

Internet Explorer History files – Understand index.dat (I)

The Internet History files are important evidence. To analyse evidence, it is necessary to examine index.dat files. Index.dat files log information that a user has performed.

1. What is index.dat?

Index.dat is to keep track of a user activity, which can include surfing the Internet Explorer or opening files from within window Explorer or Outlook that have an extension listed as a registered file type. Other web-based programs can also generate entries. Please do remember that index.dat files are not all created equal. This handbook mainly focus on Internet History files, which located, in windows, in C:\Documents and Settings\[username]\Local Settings\History\History.IE5

2. Index.dat structure in Internet History Folder

The beginning of the data structure of the index.dat file

File offset	Length	Description
0	28bytes	File header (ends in hex 00)
28	4 bytes	Filesize of Index.dat
32	4 bytes	Pointer to file offset of hash table

The hash table structure

Length	Description
4 bytes	Header
4 bytes	Length of hash
4 bytes	Pointer to file offset of next hash table
4 bytes	Hash table number

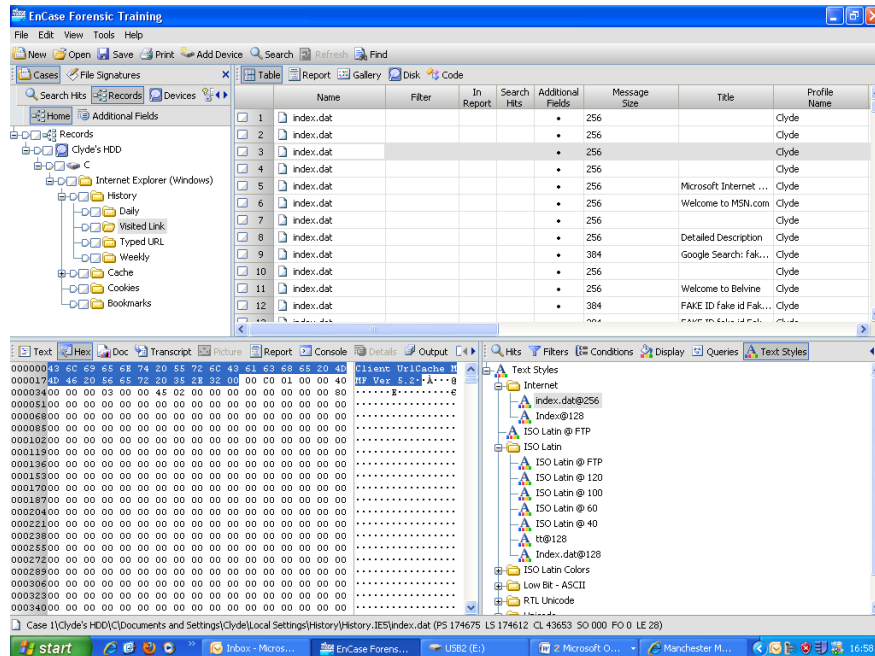
The record structure

Record offset	Length	Description
0	4 bytes	Type (URL)
4	4 bytes	Record size (value x 128 bytes)
8	8 bytes	Last visited time –Filetime format (GMT)
16	8 bytes	Last visited time –Filetime format (GMT)
24	4 bytes	Expiration date –DosDate Time format (GMT)
68	4 bytes	Record offset to tile Bar Parameters
80	4 bytes	Last visited time-DocsdATE Time Format (GMT)
84	4 bytes	Hit counter
104	variable	Visited:[username]@[URL]
variable	20 bytes	Title bar parameters. Starting at the 17 th byte (offset 16) read 2bytes is the length of the title bar data. The 20 th byte(offset19) is the type: \x1f =USED –TITLE BAR DATA WILL BE IN UNICODE \X1E ={guid} \X00= Not used
variable	variable	Title bar data

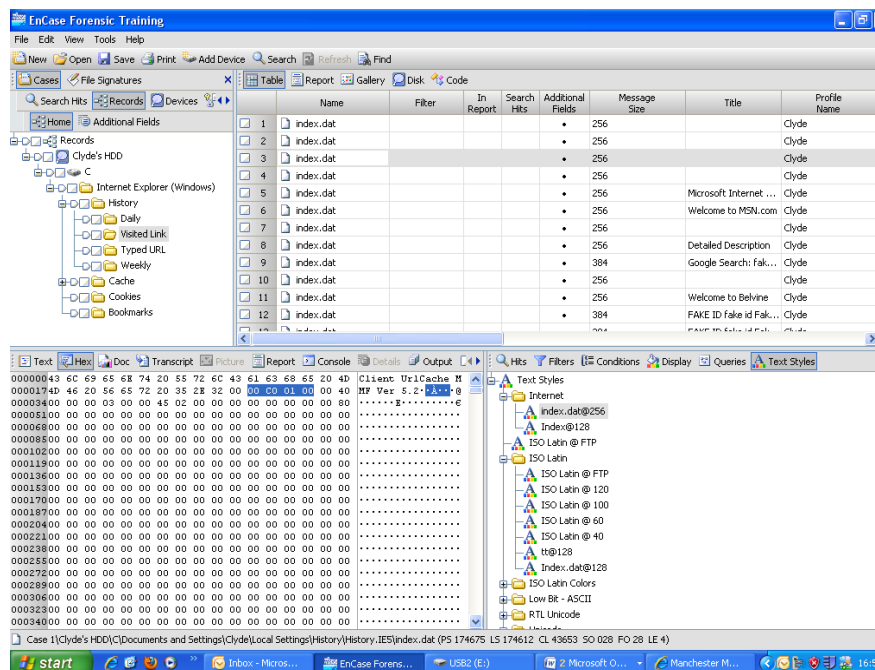
3. Understanding the structure of index.dat file (an example)

Use “search” Internet history with comprehensive search for the Internet History Files. After search, go to “Records” and find an index.dat file. Now we start to understand the structure of index.dat.

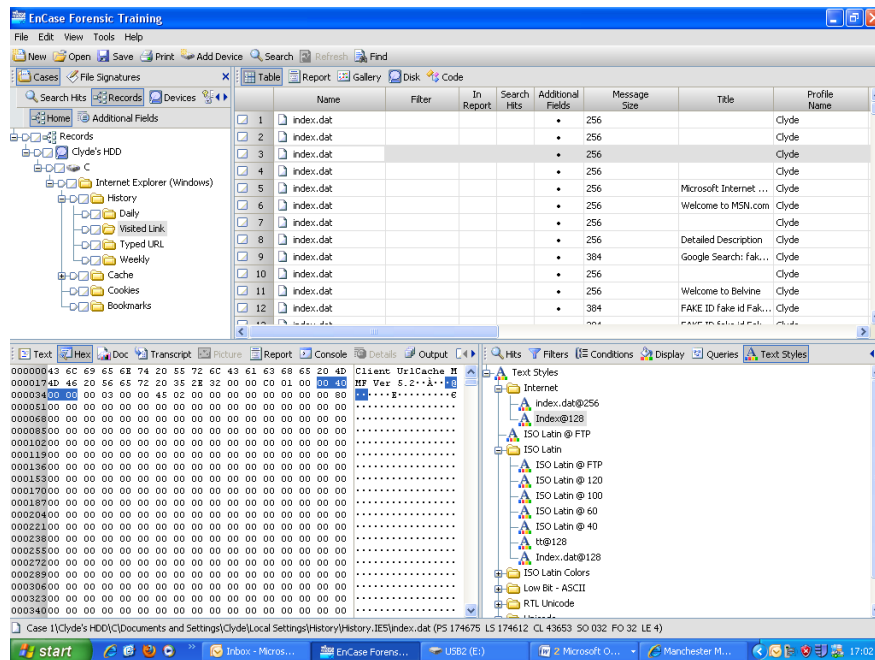
3.1 File header (highlighted hexadecimal representation)



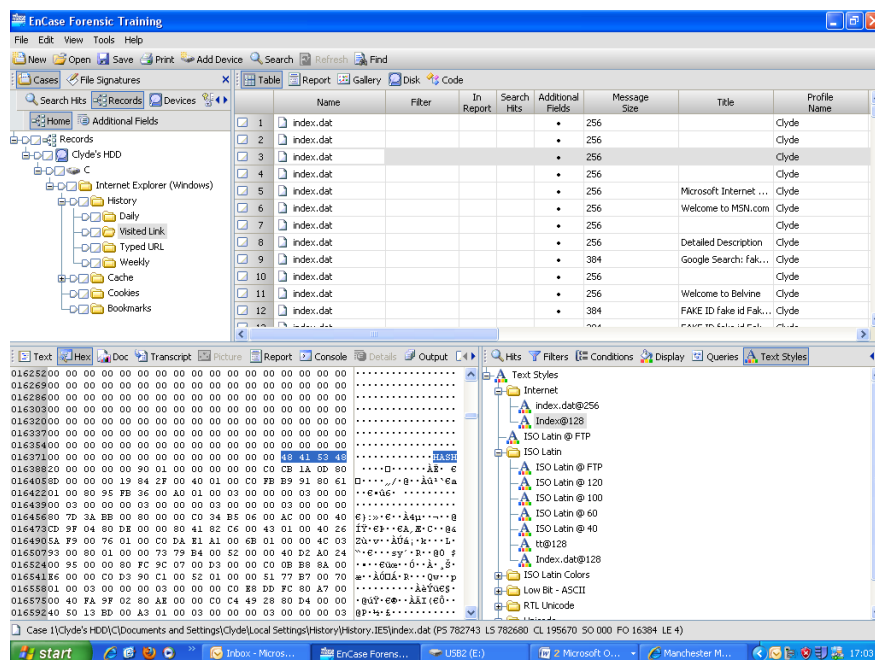
3.2 File size (highlighted hexadecimal representation)



3.2 Hash table offset

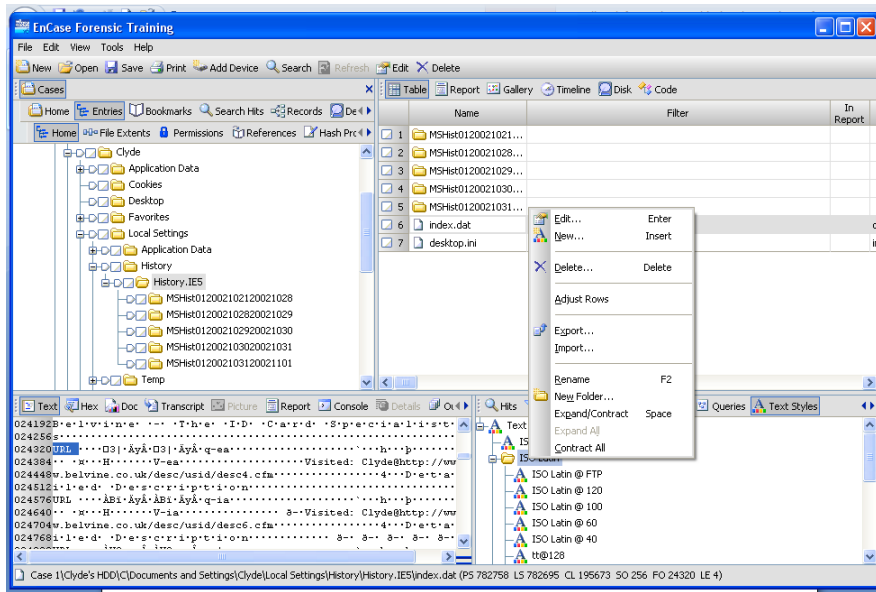


3.3 Hash header

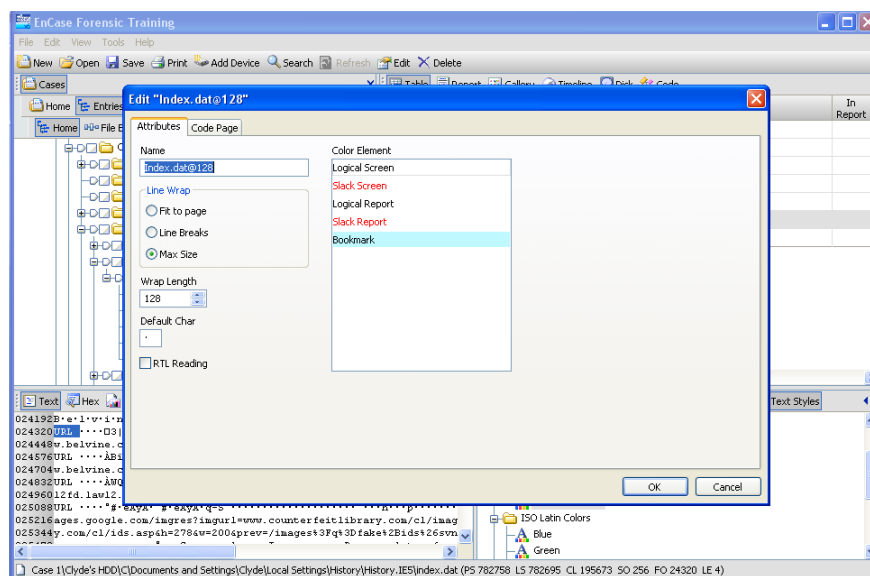


4. Creating new text style for the index.dat file, the purpose is to set the proper text style for the history INDEX.DAT files in the view pane.

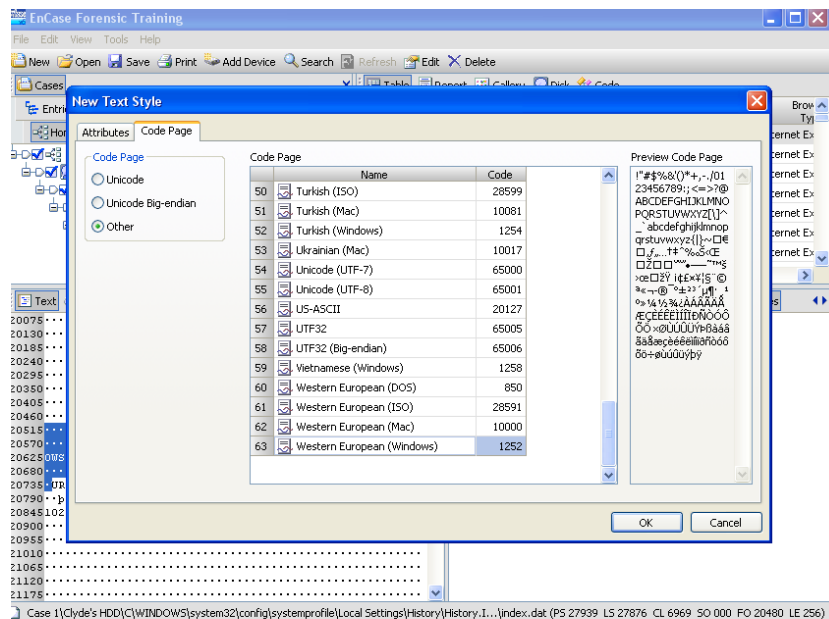
4.1 Go to text style in the filter pane and create a new style using “new”



4.2 Fill [index.dat@128](#) and choose MAX SIZE and the wrap length is 128.

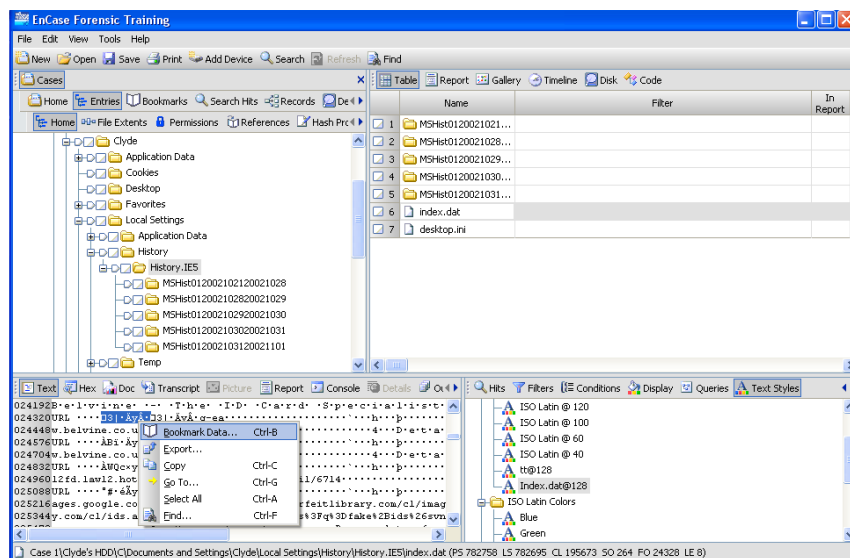


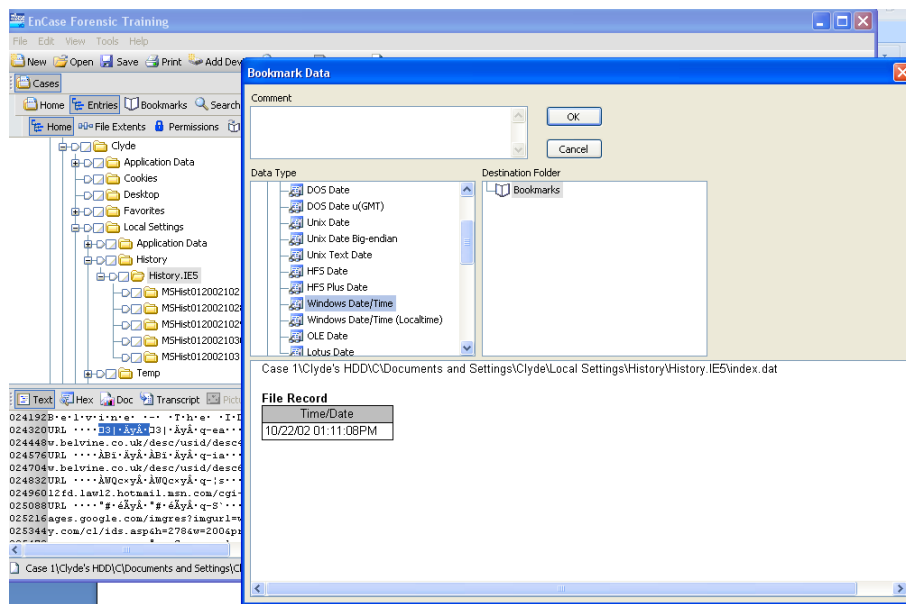
4.3 Click on the code page tab, select “other” and then choose Western European (windows) click “ok”



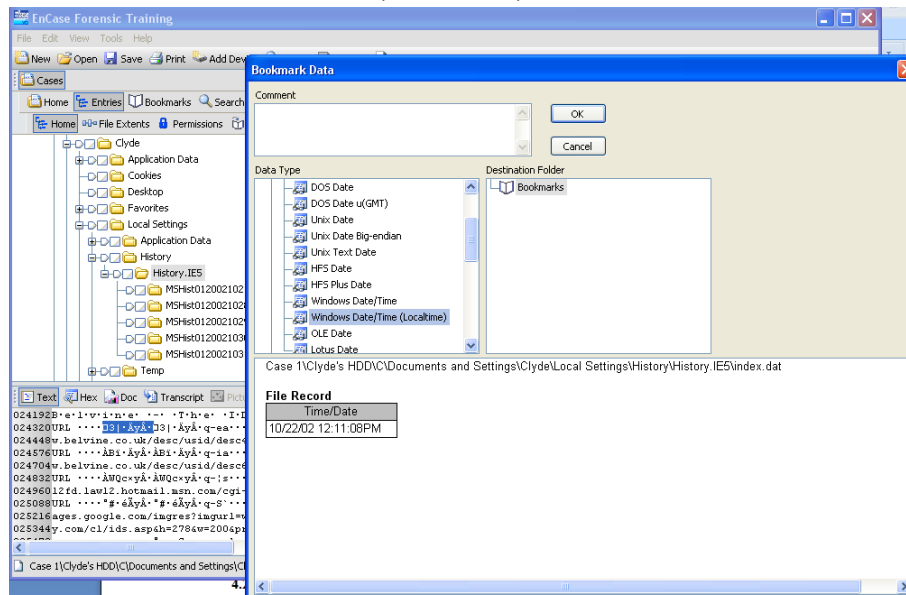
5. Decoding the windows date/time within the record

5.1 Find Record offset. The identifier is URL. To try to find the beginning of last accessed date/time field (record offset 8), highlight the first 8 bytes of the record, the next byte begins that field. Beginning at that byte, highlight for 8 bytes to decide the last accessed field. Use the bookmark feature to decode the windows date/time by choosing “Windows Date/time” or “Windows Date/Time (Localtime)”.

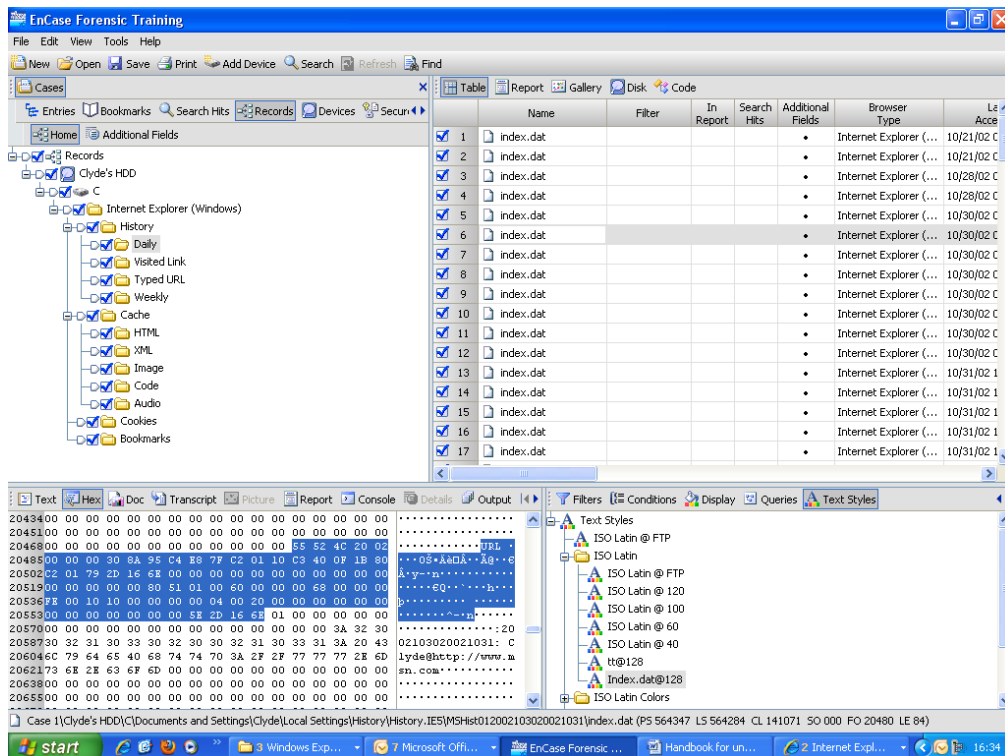




Or you can choose Windows Date (local time)



5.2 You can also decode from HEX to date/time using bookmark

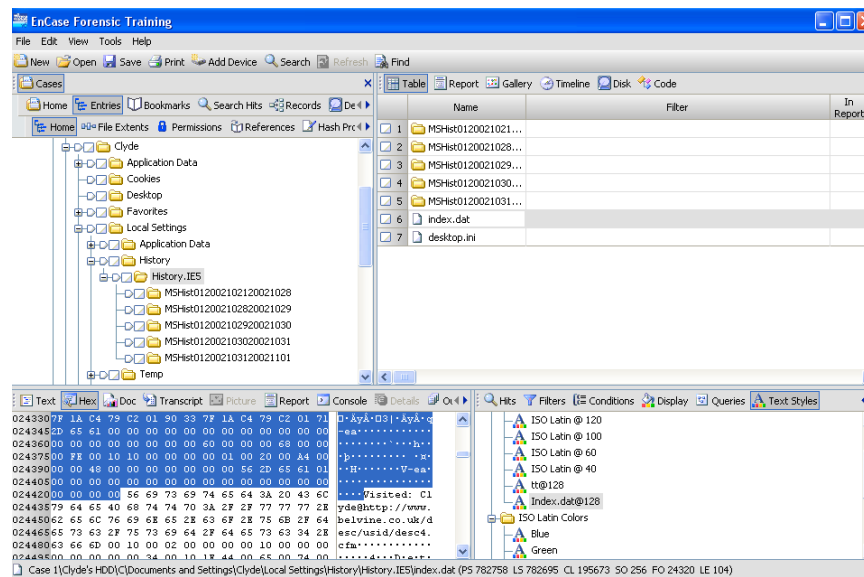


6.2 Look at data record “visited: [username]@[url]”, at record offset 104, you will find this data structure:

Visited:[username]@[URL]

[username] is at the URL that was visited

The data ends at hex 00

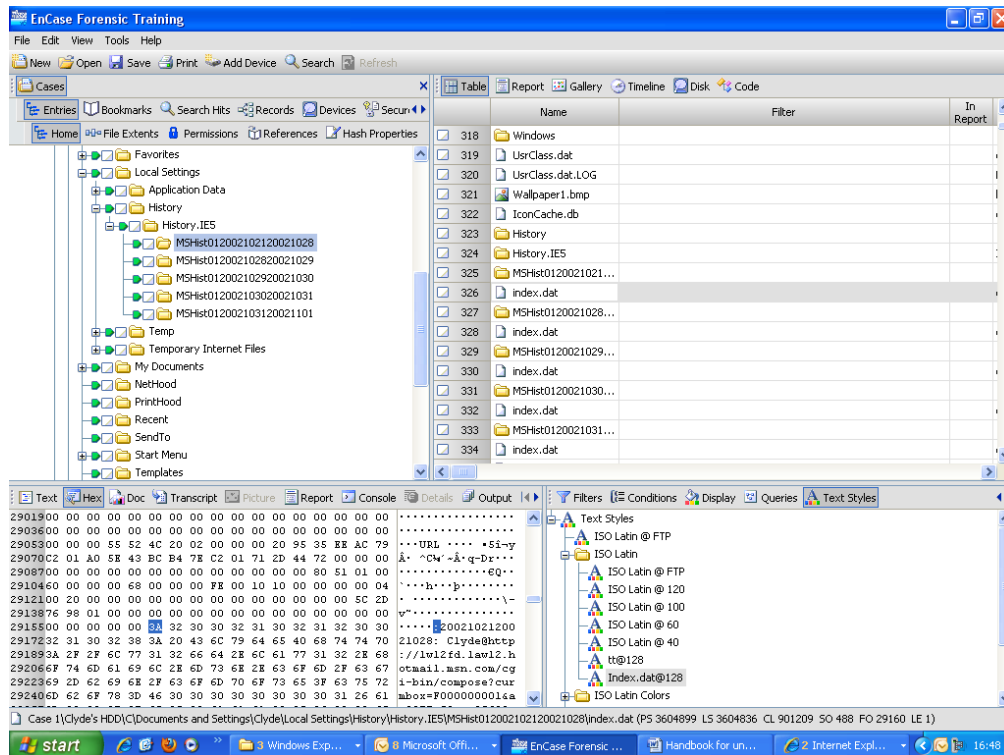


6.3 If the user opened a file, you would see a URL beginning with [file:///](#); if the file name contained spaces, you would see that represented as %20(hex20).

The delimiter between elements of the path is a forward slash (“/”) instead of

a backslash(“\”) an example of this would be:
<file:///c:/My%20Files/Personal%20Information.txt>

7. Looking at daily and history files (go to Entries and find History.IE5)



7.1 Look at history file folder naming

MSHist012002102120021028

MSHist01	2002	10	21		2002	10	28
	Year	Month	Day	through	year	Month	Day

Task: based on the naming, can you tell which folder is daily history and which folder is weekly history.

Search for a file and when this searching happened?

8. Notes : Daily and Weekly history

The daily history is a collection of records from a given day's activity. A day begins at 12am or 00:00:00 and ends at 11:59:59pm or 23:59:59

The weekly history is a collection of records from previous daily history files, the week begins on Monday at 12am.