Using Citizen Media and Open Source Investigations to Promote Human Rights:
UC Berkeley’s Human Rights Investigations Lab

by

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Abstract

Citizens with cell phones have the power to change the world. With the explosion of new technologies such as mobile devices and social media platforms, ordinary people around the world now have the ability to document and report human rights abuses as they happen. Citizen media, also known as open source information, is changing the way researchers and investigators tackle human rights problems. In September 2016, in response to these developments, the Human Rights Center at the UC Berkeley School of Law launched the world’s first university-based open source investigations lab in collaboration with Amnesty International. Harnessing the energy of citizen activists, the Investigations Lab trains students from across disciplines to verify human rights violations using open source investigation methods; exposes human rights violations through reports and journalistic projects, and seeks to hold perpetrators legally accountable for their crimes. After one year, the Lab is an academic success. But is it achieving its advocacy and accountability goals? Where does it go from here? This project reviews the relevant literature on human rights fact finding and open source investigations to understand the Lab’s work within the larger human rights context, and to address a pressing issue raised by the research – is it possible to create investigative and evidentiary standards for using open source investigations and citizen media to promote human rights? Expert interviews supplement this inquiry. This project next studies the ecosystem of human rights organizations and actors working on open source investigations, seeking to understand the Lab’s place in the sector. Using a semi-structured interview protocol (Gugiu and Rodriguez-Campos, 2007) and Delphi technique (Hsu and Sandford, 2007; Dalkey and Helmer, 1963), this project develops a preliminary logic model for the Lab, outlining key assumptions, activities, inputs, outputs, and intended outcomes. Through a critical review of internal program documents and publicly available materials, it orients the logic model components and research within a richer organizational context. Recognizing the need for further analysis, this project culminates in a set of recommendations for the future, and a new model for conceptualizing the Investigation Lab’s place in the human rights sector. It argues that the Human Rights Center has the potential and the duty to take a more central, systemic, coordinating role in open source investigations.
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Section 1. Introduction

Project Background

Open Source Investigations and Citizen Media.

Technology is rapidly changing the field of human rights. Global citizens armed with mobile devices and Internet access are now able to instantly capture evidence of human rights violations in the form of photographs, videos, and other digital content. Sometimes, these activists send their digital content directly to human rights organizations. More often, they post their content to public, “open source” social media sites. Increasingly, human rights organizations are relying on this citizen media to expose and confirm abuses. It is not always easy to find content, however, and once found, digital content must be reviewed and verified. Open source information and citizen media are only useful as tools of human rights advocacy and accountability if they can be 1) discovered amongst the deluge of online resources and 2) verified as credible and authentic (A. Koenig, personal communication, June 19, 2017). Unfortunately, reviewing and verifying digital content is laborious and time-consuming; most human rights organizations do not have the resources to properly vet citizen media in any meaningful or organized way (A. Koenig, personal communication, June 19, 2017).

In September 2016, in response to this dilemma, the Human Rights Center at the UC Berkeley School of Law (HRC) launched the world’s first university-based open source investigations lab in partnership with Amnesty International (AI) (Human Rights Center, 2017). An extension of AI’s Digital Verification Corps (DVC), the

**The Human Rights Center at UC Berkeley (HRC).** Established in 1994, HRC is an independent, interdisciplinary research and training center closely affiliated with the UC Berkeley School of Law. Its mission is to use science and law to promote human rights and international justice around the world and to train the next generation of human rights researchers and advocates (Human Rights Center, 2017). HRC embraces innovative technologies and evidence-based methods to accomplish three overarching goals: to investigate human rights abuses and hold perpetrators accountable; to give voice to vulnerable populations and survivors; and to train the next generation of human rights researchers and advocates – that is, the network of undergraduate and graduate students from UC Berkeley and other universities around the world (Human Rights Center, 2017). From the outset, HRC has focused its work on securing legal accountability for human rights violations. It has developed an especially effective partnership with the International Criminal Court (ICC) located in The Hague as well as other international criminal courts dedicated to investigating and prosecuting massive human rights violations (A. Koenig, personal communication, June 19, 2017).
The Human Rights Investigations Lab. The Investigations Lab is part of HRC’s Human Rights and Technology program. Reflective of HRC’s broader goals, the Lab’s objectives are threefold: to train students in open source investigation methods; marshal evidence of human rights violations for researchers and investigators to use to hold perpetrators accountable; and shine a light on human rights issues through advocacy and journalistic reports (Human Rights Center, 2017).

Initial Successes. In its first year, the Investigations Lab has trained 74 students who collectively speak 18 languages and represent several diverse disciplines such as law, computer science, biology, and history. These students have verified 150 pieces of citizen media (in the form of videos); generated 10 verification reports for human rights organizations; and provided positive survey feedback on Lab activities (Human Rights Center, 2017). They have verified digital media created by citizen activists in Syria, Yemen, Sudan, and Myanmar, and have documented and verified hate speech crimes in the United States (Human Rights Center, 2017). Local and national media have taken notice – PBS recently produced a documentary on the Investigations Lab (PBS, 2017). In addition to Amnesty International, the Lab now has partnerships with the Syrian Archive, Bellingcat, and ProPublica (Berkeley News, 2017; San Francisco Chronicle, 2017). Finally, similar labs, based on the HRC model, have been launched at the University of Pretoria in South Africa, the University of Essex in England, and the University of Toronto in Canada (Berkeley News, 2017). Part of the DVC, these labs

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1 HRC’s other programs include Sexual Violence, Human Trafficking, Student Fellowship, and a new Health and Human Rights Initiative (Human Rights Center, 2017).
have contributed more than 6,000 hours of open source investigative work to the human rights sector (Berkeley News, 2017).

**But What Impact.** From an academic standpoint, the Investigations Lab appears to be a success. Certainly, academic outcomes are important to HRC – it is, after all, a research and training organization affiliated with a major university. But what about the organization’s larger mission? HRC and the Investigations Lab have explicit goals around human rights advocacy and accountability. Are these goals being met? Is the Lab shining a light on human rights issues, and marshaling the evidence necessary to hold perpetrators accountable? Moreover, what is the Lab’s relationship to other human rights actors working on open source investigations? Is it making a meaningful contribution to the sector? Is it building capacity and/or helping to scale impact? These are important questions to ask: If the Lab is not meeting its objectives or making a meaningful contribution to human rights accountability work, is it truly worthwhile?

**Project Overview**

This project begins to address these questions. It is a work in progress – an ongoing collaboration with HRC staff and Lab participants. As a starting point, this project reviews the relevant literature on human rights fact finding, open source investigations, and international criminal justice to situate the analysis within the larger human rights context, and to address a pressing issue raised by the project – is it possible to create investigative and/or evidentiary standards for using open source investigations and citizen media to promote human rights? Expert interviews supplement this inquiry.
In the context of this research, this project then reviews the various actors in the human rights sector working on open source investigations, seeking to understand HRC’s place within that ecosystem. Using a semi-structured interview protocol (Gugiu and Rodriguez-Campos, 2007) and Delphi method (Hsu and Sandford, 2007; Dalkey and Helmer, 1963) to elicit information regarding Lab activities, inputs, outputs, assumptions, and intended outcomes, this project develops a preliminary logic model for the program. Through a critical review of internal program documents and publicly available materials, this project orients the logic model components and research within a richer organizational context. Recognizing the need for further analysis, this project culminates with a set of recommendations for HRC’s future, and a new model for conceptualizing the Lab’s place in open source investigations.

**Section 2: Literature Review**

**History and Evolution of the Human Rights Reporting**

With the rise of the Internet and the proliferation of mobile communication devices, ordinary citizens are playing a more prominent role in human rights advocacy and accountability efforts. This reflects an important evolution in the history of human rights fact finding and investigation (United Nations, 2015; Alston, 2013).

**The Emergence of Human Rights Fact Finding and Accountability Efforts.**

Human rights fact finding was borne out of intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations, which were specifically established in the aftermath of World War II to promote international cooperation and maintain international order (United Nations,
This mission included “assisting in the realization of human rights,” and holding international actors accountable for acts of aggression (United Nations, 2017). Embedded within these institutions were lawyers, diplomats, and experts, who prepared human rights reports by conducting systemic reviews of available information and performing onsite inspections to corroborate that information (United Nations, 2015; Alston, 2013). These reports were primarily used for political and diplomatic purposes – they were meant to persuade nations and others within the intergovernmental circle of influence to take collective action and/or change policy (Alston, 2013; Robertson, 2010). Much of this work depended on the moral force and standing of the reporter (Robertson, 2010). With the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, human rights became international law, and from this system emerged international courts and tribunals tasked with investigating human rights abuses and holding perpetrators legally accountable (United Nations, 2017; International Criminal Court, 2017).

**The International Criminal Court.** One of these courts, the International Criminal Court (ICC), was established in 1998 to investigate, prosecute, and try individuals accused of committing the most serious crimes of concern to the international community, including genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of

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aggression (International Criminal Court, 2017).\(^3\) To date, the treaty that created the ICC, known as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, has been ratified by over 120 countries (State Parties) (International Criminal Court, 2017). The Rome Statute sets forth the crimes falling within ICC jurisdiction, the elements of those crimes, the rules of procedure, and the mechanisms by which State Parties cooperate with investigative and prosecutorial efforts (International Criminal Court, 2017). Unlike earlier *ad hoc* international tribunals created by the United Nations Security Council to address specific situations involving large-scale human rights abuses (such as those occurring in the former Yugoslavia or in Rwanda in the 1990’s), the ICC is an independent, intergovernmental judicial body designed to permanently complement the criminal justice systems of national courts (International Criminal Court, 2017).

Like these tribunals, however, the ICC abides by legal principles and rules of evidence drawn from both common and civil law traditions (Ashouri, Bowers, and Warden, 2014). Informed by past experiences of the *ad hoc* tribunals, the ICC has developed Rules of Procedure and Evidence that set forth standards for the collection, management, presentation, admission, and evaluation of evidence, whether in the form of witness testimony and otherwise (International Bar Association, 2016). Evidence goes to the heart of the ICC’s work – prosecutors assess it when determining whether to pursue formal investigations, and judges consider and weigh it when deciding whether to bring

\(^3\) The ICC, which began functioning in 2002 after entry into force of the Rome Statute, sits in The Hague. To date, the ICC has indicted 40 individuals and convicted three individuals (International Criminal Court, 2017).
charges or convict perpetrators (International Bar Association, 2016). “Direct”
witness testimony of human rights survivors and eyewitnesses is the most compelling
form of evidence in ICC proceedings, but other forms are also considered by
investigators and judges, such as government documents and records; official aerial and
satellite imagery, medical records, and forensic evidence, such as ballistics (International

Of paramount concern to ICC judges is the admissibility of evidence (Koenig,
and Evidence set forth a three-prong test for admissibility: (1) relevance (i.e., does the
evidence make “the existence of a fact at issue more or less probable”), (2) probative
value, and (3) prejudicial effect (i.e., does the evidence have the potential to undermine
the fairness of proceedings) (International Criminal Court, 2017). Probative value refers
to the reliability of the evidence, and the extent to which it is likely to influence the
To establish reliability, it is necessary to authenticate evidence, i.e., verify its integrity
and originality by demonstrating that the evidence is “what it purports to be” and has not
been altered in any way (Ashouri, Bowers, and Warden, 2014). In practice, ICC courts
tend to admit evidence and then weigh it to determine probative value; it applies a
flexible, but discretionary and therefore unclear evidentiary standard (Hiatt, 2016).

The Rise of Human Rights NGOs and Advocacy Reporting. As legalistic
norms and the concept of universal human rights expanded in the post-war period and
beyond, so too did the number of non-governmental human rights organizations involved in monitoring and investigating human rights violations (United Nations, 2015; Alston, 2013). Especially pronounced in the 1960’s to 1980’s, this growth in NGO’s gave rise to human rights reporting that served predominantly advocacy purposes (Koettl, 2016, Alston, 2013). This is the second “generation,” or wave, of human rights reporting, and it is commonly seen today (Alston, 2013). While NGO reports certainly aim to influence government actors or trigger legal inquiries, they often do so by mobilizing public opinion around broader patterns of abuse committed or enabled by perpetrators, institutions, and policies (Alston, 2013; Hannum, 2011). NGO reports may lead to ICC investigations, but their overwhelming purpose is to educate the press and the public and exert pressure on policy makers (Hannum, 2011).

Standing as they do outside the realm of governmental institutions, NGO reports also tend to be more adversarial in nature, and dependent upon allegations based on indirect or circumstantial evidence (Hannum, 2011). As advocacy tools, they may be more sensitive to journalistic needs and norms. Nevertheless, in the same way that careful investigation and authenticity of evidence are critical to legal accountability, credibility and accuracy are essential components of human rights advocacy:

For NGOs, the stakes in surviving … scrutiny could not be higher. The credibility of their fact-finding is their stock-in-trade. Broadly stated, the chief objective of human rights NGOs is to promote compliance with international human rights standards. (…) Fact-finding lies at the heart of these efforts, and the fact-finding “works” when it convinces the target audience that the published allegations are well founded (Orentlicher, 1990, pp. 92-93).
As Koettl (2016) noted, “evaluating the credibility of a source is at the core of human rights fact finding” (Koettl, 2016, p. 15). Integrity, then, is critical for both human rights advocacy and accountability - “facts” must be truthful and verifiable in the advocacy context, and they must be authentic and reliable in the legal context. Both contexts require clear research and reporting methodologies and evidentiary standards.

The Rise and Impact of Technology and Citizen Media

According to Alston (2013), human rights investigators are being swept up in a third wave of fact finding and reporting due to the proliferation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as mobile devices and social media:

The availability of camera-enabled cell phones in combination with digital social networks is nothing short of a game changer, especially for human rights research and advocacy, and offers enormous opportunities if properly integrated with well-established fact-finding methodologies (Koettl, 2016, pp. 1-2).

Many in the human rights field have embraced these new technologies and the “open source information” they yield – “open source information” encompasses the broad array of publicly available information such as news articles, academic articles, statistics, and audiovisual content or reporting increasingly being shared through open online social networks (Koettl, 2017; Aronson, 2017; Hiatt, 2016). Citizen media – images or video created and shared by “digitally enabled actors” such as bystanders, monitors, citizen journalists, activists or armed actors – “can be considered the visual subset of open source information” (Koettl, 2016, p. 1; United Nations, 2015). In the advocacy context, these digitally enabled actors have the power to transform human rights reporting,
providing the press and the public with evidence of abuses in real time, as in a recent example out of Syria:

Within hours of the chemical weapons attack in the eastern suburbs of Damascus on 21 August 2013, more than a hundred videos were uploaded to YouTube, showing the horrific impact of this alleged attack. A review of the videos by medical and chemical weapons experts, combined with testimonies from survivors and doctors, allowed human rights researchers to establish basic facts about the attack and the chemical agents used, even before U.N. investigators were able to produce a comprehensive assessment through direct ground access (Koettl, 2016, p. 2).

As Aronson explained, citizen images and videos, whether captured accidentally or intentionally, “often compliment official narratives and press accounts of an event or situation, adding detail and nuance. At other times, they directly rebut certain factual claims and contradict particular narratives” (Aronson, 2017, p. 84). Thus, by providing visceral and compelling graphic detail of human rights abuses soon after their occurrence, citizen media directly challenges the accounts of perpetrators, including governments. As an advocacy tool, it is powerful.

In the accountability context, citizen media and other forms of open source information have the potential to provide important evidence of human rights abuses. “Digital evidence” was defined by Koenig, Cody, Stover, and Crittenden (2014) as “data that is created, manipulated, stored or communicated by any device, computer or computer system or transmitted over a communication system, that is relevant to the proceeding (Koenig et al., 2014, p. 1, fn. 2). It includes emails and GPS data extracted from cell phones, as well as social media such as photographs, videos, and audio
recordings of live events captured on mobile devices and shared directly with
investigators or via social networks like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter (Ashouri et al.,
2014; Koenig et al., 2014).

Digital evidence “can help court investigators document criminal intent and link
perpetrators to specific events,” providing “linkage evidence” between the defendant and
the crime (Koenig et al., 2014, p. 4; Ashouri et al., 2014). This linkage-based evidence
Digital evidence may also provide crime-based evidence, say, for example, where a video
captures a torture in progress – the “what” of a violation (Witness, 2016). Finally, and
perhaps most frequently, it can be used to corroborate witness testimony and other
evidence by pinpointing the time, place, and manner of a violation (Ashouri et al, 2014).

[D]igital and technologically derived evidence allows for information
to be introduced in court that captures dimensions of a situation, event
or location that may be beyond (contemporaneous) human perception
or may provide a counterpoint to a witness’s recollection. While an
eyewitness account provides that witness’s perception and recollection
of an event, a video may capture elements that were outside a person’s
range of vision or that the individual has forgotten; a satellite or aerial
image may show an overview of a larger area or an inaccessible
location; and data such as phone records or computer records may show
communications and patterns of communications relevant to an
individual’s activities and knowledge of events. This information, when
presented as evidence, has the potential to better enable judges to
discharge one of their key functions: to ascertain the truth about crimes
charged within the jurisdiction of the ICC (International Bar

Citizen media has implications for both human rights advocacy and accountability. As
Koettl (2016) noted, “[c]itizen media can often present direct evidence of specific
violations and can at the minimum – by itself – be used to support initial calls for further, independent investigations into apparent human rights violations or war crimes, using a standard public pressure advocacy strategy” (Koettl, 2016, p. 21). Human rights researchers have identified several additional benefits inherent in citizen media:

- **Accessibility:** Citizen media provides researchers and investigators with greater access to conflict zones: “The ubiquity of cell phone cameras and digital networks further helped to address the access challenge, making it easier for activists, journalists and ordinary citizens” to document abuses and circumvent the control of governments or armed groups (Koettl, 2016). And as Hiatt (2016) noted in discussing the availability of open source information, “hundreds of thousands of videos depicting human rights violations [from conflict zones] have already been posted online. Many of them will be relevant” to human rights reporting and investigation (Hiatt, 2016, pp. 325-326).

- **Detail:** By its very nature, citizen media provides an extreme level of detail, and if preserved appropriately, creates a permanent record of human rights violations. To the extent citizen media reveals important details such as landmarks or signage, insignias, license plates, serial numbers, weaponry, or name badges, it may even be more accurate than witness testimony (Koettl, 2016; Aronson, 2017).

- **Perspective:** Citizen media often shows events from multiple locations, allowing for a multi-perspectival reconstruction of those events. “It can provide a richer accounting of what happened by expanding the amount of information that can be
gathered about an event, as well as what happened immediately before and after” (Aronson, 2017).

- **Certainty**: According to Koettl (2017), when taken together, ICTs such as citizen media and satellite imagery have the power to reduce information uncertainty (what Koettl called the “lemon problem”) in human rights fact finding, which is helpful to “provide the necessary facts and evidence to counter perpetrator strategies of denial and minimization” (Koettl, 2017, p. 47).

- **Security**: To the extent citizen media is posted anonymously or from a safe place, it may protect eyewitnesses (Koettl, 2016). And the use of citizen media to bolster or corroborate witness testimony may also insulate those witnesses from intimidation or excessive exposure (Hiatt, 2016). Hiatt (2016) also noted that it provides a level of protection to human rights investigators who carry out open source investigations away from conflict zones or problem areas.

**The Need for New Standards.** As promising as citizen media and open source investigations are for human rights fact finding, researchers and investigators have highlighted the need for updated methodologies and evidentiary standards to address these new realities. Koettl (2016) called for the “development of robust and transparent methodologies of citizen media verification” (Koettl, 2016, p. 2). He noted that “human rights researchers should strive to adopt high standards of handling digital evidence, similar to those used in forensic or criminal investigations (Koettl, 2016, p. 11).
Citizen media, like all other forms of human rights fact finding, must be verified and authenticated to have any meaningful reporting or investigative value – it must be credible (A. Koenig, personal communication, June 19, 2017; F. McMahon, personal communication, June 28, 2017). Similarly, according to Hiatt (2016), the ICC and international criminal courts should “embrace open source investigations” but also “clarify evidentiary rules to allow for admission, and clearer weighing, of this new and powerful kind of evidence” (Hiatt, 2016, p. 330). In its most recent strategic report, the ICC called for a greater diversity of evidence in criminal prosecutions, including digital evidence, but noted a lack of clear evidentiary standards (International Criminal Court Strategic Plan, 2015).

There is general consensus that standards are necessary. But what should these standards include? The literature points to a number of technical, journalistic, legal, and ethical factors that human rights researchers and experts should consider as they develop investigative and evidentiary standards for open source investigations. Of particular note is the extent to which these factors implicate different disciplines and areas of expertise.

**Technical Considerations.** Technical challenges involving the use of citizen media in the human rights context abound, including: the sheer volume of citizen media, its ephemeralness (citizen media is often posted and then removed from the Internet), and its ability to be manipulated, re-posted or shared in the wrong context (Koettl, 2016). Koettl (2016) proposed an analytical framework for handling and verifying citizen media that addresses many of these technical issues:
1. **Material Collection and Preservation:** The first step of the verification process proposed by Koettl (2016) is to save the underlying digital files and collect all available documentation, including the URL, screen shots of the social media post, and the exact time of posting.

2. **Metadata Review:** This step involves reviewing both the digital metadata and public metadata of the image or video (Koettl, 2016). Witness (2016) defined digital metadata as “information about a file created by an electronic device that is automatically stored and is often not visible to the user” (Witness, 2016, p. 7). Digital metadata includes timestamps and GPS coordinates that help document the time, date, and location of a recording, and it also reveals the specific recording device used (Koettl, 2016). By contrast, public metadata is the external “publicly visible information such as the upload time [of a social media posting] or the unique ID that is assigned [by a social media platform] to any piece of citizen media” or the location of the posting (Koettl, 2016, p. 13). This step is necessary for citizen media posted to social media sites because such sites often alter or remove digital metadata from the original digital file (Koettl, 2016).

3. **Verification of Provenance and Source:** As explained by Koettl (2016), this step involves establishing the original source and provenance of citizen media. This is often difficult as media often passes through many hands and appears on many social media sites before it reaches researchers and investigators. Nevertheless, “it should be considered best practice to track down the original source of the
[citizen] media content under investigation, even when there’s no
difference in actual content” (Koettl, 2016, p. 15). Koettl (2016) outlined a few
strategies for accomplishing this, including: reviewing the account history and
activity of the social media post to confirm that it is a real account; reviewing that
account’s links to accounts to establish a digital profile; contacting the source, if
safe to do so; reviewing other content posted by the source to confirm geographic
location; searching the unique identifier of the post for other instances of the
content online; and conducting a reverse image search to confirm the source.

4. **Content Analysis:** This step focuses on the actual content of the digital file under
review (Koettl, 2016). Specific details are analyzed to pinpoint the location, date,
and time of the events depicted, and the actors involved. This can be done by
carefully identifying “relevant features in a video or picture that can be matched
up with satellite imagery, street-view imagery, or other open source videos and
pictures, including geo-referenced pictures available on specialized websites”
(Koettl, 2016, p. 19). Koettl (2016) identified several features that may yield
valuable information as to location, including traffic signs, license plates, shops,
landmarks, vegetation, terrain, graffiti, street lamps, and road conditions.
Indicators as to date may include weather, clothing, or other corroborating open
source materials, and agency (perpetrators) may be revealed by details gleaned
from uniforms, flags, insignia, weapons, inventory or serial numbers, munitions
or clothing. (Koettl, 2016). “A frame by frame review [of video content] will also
help to detect potential edits in a video, an important fact that can have significant implications” for verification (Koettl, 2016, p. 18).

5. **Optional Expert Analysis:** According to Koettl (2016), another important step in the verification process is to consult with experts, such as digital forensic experts, weapons specialists, or forensic pathologists, to confirm findings regarding digital metadata as well as file content.

6. **Integration with Other Research:** Lastly, Koettl (2016) recommended that citizen media findings be combined with traditional methods of human rights fact finding such as witness testimony and satellite imagery. “Citizen media can often present direct evidence of specific violations…. However, corroboration [of other, more direct evidence such as testimony] normally yields the strongest results, and is highly recommended in line with traditional fact-finding” (Koettl, 2016, p. 21).

The analytical framework proposed by Koettl (2016) provides the most comprehensive technical outline for handling citizen media and conducting open source investigations. However, several others have addressed technical considerations and published informative “how to” guides. Trewinnard (2017) produced a *News Verification Guide* for journalists to use to establish the credibility of citizen media. Trewinnard (2017) highlighted effective techniques for addressing: old media that has been stripped of original content or reused in the wrong context; manipulated content, staged content; and fake news sites. Like Koettl (2016), he also set forth specific steps for verifying citizen media and determining its originality, source, geolocation, date, and
motivation (Trewinnard, 2017). Geolocation “takes advantage of a number of data sources including maps, satellite imagery, street-view imagery and geotagged photos and videos” to corroborate the location of a piece of citizen media and establish its credibility (Trewinnard, 2017, p. 16). Witness (2016) also published a guide for journalists, researchers, students, and policymakers – DatNav: How to Navigate Digital Data for Human Rights Research – that broadly outlines the use of digital data for human rights documentation, and provides resources for further reading.

In addition to the verification process, which usually takes place on the front end, Aronson (2017) outlined important considerations involving back-end activities such as the storage, organization, curation, and archiving of citizen media to maximize and protect its value for human rights work. He argued that proper preservation and cataloguing of the following types of information is especially important for research and investigative purposes: geolocation; date and time of day; perpetrators; approximate counts of people depicted; types of weapons, vehicles, tools, and other implements; forensic clues; and patterns of activity (Aronson, 2017, p. 91).

**Journalistic Considerations.** Applying rigorous technical standards to the verification of citizen media is critical to establishing its credibility. As a United Nations report (2015) noted, human rights work “often concerns disputed facts…. Individuals commit [human rights] violations not because they believe it is justifiable, but because they believe they will not be called on to justify themselves. That places a premium of fact-finding and evidence” (United Nations, 2015). Perpetrators of human
rights violations have every reason to deny or obfuscate their activities, and researchers and journalists must be careful not to counteract these tendencies with misinformation. Credibility and accuracy are at the core of human rights advocacy and journalism – “the risk of using misinformation can discredit an entire research project. While this is an old problem it is exacerbated in the digital age, where the spread of misinformation is made easier by digital social media networks” (Koettl, 2017, p. 38).

To compound the problem, there is a lack of quality control in the sector:

The lack of institutions that provide quality control – such as traditional media outlets before the advent of digital social networks – contribute to this challenge, which only recently came under scrutiny through the fake news debate following the 2016 U.S. presidential elections. The human rights profession is not immune to this problem (Koettl, 2017, p. 39).

**Legal Considerations.** Credibility and quality control are equally important in the legal context. Again, in international criminal courts, evidence is deemed admissible for prosecutorial purposes if it is found to be relevant, reliable, and authentic (in other words, credible) (Ashouri et al., 2014). This is true of all forms of evidence, digital or otherwise. As with advocacy, however, the rapid rise of digital content creation has far outpaced investigators’ and courts’ ability to develop adequate standards for admissibility (International Bar Association, 2016).

Ashouri et al. (2014) identified three types of factors to consider when developing evidentiary standards for open source investigations vis-a-vis ICC proceedings: authentication, hearsay, and provenance (chain of custody). As we have seen, authenticity is concerned with ensuring the integrity of digital evidence, and that it is
“what it purports to be” (Ashouri et al., 2014, p. 117). Proving that a piece of evidence has not been manipulated or taken out of context is key to establishing its authenticity (Ashouri et al., 2014). “Hearsay” evidence is evidence that is outside the direct knowledge of the testifying witnesses, and offered for the truth of the matter asserted – documents prepared outside of court generally fall within this category, as would digital evidence. To get around a hearsay objection, prosecutors may need to offer corroborating evidence such as “live testimony, and explanations of the procedures by which the digital evidence was obtained, including testimony of those involved with obtaining it” (Ashouri et al., 2014, p. 121). Gardner (2009) defined “chain of custody” as “[t]he movement and location of real evidence, and the history of those persons who had it in their custody from the time it is obtained to the time it is presented in court” (Gardner, 2009, p. 260). In ICC proceedings, “a strong chain of custody increases the weight judges accord to the evidence because…‘[f]actors such as….the proof of authorship will naturally assume the greatest importance’” (Ashouri et al., 2014, p. 121). Again, corroborating evidence may be necessary to establish chain of custody, assuming that information exists and has been documented (Ashouri et al, 2014).

Mehandru (2017) proposed a test for admissibility that addresses many of these factors and borrows heavily from the manuals of advocates, journalists, and technical experts. The test outlines key internal and external indicia, including metadata, that courts should look to when determining the probative value of digital evidence (A. Koenig, personal communication, June 22, 2017) (see Figures 1 and 2).
Figure 1: Test of Admissibility in ICC Proceedings

1. Relevance

Reliability

Authenticity

Other Indica

Measure by which the exhibit is likely to influence the determination of a particular issue

2. Probative Value

3. Weight of Probative Value against Prejudicial Effect on Evidence

a. Originality
b. Integrity
c. Date/Location of the recording

a. Bias of the source
b. Public/Private nature of the information
c. Testimonial nature of the information
d. Contemporaneity of the recording
e. Purpose for which it was created
f. Ability to independently verify/test information and method of collection

Source: Mehandru (2017)

Figure 2: Internal and External Markers of Authenticity of Digital Evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Markers</th>
<th>External Markers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metadata: date stamps, timestamps, digital signatures, GPS data and triangulation, watermarking</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: street signs, prominent landmarks</td>
<td>Storage/Chain of Custody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity: to tampered with, via editing or manipulation</td>
<td>Testimony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity: capturing full event, people arriving/leaving, other surroundings</td>
<td>Replicable process for gathering and storing the evidence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Mehandru (2017)
Ethical Considerations. Sometimes lost in the technical and legal aspects of open source investigations are very serious ethical concerns stemming from the use of citizen media. Koettl (2016), Aronson (2017), and others addressed the need to factor in these considerations when developing investigative and evidentiary standards:

- **Informed Consent:** Where possible, the consent of the original creator (source) of citizen media should be obtained (Koettl, 2016).

- **Privacy and Security:** Citizen media has the potential to put eyewitnesses and citizen activist at risk as they are often on the front lines of conflict zones and in close proximity to perpetrators (Hiatt, 2016). Where consent is not possible, the faces of any vulnerable individuals who are depicted in citizen media should be blurred and their identities concealed (Aronson, 2017). Additionally, efforts should be made to monitor the public versus private nature of citizen media – if digital content is posted onto social media sites, but then subsequently removed or made private, human rights researchers and investigators should take these personal privacy decisions into account, if possible (Koettl, 2016).

- **Access and Stakeholder Involvement:** Access to preserved digital content should be limited to those organizations and individuals who are legitimately involved in human rights advocacy and accountability efforts (Aronson, 2017). Moreover, where possible, survivors and other important stakeholders should be included in the decision-making process vis-à-vis the uses of citizen media. Aronson (2017) advocated for the convening of “a knowledgeable and empathetic board of
trustees for a particular collection – made up of a mix of survivors, relatives of victims, affected community members, human rights advocates and investigators, lawyers, and other relevant specialists – to set policies and also act as a co-custodian or steward of a collection” (Aronson, 2017, p. 94).

- **Secondary Trauma:** Koettl (2016) argued that any investigative standards should include self-care plans and policies for preventing psychological harm to open source investigators and others who view citizen media that depicts human rights abuses. In addition, thought should be given to the potential trauma caused by encouraging citizens to capture such abuses in the first place.

The International Bar Association (2016) pointed out an ethical concern that is less immediately obvious in the context of human rights work but no less important. Pursuant to court mandate, international criminal courts such as the ICC have a duty to hold fair and efficient trial proceedings that protect the rights of the accused as well as those of the victimized (International Bar Association, 2016, p. 13). In addition, the ICC imposes obligations on prosecutors to disclose all potential evidence against the accused and to “‘investigate incriminating and exonerating circumstances equally’” (International Bar Association, 2016, pp. 16, 31). The increasing volume and complexity of digital evidence in international criminal courts, combined with the court’s lack of technical resources and expertise, have the potential to slow down proceedings considerably. Given that international criminal trials already take years to litigate, this may be an

**Section 3: Methods and Approaches**

After one year, the Investigations Lab has achieved academic success, but questions remain about its impact on human rights advocacy and accountability: Is the Lab shining a light on human rights issues, and marshaling the evidence necessary to hold perpetrators accountable? Is the HRC meeting its explicit organizational goals? To address these questions, this project relies on extensive primary and secondary data obtained through the following methods:

**Primary Data Collection**

- **Program Documents:** A thorough review of internal and publicly available program documents, including Lab grant applications, year-end reports, memoranda and meeting materials, white papers, and press releases.

- **Quantitative and Qualitative Data from Previously Administered Surveys:** Review of quantitative and qualitative responses obtained from 2017 Mid-Year and Year-End surveys administered to student participants of the Lab;

- **DVC Summit:** Two-day attendance at the first annual summit of DVC and Lab participants, including interactive seminars with experts on human rights fact finding, open source investigations, and journalism. Experts included:
o Sam Dubberley, Director of Amnesty International’s Digital Verification Corps, and co-founder of Eyewitness Media Hub, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the creation, discovery, verification, and publication of eyewitness media;

o Eliot Higgins, founder of Bellingcat, a website and investigative search network for citizen journalists; and

o Felim McMahon, investigator with the International Criminal Court and former journalist with Storyful, provider of global insights, news, and video content for media partners.

• **Informal Focus Groups:** Extensive discussions and informal focus groups with Lab participants, including staff members, students, professors, partner organizations, and technical experts;

• **Semi-structured Interview Protocol:** Review of qualitative data from a semi-structured interview protocol (Gugiu and Rodriguez-Campos, 2007) administered to Lab participants, including staff, students, professors, and technical experts;

• **Delphi Technique:** Refinement of qualitative data using a modified Delphi technique (Hsu and Sandford, 2007; Dalkey and Helmer, 1963);

• **Expert Interviews:** Consultation with experts on human rights fact finding, open source investigation methods, international criminal court proceedings, and nonprofit program evaluation. Experts included:
Alexa Koenig, Executive Director of the Human Rights Center at UC Berkeley, and co-author of the book *Hiding in Plain Sight: The Pursuit of War Criminals from Nuremberg to the War on Terror*;

Eric Stover, founder and Faculty Director of the Human Rights Center at UC Berkeley, author of six books including *The Witnesses: War Crimes and the Promises of Justice in The Hague*, member of the editorial boards of the *International Journal of Transitional Justice* and *Human Rights Quarterly*, and board member of the Crimes of War Project;

Dr. Richard Waters, Associate Professor at the University of San Francisco School of Management, and member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Sector Management*; and

Nicholas Almeida, Advisor in Philanthropy and Impact Investing, and Adjunct Professor at the University of San Francisco;

**Semi-structured Interview Protocol for Logic Models.** Borrowing from the work of Gugiu and Rodriguez-Campos (2007), a 42-question survey was administered to Lab participants to solicit qualitative data on the program’s primary assumptions, activities, inputs, outputs, and intended outcomes (see Appendix A). Created as a Google survey form, and emailed to a select group of staff members, students, professors, and experts following informal focus groups this particular survey protocol was selected to elicit wide-ranging feedback from stakeholders on logic model components at the individual, organizational, and systemic levels (Gugiu and Rodriguez-Campos, 2007; N.
Almeida, personal communication, May 15, 2017) (see Figure 3 for an example of survey questions). To date, six participants have responded, but the process is ongoing and data will continue to be analyzed and incorporated into the preliminary logic model.

Figure 3: Semi-structured Interview Protocol – Sample Questions

Human Rights Investigations Lab
Survey to Collect Logic Model Insights

Program Outcomes
Program Outcomes refer to the changes that occur after program services or activities are administered to the target population and/or participants and may represent positive and negative changes or maintenance of a particular level or status that would otherwise have deteriorated without the program. Intended program outcomes may be short-term, midterm and/or long-term in nature.

What are the individual-level changes that may occur because of the program?
Your answer

What skills or knowledge will participants learn from the program?
Your answer

What changes in behavior or performance might one expect to see in program participants?
Your answer

What secondary benefits may colleagues, friends or family members derive?

Source: Author’s creation. Adapted from Gugiu and Rodriguez-Campos, 2007.

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4 Summer and vacation schedules made it difficult for participants, some of whom live overseas, to complete the survey in a timely manner.
**Delphi Technique.** A Delphi technique (Dalkey and Helmer, 1963) was used to build consensus around preliminary responses to the semi-structured survey:

The Delphi technique is well suited as a means and method for consensus-building by using a series of questionnaires to collect data from a panel of selected subjects (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963; Dalkey, 1969; Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Lindeman, 1981; Martino, 1983; Young & Jamieson, 2001). Delphi, in contrast to other data gathering and analysis techniques, employs multiple iterations designed to develop a consensus of opinion concerning a specific topic. Ludwig (1994) indicates:

Iterations refer to the feedback process. The process was viewed as a series of rounds; in each round every participant worked through a questionnaire which was returned to the researcher who collected, edited, and returned to every participant a statement of the position of the whole group and the participant’s own position. A summation of comments made each participant aware of the range of opinions and the reasons underlying those opinions (p. 55) (Hsu and Sandford, 2007).

A modified Delphi process was employed here. Rather than a series of confidential questionnaires or Google surveys, initial responses to each category of questions – individual, organizational, and systemic – were compiled and resubmitted to respondents by email to inform them of the range of comments and to solicit their modified responses, if any (R. Waters, personal communication, July 13, 2017). Typically, the Delphi process is anonymous, but here, due to the time constraints and limited survey responses, participants waived anonymity (Hsu and Sandford, 2007). This process is ongoing, however, and a more formal Delphi technique will be administered in September 2017.

**Secondary Data Collection**

**Literature Review and Sector Research.** Central to this project is a thorough review of the relevant academic and peer-reviewed literature on human rights fact
finding, open source investigations, and international criminal court tribunals.

The literature reviewed focuses primarily on citizen media – i.e., photographs and videos created by citizen activists and shared on social media sites – and open source investigations in the context of the International Criminal Court and similar tribunals. A literature review matrix (Kara, 2012) was used to keep track of key information, and findings were loosely coded for key concepts (see Table 1).

Table 1: Literature Review Matrix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Theoretical Framework</th>
<th>Quote/Page</th>
<th>Why Significant - Analysis/Caution</th>
<th>Where potentially useful</th>
<th>Keywords &amp; Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Bar Association, 2016</td>
<td>Examination of intersecting relationships between open source investigations and citizen media verification</td>
<td>P. 19: “Digital and technologically derived evidence – evidence taken from and created by digital devices and via technology, such as cameras, satellites, and other remote sensing technologies.” This is NOT the same as the digitization of evidence per the International Criminal Court protocol.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Bar Association, 2016</td>
<td>Primary form of evidence is video or audio testimony (prior recorded testimony). Other forms of evidence include documents, records, photographs, aerial and satellite images, audio and video recordings, phone records, and forensic evidence such as DNA, ballistic and blood tests, and of course digital evidence from phones, computers, and other digital devices.</td>
<td>P. 20: Digital evidence is inevitable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional research into the various human rights organizations and actors</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>working on open source investigations and citizen media verification was conducted.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Expert interviews supplemented this inquiry.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Section 4. Research and Data Analysis

Sector Research

Research into human rights organizations and actors working on open source investigations revealed a sector that operates largely in silos (Koettl, 2017). Information is not routinely shared and as a result community knowledge is not created (Koettl, 2017; F. McMahon, personal communication, June 28, 2017). Activists, researchers, and investigators often remain myopically focused on their particular areas of expertise and experience. While the work overlaps and the various actors are necessarily interdependent, the ecosystem itself more closely resembles a disparate assortment of particles rather than a holistic system (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Ecosystem of Open Source Investigations and Citizen Activists

In light of this finding, it is not surprising that HRC views itself as a single link in a linear chain of actors rather than as an integral part of a systemic investigations process (A. Koenig, personal communication, July 29, 2017). HRC merely receives digital content from nonprofit organizations (usually Amnesty International) or finds it online, independently verifies that content, tracks data and performs digital discovery for context, and then returns a verification report to be used somewhere down the chain by researchers and investigators as part of their advocacy or accountability efforts (A. Koenig, personal communication, July 29, 2017) (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Chain Model of HRC’s Open Source Investigations Work

Source: Author’s creation.

This is a very static view of HRC’s work, in keeping conceptually with an ecosystem that is made up of insular, isolated organizations working in silos. Hiatt (2016) argued that open source intelligence and citizen media will make human rights work “better, cheaper, and safer” (Hiatt, 2016, p. 324). In reality, however, the current ecosystem suggests significant gaps in the sector – at every phase of open source
investigations, there appear to be issues of capacity, communication, and coordination (E. Stover, personal communication, June 27, 2017). This is especially true of the connections between advocacy organizations such as Amnesty International and the international legal community responsible for investigating and prosecuting crimes (F. McMahon, personal communication, June 28, 2017).

**Semi-structured Interview Protocol**

As noted above, a total of six participants responded to the semi-structured survey (see Figure 6 for example of survey responses).

**Figure 6: Semi-structured Interview Protocol – Sample Responses**

![Program Outcomes](image)

**What are the individual-level changes that may occur because of the program?**

3 responses

- Students will acquire the OSINT skills needed to support human rights investigations and have opportunities for hands-on application. Students will have an increased awareness/deeper understanding of the digital tools used to support human rights investigations and the collaborative work needed in the human rights world. Students that participate as team managers in the lab will also develop leadership skills. Outside of the human rights context, students can use these skills to verify information such as potential false news reports, potentially altered images, etc.

- Increase skills in osint, skills working in teams, increase knowledge of world events, human rights laws/organization, and accountability methods, feeling like you’re working to achieve a bigger purpose, may also cause stress/trauma

- students: learning how to use digital resources to conduct online research/investigations; greater confidence in fact-checking, deeper understanding of the methods used by those in other disciplines, sense of contribution to meaningful work; sense of purpose and interest in a particular future career; learning how to design human rights-sensitive tech tools; greater resiliency as learn how to protect selves from graphic content; survivors / witnesses; sense of empowerment if have their information used in advocacy work or a court case, learning how to work with legal actors and human rights advocates

**Source:** Author’s creation. Adapted from Marco Tavanti, 2017.
Following an extensive review of Lab materials, informal interviews with participants, and application of the Delphi technique, a preliminary logic model emerged (see Table 2).

Table 2: Preliminary Logic Model Framework for Investigations Lab

The logic modeling process revealed three clear outcome areas associated with the Lab’s activities – Education, Advocacy, and Accountability. These are in line with HRC’s organizational goals as well as the Lab’s specific objectives. Fairly clear outputs and outcomes exist in relation to the Education outcome. Students receive trainings in
open source investigations and produce verification reports complete with Excel spreadsheets of digital and other data. Internal survey results indicate that students leave the Lab with increased technical skills, knowledge of human rights issues, and collaborative behaviors. The Lab is growing in student population, and some continue to pursue human rights work at UC Berkeley and beyond.

Human rights groups such as Amnesty International and ProPublica have incorporated student verification reports into their public reports (S. Dubberley, personal communication, June 27, 2017). Thus, there are fairly clear Advocacy outputs and outcomes. Advocacy indicators are not perfect, but at the first annual DVC/Lab summit in June 2017, Amnesty International was able to explicitly demonstrate how it had used Lab reports to change governmental policies and pursue investigations. (This was partly in response to student complaints about impact – on internal survey responses, they indicated a desire to know more about the larger context of their verification efforts, and how their work contributed to sector (A. Koenig, personal communication, June 22, 2017).) For example, student verification reports were used to lobby and persuade the French government to change its policies vis-à-vis arms sales to Saudi Arabia (S. Dubberley, personal communication, June 27, 2017). Amnesty International also used Lab reports for highly publicized advocacy efforts related to the detention of refugees on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea, prompting the Australian government to change its narrative about detainee circumstances (S. Dubberley, personal communication, June 27, 2017). Similarly, Bellingcat relied on citizen media verified by volunteers to confirm
Russian responsibility for the downing of a civilian plane over Ukraine in 2014 (Eliot Higgins, personal communication, June 28, 2017).

Unfortunately, the Lab’s Accountability outputs and outcomes are much more difficult to conceptualize and understand. (In general, respondents had trouble responding to semi-structured interview questions relating to the Lab’s intended systemic-level outcomes. Most respondents left these questions blank or answered cryptically, i.e., “perpetrators will be held accountable” as a result of Lab activities.) For one thing, it is unclear how Advocacy outcomes relate to Accountability outcomes. Do advocacy reports alone result in greater investigations or convictions, and to what extent are these outcomes attributable to the Lab? Even more to the point, how is accountability a direct result of Lab reports, if at all? The Lab’s explicit goals are to hold perpetrators accountable for human right violations, and to give voice (and justice) to survivors. It is unclear, however, whether student verification reports yield any valuable evidence for ICC courts or other international criminal tribunals. In other words, is the data compiled by students admissible as evidence in court? The logic modeling process did not answer this question, but rather revealed a lack of understanding about how Lab activities impact Accountability—there is a disconnect between outputs and outcomes.

One problem is that international criminal investigations and trials take years to prosecute (International Bar Association, 2016). For example, the former dictator of Chad was prosecuted in 2016 for war crimes he committed in the 1980’s (BBC, 2017). No doubt another problem is the lack of capacity, communication, and coordination in
the human rights sector, especially in the area of open source investigations.

Viewed as an isolated link in a chain, HRC may not be getting the feedback it needs from other human rights organizations and actors to properly understand the causal relationship between Lab reports and accountability efforts.

A final problem, but not a surprising one in light of the literature review, is the lack of clear investigative and evidentiary standards for the use of citizen media in human rights reporting and criminal prosecutions. Without such standards, it may be impossible for HRC to make the connection between short-term Lab outputs and the accountability goals at the heart of its mission. The logic modeling process, it turns out, revealed the need for research into best practices and possible investigative and evidentiary standards for using open source information and citizen media to promote human rights.

Section 5: Implications and Key Findings

According to Alston (2013), new technologies and citizen media are ushering in a third wave of human rights fact finding and investigation. He warned that human rights organizations are not doing enough to study these emerging technologies or to effectively harness them in the pursuit of accountability and justice for survivors (Alston, 2013). This project and the research bore that out, and revealed several additional findings:

- The ecosystem within which human rights organizations and actors work is characterized by gaps in capacity, communication, and coordination. These gaps exist at every stage of the investigations process;
• There is a critical lack of clear, comprehensive investigative and evidentiary standards for human rights organizations and actors to follow when conducting investigations, and using citizen media and digital evidence;

• There is a need for organizations and institutions to provide quality control to prevent the use of misinformation in human rights reporting and fact finding;

• There is extensive literature outlining the important technical, journalistic, legal, journalistic, and ethical considerations that should be taken into consideration when developing investigative and evidentiary standards;

• The relevant technical, journalistic, legal, and ethical considerations involve many different academic disciplines and unique areas of expertise;

• HRC views itself as a single link in a linear chain of activity, and without clear standards for moving forward, is at risk of failing to meet its key advocacy and accountability objectives.

In light of these findings, HRC should consider shifting its mindset and expanding its role in the human rights sector. HRC and similarly situated human rights organizations must play a more central, systemic role in open source investigations, and in the development of investigative and evidentiary standards. Rather than functioning as an isolated link in a chain, HRC should view itself as the nucleus or guiding force that sustains the ecosystem of related actors and organizations (see Figure 7).
In this model, adapted from Dr. Marco Tavanti’s model of Academic Social Responsibility (ASR), HRC and similar academic institutions serve as a stabilizing and coordinating force. They pull various human rights actors together to build capacity, scale impact, and maximize outcomes. They lead the way on developing and promoting standards and guidelines for open source investigations – certainly as an interdisciplinary organization closely affiliated with a major university, HRC is best positioned to ensure that technical, journalistic, legal, and ethical factors are considered and incorporated into any final set of standards. They tap into their own vast intellectual resources to provide labor, research, and ideas to the sector. They engage in multi-sector partnerships, for
example, between tech companies, courts, and NGOs, to improve open source methods and technologies. They continue to train professionals in open source methods. They develop a consortium to scale efforts and possibly to serve as a collective archive of digital evidence. They leverage their contacts with international human rights mechanisms and courts. They promote communication and coordination between all those who have an interest in applying law and science to the pursuit of justice and accountability. They lead the third wave of human rights researchers and investigators, and in so doing, they create community knowledge.

In this model, as in life, information flows in all directions, from all sectors – nonprofit, public, and private. Importantly, however, the three sectors remain firmly embedded in the larger community where citizens and survivors interact and for which the sectors exist. The public should have a prominent place in the model.

Section 6: Recommendations and Conclusions

Moving forward, HRC should consider implementing the following recommendations:

1. Continue the logic modeling process to fully flesh out the Investigation Lab’s key activities, inputs, outputs, and intended outcomes, especially with regard to HRC’s Accountability goals.

2. Work with the human rights community, including international NGOs and the international justice community to develop investigative and evidentiary standards that squarely address the important technical, journalistic, legal, and ethical considerations raised by the research.
3. Engage all three sectors – including NGOs, tech communities, the international legal community, citizen activists, and other key stakeholders – by holding conferences, panels, and workshops on open source and citizen media topics.

4. Develop a strategic plan for the Investigations Lab based on a model that recognizes HRC’s central role in open source investigations and human rights work more broadly. Consider developing a consortium of academic research centers and governing structures to scale the work and build capacity, and be sure to include all key stakeholders including survivors.

This last point is particularly important. A new model for conceiving HRC’s place in the ecosystem of human rights actors working on open source investigations has the potential to benefit the organization, the human rights sector, and the wider community. Further, in keeping with the concept of Academic Social Responsibility (Tavanti, 2012), this model recognizes and promotes an important viewpoint –that academic centers have an “institutional capacity, as well as [a] responsibility, to educate for the public good and engage for the global common good.”
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Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview Protocol
Human Rights Investigations Lab
Survey to Collect Logic Model Insights

Program Outcomes

Program Outcomes refer to the changes that occur after program services or activities are administered to the target population and/or participants and may represent positive and negative changes or maintenance of a particular level or status that would otherwise have deteriorated without the program. Intended program outcomes may be short-term, midterm and/or long-term in nature.

1. **What are the individual-level changes that may occur because of the program?**

2. **What skills or knowledge will participants learn from the program?**
3. **What changes in behavior or performance might one expect to see in program participants?**

4. **What secondary benefits may colleagues, friends or family members derive?**

5. **What organizational changes may occur because of the program?**
6. **What career options, enhanced perceptions or improved skills may staff acquire?**

7. **What capacities or resources may the organization develop or enhance?**

8. **What community changes may occur as a result of the program?**
9. What environmental changes may result from program activities?

10. What social changes might one expect to observe because of the program?

11. What economic outcomes might the program have on impacted communities?
12. What specific system-level changes could the program have?

________________________

________________________

________________________

13. What policies or legislative impact could the program have at the local or state level?

________________________

________________________

________________________

14. What policies or legislative impact could the program have at the national or international level?

________________________

________________________

________________________
15. **What political impact could the program have if successful? Unsuccessful?**

16. **What are the regional, national or international changes that may occur because of the program?**

17. **In your opinion, what would be the top five (5) indicators of program success?**
Program Activities are the specific actions and processes used to produce outputs and outcomes. Program Outputs refer to the direct results of program activities such as services, products, techniques, tools, events, and technology.

18. **What new or existing activities does the program provide to program participants or their colleagues, friends or family members?**

19. **When and where do these activities take place?**

20. **Who conducts these activities?**
21. **What participant needs are these activities designed to meet?**

   

22. **What new or existing activities does the program provide to staff?**

   

23. **When and where do these activities occur?**

   

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/16Pz68zw6mVI6h6QOK01l2UibLNagYBXW5rFVMiGH4H8/printform
24. **What staff needs are these activities designed to meet?**

25. **What new or existing activities does the program provide to impacted communities?**

26. **When and where do these activities take place?**
27. **Who conducts these activities?**

28. **What community needs are these activities designed to meet?**

29. **What new or existing activities does the program provide to policymakers?**
30. **When and where do these activities take place?**

31. **Who conducts these activities?**

32. **What policy needs are these activities designed to meet?**
33. **What new or existing activities does the program provide to the broader regional, national or international community?**


34. **When and where do these activities take place?**


35. **Who conducts these activities?**


36. **What regional, national or international needs are these activities designed to meet?**

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**Human Rights Investigations Lab**

Survey to Collect Logic Model Insights

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**Program Inputs**

Program Inputs refer to all of the resources invested in and used by the program to achieve its outputs and outcomes.

37. **What essential resources (i.e., facilities, equipment, materials, personnel, money, and other resources) are available to generate or support each of the aforementioned program activities?**

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38. Is there a gap between the resources necessary to operate the program and the available resources?

39. What is the size and nature of this gap?

40. How has/will this gap be filled?
41. If the gap cannot be filled, which program activities or components are in danger of being cut or curtailed?


42. Who are the key program partners and what is their role and/or contribution to the program?
Author’s Bio

Erica Williams is a nonprofit consultant in the Bay Area with over seven years of experience in the nonprofit sector and fifteen years of experience in the legal sector. She specializes in nonprofit management, strategic planning, program evaluation, organizational development, and public policy analysis. Erica is passionate about building stakeholder relationships and community partnerships, developing cross-sector collaborations, and increasing organizational effectiveness through internal and external dialogue.

Erica is an MNA Candidate at the University of San Francisco School of Management. She is guided by an enduring commitment to public service, relationship-centered work, and achieving social impact through mission fidelity and data-driven decision-making.