

A Partnership for Nurturing the Next Generation of Intelligence Analysts

Mercyhurst University is home to the world's oldest and premier intelligence studies program, offering both undergraduate and graduate degrees. Unlike most programs that specialize in only one area, the School of Intelligence, Computing, and Global Politics stands out for its breadth, covering strategic, tactical, competitive business, and law enforcement intelligence. This makes the skills of its graduates eminently portable to various fields.

The school boasts the best academic program in open-source intelligence (OSINT), and offers courses in geospatial, human, and counterintelligence disciplines. The faculty hails from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences, and the curriculum integrates real-world experience through the Center for Intelligence Research, Analysis, and Training (CIRAT). Graduates gain the applied experience necessary to make a significant impact working in the government, private sector, or nonprofit domains.

Seeking a robust OSINT tool

Executive Director of CIRAT, Brian A. Fuller, and the Intelligence Studies Department Adjunct Professor sought an OSINT platform for students to apply their learning in the diverse intelligence disciplines taught at Mercyhurst. At the same time, he sought a solution that could provide real-time, actionable insights for CIRAT's client work, encompassing geopolitical risk analysis, social media exploitation, and business competitive intelligence.

Why Babel Street Insights

After evaluating several platforms, Fuller and his team selected Babel Street Insights for its intuitive interface, tremendous depth and breadth of data, and solid sentiment analysis capabilities. The platform's ability to synthesize vast data streams and provide real-time dashboards made it an ideal fit for both classroom instruction and CIRAT's operational needs.

At the time, Babel Street did not have an academic program. However, Mercyhurst's program was a good fit for Babel Street's mission to empower defense, intelligence, and business operations with the capabilities needed to make strategic, data-driven decisions with confidence. With the shared goal of helping educate the next generation of intelligence analysts, Babel Street offered its OSINT platform to the intelligence studies program at a drastically reduced rate. The partnership began with a proof-of-concept.

"[The trial] was a home run and exactly what we needed, being user-friendly and highly intuitive," Fuller said. "With the amount of data Insights processes, it can quickly return results and synthesize data, allowing for longer lead times on conducting actionable analysis and productive development. We also didn't find another tool that did sentiment analysis as well."

Sentiment analysis is crucial for analysts who need to understand a population's feelings about geopolitical actions, such as elections, candidates, or policies. Public sentiment can also help predict how events might unfold and affect politics or business in a particular region.

Fuller and his students also appreciate the generative AI feature in Insights that helps accelerate research data.

"Insights AI is like a research assistant who helps analysts fuse trusted data into a research product much more quickly," Fuller said. "What would take hours, days, or weeks doesn't anymore."

Real-world impacts

With access to Babel Street Insights, students gain hands-on experience on real-world projects through CIRAT. CIRAT operates like a professional intelligence firm within the university, having engagements on projects for over 300 clients, including the U.S. government, law enforcement agencies, Fortune 500 companies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), national security agencies, and business intelligence firms.

"Our students working in CIRAT are doing work for clients that impacts decision-making right away. Students get applied experience on projects with real-world implications," Fuller said. "The tools and resources from CIRAT are a force multiplier for all their clients."

CIRAT projects encompass a wide range of areas, including competitive intelligence for business, market analysis, brand awareness, geopolitical events and global conflicts, law enforcement, national security, and intelligence support to combat human trafficking.

Mercyhurst students graduate with a competitive edge, a robust resume, and a portfolio of accomplishments. CIRAT clients get to work with the next wave of talent, which frequently leads to job offers for students before they graduate.

A win-win partnership

Fuller sees a bright future for the partnership with Babel Street and appreciates the steady stream of new and updated tools.

"Babel Street is keeping up with new technological developments every step of the way, so I don't feel like I have to go out of my way to fill a gap," Fuller said.

"Babel Street is proud of our collaboration with Mercyhurst to train the next generation of intelligence analysts," Babel Street CEO Benji Hutchinson said.

"Mercyhurst also exposes us to innovative use cases around the application of AI that help us improve our tools to meet the rapid pace of change."

Together, Mercyhurst University and Babel Street are shaping the future of intelligence education and practice, while staying on the cutting edge of open-source technology.

Babel Street is the trusted technology partner for the world's most advanced identity intelligence and risk operations. The Babel Street Insights platform delivers advanced AI and data analytics solutions to close the Risk-Confidence Gap.

Babel Street provides unmatched, analysis-ready data regardless of language, proactive risk identification, 360-degree insights, high-speed automation, and seamless integration into existing systems. We empower government and commercial organizations to transform high-stakes identity and risk operations into a strategic advantage.

Learn more at babelstreet.com.