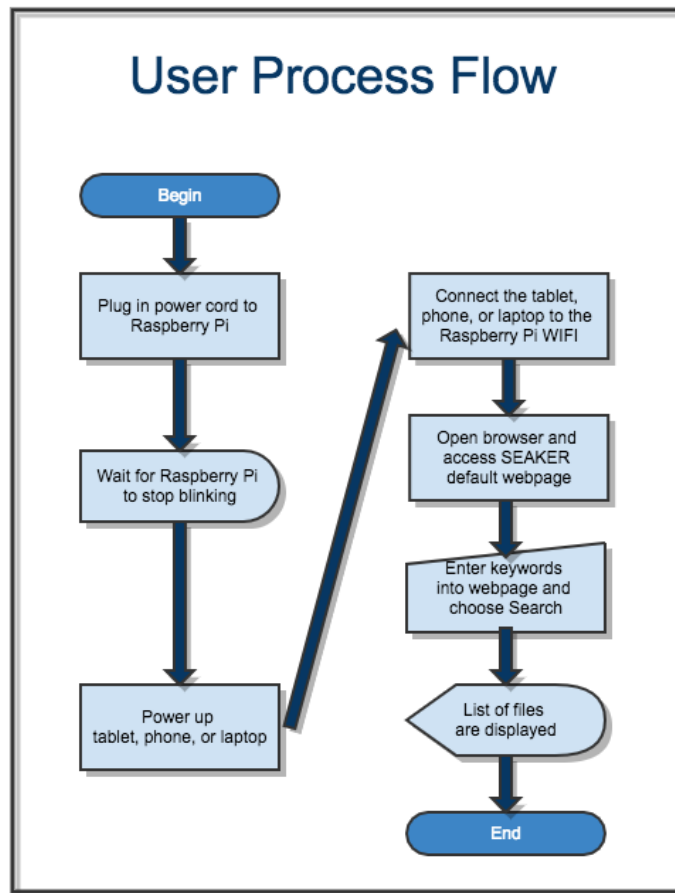


Figure 14: The functionality of SEAKER from the user perspective

## 6.3 Code

### 6.3.1 Directory and Filename Collection Code (in C)

```
1  /*
2  * collect_files
3  *
4  * created for the SEAKER project
5  * California State University Channel Islands
6  * 2018
7  * Original Author: Eric Gentry
8  */
9  #include <unistd.h>
10 #include <sys/types.h>
11 #include <sys/stat.h>
12 #include <dirent.h>
13 #include <stdio.h>
14 #include <string.h>
15
16 void listdir(const char *name)
17 {
18     DIR *dir;
19     struct dirent *entry;
20     struct stat path_stat;
21     if (!(dir = opendir(name)))
22     {
23         // failure to run opendir
24         // this would most likely be caused by an unsupported drive format
25         return;
26     }
27     while ((entry = readdir(dir)) != NULL)
28     {
29         // make the full filename
30         char path[1024];
31         snprintf(path, sizeof(path), "%s/%s", name, entry->d_name);
32
33         // the first part works with most drive types, except exFat... the second part fixes
34         // that
35         if (entry->d_type == DT_DIR || (stat(path, &path_stat)==0 && S_ISDIR(path_stat.
36             st_mode)))
37         {
38             if (strncmp(entry->d_name, ".", 1) == 0 || strncmp(entry->d_name, "..", 2) == 0)
39             {
40                 // skip recording entries for current and parent directories
41                 continue;
42             }
43         }
44     }
```

```

41
42     // this is a directory, so walk that path...
43     listdir(path);
44 }
45 else
46 {
47     // just print the filename
48     printf("%s/%s\n", name, entry->d_name);
49 }
50 }
51 closedir(dir);
52 }
53
54 int main(void)
55 {
56     listdir(".");
57     return 0;
58 }

```

### 6.3.2 udev rules file for automount

```
1 KERNEL!="sd[a-z][0-9]", GOTO="auto_mount_usb_storage_by_label_end"
2
3 # import FS infos
4 IMPORT{program}="/sbin/blkid -o udev -p %N"
5
6 # Get a label if present, otherwise specify one
7 ENV{dir_name}="usbhd-%k"
8
9 # Global mount options
10 ACTION=="add", ENV{mount_options}="ro"
11
12 # Filesystem-specific mount options INCOMPLETE
13 ACTION=="add", ENV{ID_FS_TYPE}=="ntfs|exfat", ENV{mount_options}="$Env{mount_options},
    user_id=1000,group_id=1000,ntfs-3g"
14 ACTION=="add", ENV{ID_FS_TYPE}!="ntfs|exfat", ENV{mount_options}="$Env{mount_options},
    uid=1000,gid=1000"
15 ACTION=="add", ENV{ID_FS_TYPE}=="ext3|ext4|ntfs", ENV{mount_options}="$Env{mount_options}
    },noatime"
16
17 # Mount the device ADD SEARCH TO LIST PATHS HERE
18 ACTION=="add", ENV{ID_FS_TYPE}!="ntfs|exfat", RUN+="/bin/mkdir -p /mnt/%E{dir_name}",
    RUN+="/bin/mount -o $Env{mount_options} /dev/%k /mnt/%E{dir_name}", RUN+="/home/pi/
    seaker_collect.sh %E{dir_name} | at now"
19 ACTION=="add", ENV{ID_FS_TYPE}=="ntfs|exfat", RUN+="/bin/mkdir -p /mnt/%E{dir_name}",
    RUN+="/home/pi/mount_ntfs.sh %k %E{dir_name}"
20
21 # Clean up after removal
22 ACTION=="remove", ENV{dir_name}!="", RUN+="/bin/umount -l /mnt/%E{dir_name}", RUN+="/bin
    /rmdir /mnt/%E{dir_name}"
23
24 # Exit
25 LABEL="auto_mount_usb_storage_by_label_end"
```

## 6.4 Results of Testing

### 6.4.1 Collection Algorithm Timing Data

For fairness and testing purposes, ls was optimized to utilize as few time-consuming options as possible, including the `-f` option that prevents sorting and `-A` for skipping current and parent directories (`.` and `..`) in the results. Here are the actual functions tested:

```
sudo sh -c 'cd /mnt/usb && time ls -ARf1 > ~/ls_time.txt'
sudo sh -c 'cd /mnt/usb && time find / -print > ~/find_time.txt'
sudo sh -c 'cd /mnt/usb && time ~/collect > ~/collect_time.txt'
```

Testing results for the custom collection code vs. operating system file and directory listing applications:

	SSD	SSD	WD 2.5' SATA HDD	iOmega 3.5' IDE HDD	Samsung 3.5' SATA HDD	
Size GB	500	500	500	1000	1000	
Consumed GB	94.22	239.83	456	474.2	316.6	
% Consumed	18.84%	47.97%	91.20%	47.42%	31.66%	
# files	1,244,699	1,561,132	14,487	216,356	21,556	
# directories	254,473	317,876	145	10,603	2,222	
ls t1	62.142	112.627	0.942	8.398	1.400	
ls t2	62.025	116.978	0.899	8.252	1.375	
ls t3	68.376	115.833	0.903	8.229	1.324	
ls ave time (secs)	<b>64.181</b>	<b>115.146</b>	<b>0.915</b>	<b>8.293</b>	<b>1.366</b>	
find t1	43.914	90.693	1.004	9.090	1.733	
find t2	44.958	97.619	1.014	8.315	1.667	
find t2	43.214	96.499	1.015	8.347	1.672	
find ave time (secs)	<b>44.029</b>	<b>94.937</b>	<b>1.011</b>	<b>8.584</b>	<b>1.691</b>	
col t1	20.893	68.270	0.834	7.541	1.281	
col t2	18.103	82.091	0.832	7.548	1.260	
col t3	19.381	84.823	0.804	7.531	1.248	
collect ave time (secs)	<b>19.459</b>	<b>78.395</b>	<b>0.823</b>	<b>7.540</b>	<b>1.263</b>	<b>Average:</b>
% faster than ls	70%	32%	10%	9%	8%	<b>26%</b>
% faster than find	56%	17%	19%	12%	25%	<b>26%</b>

Table 2: Collection Algorithm Timing Data

### 6.4.2 Data Saturation vs Timing Latency Data

label	UUID	type	capacity	available space	used space	used space	collect time
My Passport	C0100754100750B8	ntfs	466G	424G	42	10%	0m8.623s
My Passport	C0100754100750B8	ntfs	466G	366G	100	22%	0m38.682s
My Passport	C0100754100750B8	ntfs	466G	337G	129	28%	0m54.258s
My Passport	C0100754100750B8	ntfs	466G	249G	217	47%	1m34.964s
My Passport	C0100754100750B8	ntfs	466G	162G	304	66%	2m16.988s
My Passport	C0100754100750B8	ntfs	466G	75G	391	85%	2m59.572s

Table 3: Data Saturation vs Collection Timing Data



### 6.4.3 Collection Time by Drive Type Data

Drive Saturation	NTFS	ExFat	Fat32	HFS+
10%	8.623	16.531	10.418	1.772
11%	14.413	18.257	11.851	2.087
12%	15.723	19.916	12.928	2.277
13%	17.034	21.576	14.005	2.467
14%	18.344	23.236	15.082	2.656
15%	19.654	24.896	16.160	2.846
16%	20.965	26.555	17.237	3.036
17%	22.275	28.215	18.314	3.225
18%	23.585	29.875	19.392	3.415
19%	24.895	31.660	21.144	3.843
20%	26.206	33.921	22.972	3.935
21%	27.516	35.617	24.120	4.132
22%	38.682	37.313	25.269	4.328
23%	42.505	39.009	26.417	4.525
24%	44.353	40.705	27.566	4.722
25%	46.201	42.401	28.715	4.918
26%	48.049	44.097	29.863	5.115
27%	49.897	45.793	31.012	5.312
28%	54.258	48.322	32.160	5.354
29%	57.395	49.321	33.309	5.637
30%	59.374	51.022	34.457	5.832
31%	61.354	52.723	35.606	6.026
32%	63.333	54.423	36.755	6.220
33%	65.312	56.124	37.903	6.415
34%	67.291	57.825	39.052	6.609
35%	69.270	59.526	40.200	6.804
36%	71.249	61.226	41.349	6.998
37%	73.228	62.927	43.820	7.192
38%	75.208	64.628	45.789	7.387
39%	77.187	66.329	46.994	7.581
40%	79.166	68.029	48.199	7.776
41%	81.145	69.730	49.404	7.970
42%	83.124	71.431	50.609	8.164
43%	85.103	73.132	51.814	8.359
44%	87.083	74.832	53.019	8.553
45%	89.062	76.533	54.224	8.748
46%	91.041	78.234	55.429	9.088
47%	94.964	78.757	56.634	9.382
48%	98.306	81.467	57.839	9.581
49%	100.354	83.164	59.044	9.781
50%	102.402	84.861	60.249	9.980

Drive Saturation	NTFS	ExFat	Fat32	HFS+
51%	104.450	86.558	61.454	10.180
52%	106.498	88.256	62.659	10.380
53%	108.546	89.953	63.864	10.579
54%	110.594	91.650	65.069	10.779
55%	112.642	93.347	67.410	10.978
56%	114.690	95.045	69.559	11.178
57%	116.738	96.742	70.801	11.378
58%	118.787	98.439	72.043	11.577
59%	120.835	100.136	73.285	11.777
60%	122.883	101.834	74.528	11.976
61%	124.931	103.531	75.770	12.176
62%	126.979	105.228	77.012	12.376
63%	129.027	106.925	78.254	12.704
64%	131.075	108.622	79.496	12.993
65%	133.123	111.720	80.738	13.196
66%	136.988	113.506	81.980	13.400
67%	140.304	115.226	83.222	13.603
68%	142.398	116.946	84.465	13.806
69%	144.492	118.666	85.707	14.009
70%	146.587	120.386	86.949	14.212
71%	148.681	122.105	88.191	14.415
72%	150.775	123.825	89.433	14.618
73%	152.869	125.545	91.879	14.821
74%	154.963	127.265	94.803	15.024
75%	157.057	128.985	96.085	15.227
76%	159.151	130.704	97.366	15.430
77%	161.245	132.424	98.647	15.633
78%	163.339	134.144	99.928	15.836
79%	165.433	135.864	101.209	16.039
80%	167.528	137.584	102.490	16.242
81%	169.622	139.303	103.771	16.556
82%	171.716	141.023	105.052	16.704
83%	173.810	142.743	106.334	16.908
84%	175.904	144.549	107.615	17.112
85%	179.572	146.226	108.896	17.315
86%	180.888	147.947	110.177	17.519
87%	182.992	149.667	111.458	17.723
88%	185.095	151.387	112.739	17.926
89%	187.198	153.107	114.020	18.130
90%	189.302	154.828	115.301	18.334
91%	191.405	156.548	118.631	18.538

Table 4: Collection Time by Drive Type Data

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