



National Data Exchange

N-DEx Update

Welcome to the New and Improved N-DEx

After much effort and anticipation, the N-DEx Program Office (PO) has released the final increment of the N-DEx system.

The latest N-DEx upgrade is bar-none a quantum leap to the next level of information sharing.

N-DEx Program Manager Jeffrey Lindsey says this N-DEx update is “a game-changer for information sharing.” He adds, “The American public at large and the local citizens served by the agencies participating in N-DEx will greatly benefit from the updated system.”

New Resources Available

New N-DEx computer-based training modules and an updated User’s Manual are already available on the Law Enforcement Online (LEO) home page.

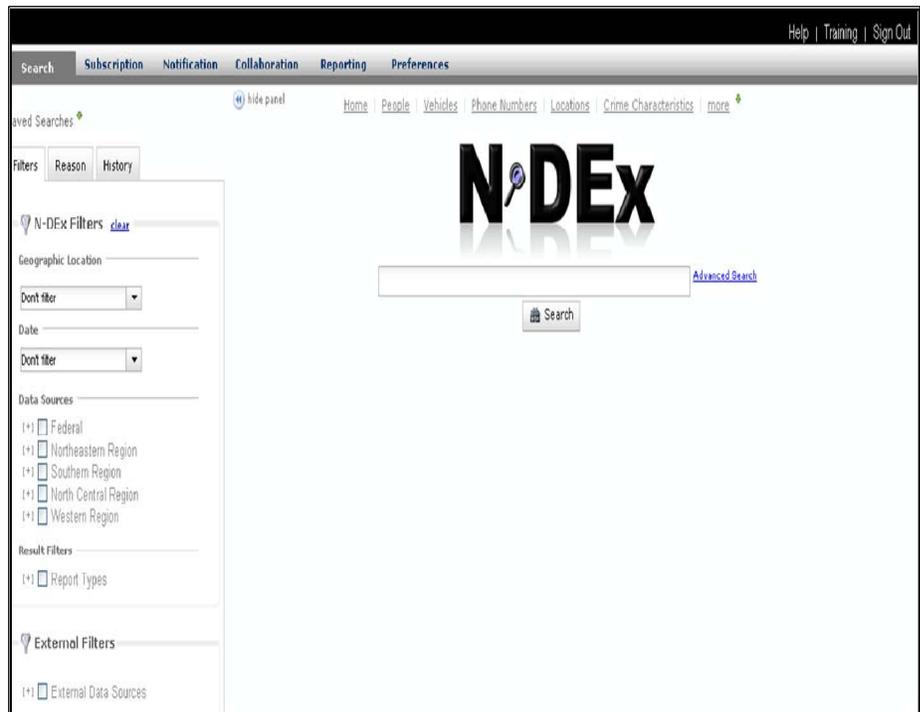
These resources are posted under the existing “N-DEx Training Modules” and “N-DEx User’s Manual” links in the Spotlights section in the bottom-right corner of the page.

Search and Results Improvements

Within the updated system, users will immediately notice the visual changes as soon as they login to the system. The N-DEx home page now looks sleek and simple. It provides users with results in a format akin to what they would see when using a commercial search engine.

This interface allows users to search all N-DEx fields, both structured and unstructured, from the main search tab on the homepage. To conduct a search with more specific controls, users may click the Advanced Search tab on the homepage.

Instead of a variety of fields across the length and width of the page, the new version of N-DEx features a set of handy filters along with a Reason and History tab. These



The simple search page provides users a sleek interface as soon as they login to the system.

are located on the left side of the page.

The filters may be used on any search and may be applied to the results as well. They can be used individually or in combination with one another. Filters include geographic location, date, data sources, result filters and external filters.

Don't worry, though. All of the normal N-DEx functionality still exists, but it can be accessed easier via the tabs in the gray bar at the very top of the page. Also, the targeted search links reside above the N-DEx logo.

Search times have decreased significantly. Where a portal or LEX-SR search would normally have required 20 to 35 seconds, they now take less than a second to return results.

After a user clicks the Search button, results are now displayed in a more commercial looking format. Users will notice the results are no longer scored on the left, but instead they are arranged in descending order by most likely to match.

Each result contains a small part of the narrative (a snippet) that is expandable by clicking the document icon to the left of the description. The complete record is visible after the user clicks the record link.

In addition to the new look, N-DEx will be using what is referred to as an Integrated Person Entity View. This view displays all information N-DEx has on a specific person. This includes biographical, identifiers, residences, business addresses and known associates.

N-DEx only displays unique information while suppressing duplicate information for a clean display. Users also have the ability to click on links to view each record that builds this composite view of a person.

Additional Features and Improvements

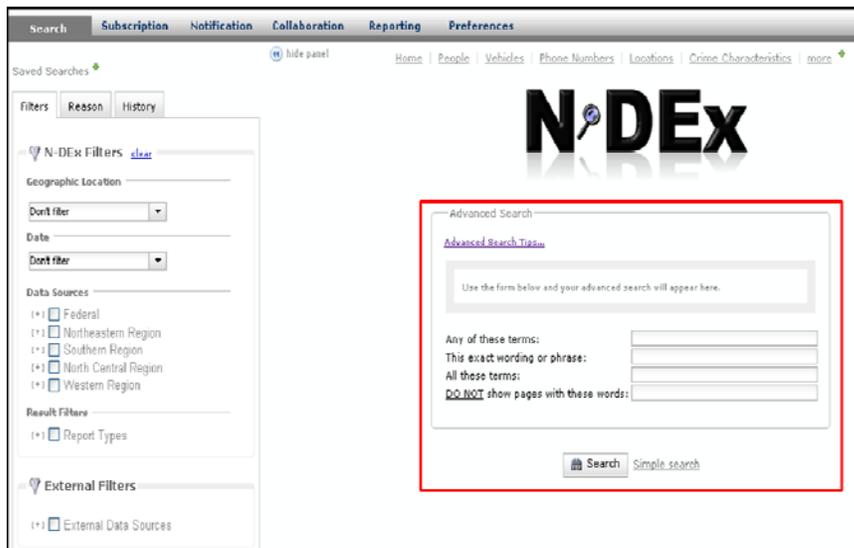
The Collaboration section of N-DEx has also been given a facelift making it easier for users to share files, work on documents, and discuss issues.

As of this system update, N-DEx no longer counts each attachment to the record as a separate entity. Instead, both are counted as part of the same entity. This means the user community may notice a slight drop in the total number of N-DEx records after the update is released, but the same amount of information will still be available.

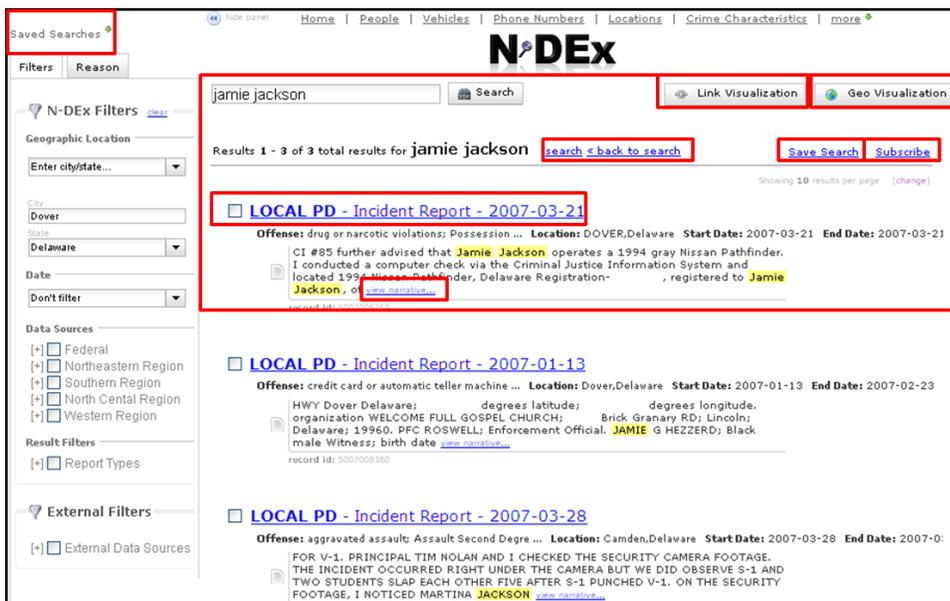
In fact, more records will be available as many more agencies have begun submitting data to the system with the onset of this update.

With this update, the LEXS-SR capability is expanded to allow users to search many more entities and receive results. Prior to this update, only a handful of fields could be searched, but now N-DEx boasts more than 100 searchable fields when using a LEXS-SR capability

Additionally, N-DEx now contains probation and parole data and can easily handle more than 200 million records.



The N-DEx Advanced Search Page



The N-DEx Results Screen. Note the sections highlighted in red. From left, they allow the user to access saved searches, examine a specific record, quickly jump to ink visualization or geovisualization, return to the main search, save the search, subscribe to searches on this subject, display the full incident report, and display the narrative.

Issues We Are Working On

As with any major update there are still some issues the N-DEx Development team is working on.

To facilitate data synchronization between the former and new systems, data ingestion was halted on December 18, 2010. Approximately 95 percent or more of previous data has been migrated to the current system configuration. Data that has been provided to the PO since December

has been queued and the backlog will be ingested within approximately four weeks.

N-DEx was developed using Mozilla's Firefox browser. It is the recommended browser at this time to ensure the best user experience.

N-DEx does support Internet Explorer versions 7 and 8 so most users will not experience any problems using them.

However, the N-DEx Development Team is working through some issues with Internet Explorer, especially functionality associated with specialized N-DEx roles such as Source Data Administrators, Training Administrators, Automated Processing Administrator, User Administrator, and other administrative roles.

If a user encounters a browser issue, clear the browser's cache. If this does not help, contact the CJIS Help Desk.

Searches using map filters and geo-visual displays rely on map layers provided by an Internet source.

To use this capability, the user's browser must be capable of reaching arcgis.com. If a user experiences problems with maps on N-DEx, they should contact their local IT department or the CJIS Help Desk as special browser settings may be necessary.

N-DEx requires Java2 Runtime Environment (JRE) 6 Update 23 (or higher) for displaying Link Visualizations. If a user experiences problems with displaying Link Visualizations, they should contact their local IT department or the CJIS Help Desk to ensure compliance with this requirement.

As always, if anyone experiences any problems and needs assistance, do not hesitate to call the CJIS Help Desk.

The targeted person search provides a simpler way to search for people of interest.

Final Words

Even though N-DEx has reached a significant milestone in this latest release, Lindsey explains this is also a starting point. "Much more data needs to be contributed and many more users need to have access to the system," he explains.

"To reach our future goals, the partnerships and collaboration that have brought N-DEx to this point will need to continue and even expand. So, in the future, look for more innovative outreach approaches from the PO." ■

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