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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

Multiple personal experiences: Send FOIA request to IRS via fax (no emailed requests accepted). IRS FOIA officer reviews, then forwards to functional coordinator in appropriate IRS office. IRS functional coordinator gathers records from employees. Records are sent via email and in paper form back to IRS FOIA officer. IRS FOIA officer reviews and redacts. Redactions are reviewed and approved by manager. Once approved, redacted records are mailed to requester. Requester can appeal redactions to IRS Office of Appeals, which rubberstamps denial of appeal. Requester can then proceed to Court.

Additional personal experience: Mailed FOIA request to IRS Office of Chief Counsel for background file. Mailed request lost for approx. 3-4 months. In meantime, called and faxed second copy of request. Process to obtain background file includes notifying taxpayer of request and seeking confirmation of proposed redactions. Redactions approved internally by IRS manager. No opportunity is provided to requester to challenge redactions for, for example, trade secrets, prior to or after receipt of redacted documents, except through a filing in a court of law. No clear administrative appeal process. In one instance, I requested additional review of withheld documents, and received a significantly redacted copy of several pages. No clear process for requesting additional review, or for challenging redactions in an administrative process.

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If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

Email of existing, current employees are searched. Emails sent by former employees, even those recently departed, have been difficult for IRS FOIA officer to retrieve, especially if emails are encrypted. One reason is that IRS FOIA officers are not provided skeleton keys to unlock encryption.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Inefficiencies at the IRS usually arise at the functional level. This is because responding to FOIA requests appear to either be provided a very low priority or intentionally delayed.

IRS Office of Chief Counsel processes could be substantially improved by providing a clear point of contact.

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

Anything else you would like to add?

OGIS (Archives) review was sought in one instance and I found this process worthless. They did not call and talk about problem. As a result, they failed to understand my concerns about timeliness and how to potentially resolve ongoing problems.

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

Anything else you would like to add?

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Wait a long time, ask if you are still interested, wait to be sued, ask Judge for more time to process the request.

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

Have submitted FOIA requests to ODNI, NSA, CIA, DEA, by email and traditional mail.  
Consulted government websites and public interest organizations websites to initially draft them.

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Typically has to do with agencies asking for prohibitive processing costs, or not respecting the 30 days timeframe within which they are supposed to respond. Have now been waiting from CIA to process a request for 5 or 6 years.

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

Inadequate staffing, and poor training (particularly compartmentalized record keeping and databases) result in FOIA officers not knowing what exists or even where to look. Capstone is a good example.

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

When employees leave an agency, their emails were erased, prior to Capstone. However, most FOI officers don't have knowledge of the program, accessibility, etc. Key word searches in particular are ineffective. And providing duplicate copies is a waste of time and money - that occurs when multiple employees are on an email discussion string, and each provides copies. There have been issues with regard to consistency in redaction, and coordination with other offices in an agency, or other agencies.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Funding, staffing, training. And in this climate, these are unlikely, at least in the short run. The current administration is clearly not predisposed to transparency.

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

Anything else you would like to add?

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### FOIA Processors

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

With the FBI they basically search their central index and if they find a responsive file they send it to you. If you're trying to get original documents not in their main file index it is all but impossible because they basically don't seem to bother to look.

The military are somewhat better as they tend to send out inquiries first to enable them to figure out the mostly likely location and then ask people in that place to conduct a specific search. However, one request I have with the military goes back over 18 months despite it being for two documents that I specified very closely in my request.

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If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

I have no specific knowledge of this.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

Anything else you would like to add?

The US FOIA system is incredibly slow and under-staffed. I often have to wait several months, sometimes a year or more to have simple requests answered. It appears to be a staffing issue because on the whole the staff themselves are quite pleasant and helpful.

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**FOIA Processors**

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

Anything else you would like to add?

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

In order to submit a FOIA one must provide as much detail as possible about the document or file in question. There are many databases (Library of Congress for example) that provide that detailed information and often providing the specific document number, location and title makes the process easier for the processor. Yet, in some cases, the document in question may only be indirectly referenced in another document or mentioned in passing. This is where the issue can become more complex. I work almost primarily with military documents that are 20 to 50 years old and often at the time of the writing of the second document, the document in question could have been classified, making learning more about that document difficult. This is also something that the DoD uses to their benefit by claiming that they cannot find the document or that they don't know it's location. Just to name a few tactics they use.

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If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

FOIA requests go into the system by having the email addresses of all parties involved. I have direct experience with this. Even if you tell them the names and titles of the parties involved, they will claim that they cannot find anything. You must have the exact email addresses in order, for the DoD at least, to do a FOIA. In recent years, the DoD has, in order to cover emails, given their personnel new email addresses so that older email addresses cannot be tracked. At present, I have a FOIA out for emails between two parties (one a DoD employee and the other the head of a non-profit) and the expected date of completion has been changed at least four times. The most recent was just a few weeks ago - I was told in August that the newest date was January 30th or so. Now, I have another email stating that June is the new date of completion.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Yes, in that the people processing the requests do not necessarily understand the specific of the request, they simply forward it on up the chain. When a response is penned from the agency in question, the FOIA processor simply forwards it on to the requester and has no idea if what is given is actually fulfilling the request. It is up to the requester to determine once they have "closed" the request and sent the information if the request was truly fulfilled or not. Then, the requester has to file an appeal which often times puts your request back at the end of the queue. Or the appeals office will tell you to simply file a new request. The DoD is quite adept at this little game.

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

<https://foiaonline.regulations.gov/foia/action/public/search/> and  
<http://www.dod.mil/pubs/foi/readingRoom.html>

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## Anything else you would like to add?

The DoD is probably the worst at handling FOIA - they leave thousands of requests on hold, some for decades. A fellow researcher had a FOIA from 2000 finally filled in 2015. It was an unclassified document and there was no need for the delay, only to prevent the truth from coming out.

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

I just send FOIA requests in whatever format the agency accepts then. My requests sometimes occur after a conversation with staff, so I can know what types of documents exist.

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

See Abby Wood and David Lewis, Agency Performance Challenges and Agency Politicization. Working paper. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1884392](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1884392)

Anything else you would like to add?

Wood and Lewis find persuasive evidence that politicizing the FOIA process slows responsiveness. That's important.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

Anything else you would like to add?

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I have filed a number of FOIA suits in federal court over the years - do you want the statements and declarations of the agency filed in court? if so, email me at \_\_\_\_\_ and I'll get them to you.

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

If OSC were not a decades-long law-breaking fraud of a federal agency, it would follow the law to enforce FOIA in other federal agencies - and things would rapidly and markedly change for the better.

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

I have several large 3-ring binders full of FOIA requests and responses from a number of agencies.

Anything else you would like to add?

FOIA is broken, in essential part, because OSC is a fraud. POGO gives OSC a "pass" for its law-breaking and has for decades - a broken, law-breaking OSC is "good" for POGO's business model.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

Anything else you would like to add?

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

I requested to know if the government officials at National Park Service found guilty of submitting a false injury report to OSHA, and failure to succeed in a wrongful termination attempt received any disciplinary action per the Department of Interior Disciplinary Policy 752. I was informed that I must pay \$250 fee to receive any information via FOIA. I did not pay the fee.

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

Anything else you would like to add?

I have discovered that government officials at DOI / NPS have a very convenient and foil proof system to succeed in wrongdoing and unethical behavior. This is achieved with a well oiled cronyism machine that started in Asheville, NC to Gatlinburg, TN onward to Atlanta, GA and finally to Washington, D.C. In short, the DOI /NPS employees who committed the violations are also the same employees who get to determine if any wrongdoings have occurred, thus alleviating any oversight concerns. Even at the DOI Office of Inspector General, the assigned Special Agents along with the I.G. Mary Kendall refuse to give any concern or credence to violations of DOI policy, regulations and laws contained in their own Disciplinary Policy.

My lesson learned. One former whistleblowing DOI / NPS employee can only muster contempt and ridicule from twenty-five highly paid government officials.

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

I don't know what you mean by "search procedures" but i often submit foia requests

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

My knowledge of how agencies do FOIA searches is very limited and mostly based on assumptions that, for example, searching a network of document files involves use of key words and may or may not return a completely accurate response.

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

Control-F and the Word document file search, plus writing a simple search program that focuses on particular elements and/or combinations of elements within a range of documents or databases.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

How about requiring an agency to describe in detail how it conducted a search for a response?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

<http://www.rcfp.org/browse-media-law-resources/news/foia-trial-offers-rare-look-how-fbi-searches-records-responds-reques>

Anything else you would like to add?

Thanks for all your efforts to make government more transparent.

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

Medical quality assurance.

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

Conversion to PDF, key-phrase search strings.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Boolean operations,

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

I've only requested documents based on conversations I've had with government officials where they described the document I needed to me.

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

I am not aware of any!

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

Email docs with specific name only

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Too much filtering by agency

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

Government extremely slow to respond

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Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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### Anything else you would like to add?

I made a FOIA request to the department of Interior NPS Atlanta for specific records for a limited time period. I sent the request by USPS certified mail. I never received a reply. I sent a second request stating I had a receipt that they had received my first request. I was informed that the receipt only meant that it had been received in the mail room, but they never received it. They claimed they didn't have any of those records. Since they were records documenting materials at issue in an on-going case, the lack of documents is troubling. This is problematic enough, but I made another request for a hearing tape recently to the same agency and upon my second request was told they never received my first request. It was not until my third request that they finally answered my question—they had lost the hearing tape. There appears to be a pattern here.

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### FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

I mostly have worked to improve VA admin procedures in processing Beneficiary Travel Reimbursement to Hawaii's Veterans. First, I learned that agencies do not provide "information", they provide "records." Through the course of several suits I have learned that "adequate search" will avoid providing almost any requested record, apparently even Privacy Act PII that SHOULD be in their SOR and readily available. (That suit is under Court consideration w/CrossMSJs HIDCV16-00562-LEK-KJM) Agencies can aggregate requests in several ways, inc. multiple requesters and then use fees to avoid processing requests. Fees are used to avoid providing records and requests for fee waivers - public use and news media - are denied. I am trying current litigation in HID to see if the one way you can defeat fees is through the 20-working-day time limits, at the appeal level. I have already received time-limited dismissal of all fees when VAPIHCS didn't respond throughout 2015-16 in a timely manner, as well as being awarded costs in two FOIA suits (above and HID15-00246 LEK-KSC).

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If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Better searching for records that are described in other agency documents, but don't show up on an "adequate search". How can they deny existence of a document referred to in another request they provided to you?

Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

See HID suits filed by Joseph Demoruelle or Sandra and Joseph Demoruelle

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

I obtained a FOIA handbook from Judicial Watch.

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

I have asked for emails, however in the few instances that I received them, they were heavily redacted.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

My experience has been that when I have sent a FOIA request to a specific office; if they don't handle the specific records, they refer me to another office rather than forwarding my request to the proper office.

---

Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

Most of my FOIA requests have been to the Department of Defense.

Anything else you would like to add?

Basic frustration when a request is mistakenly sent to a wrong office, then returned with instructions to send it to another office. Your basic run-a-round.

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

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Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

I wrote an FOIA letter to the NSA requesting the file they have on me. The NSA responded with a standard form letter informing me that that was classified information.

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

Like everyone else in this country/the entire world, I know all of my communications (including my various email addresses, IP address and search history/online activities, as well as all of the information contained in my cell phone) are being vacuumed up by the NSA every minute of every day.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

The procedures aren't the problem. The NSA's flat-out refusal to allow citizens of the United Corporation of America to see the files they on on we individual citizens IS THE PROBLEM!

---

Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

I have the physical letter the NSA sent me, but I did not retain my search history in filing an FOIA request.

Anything else you would like to add?

The District of Columbia is not even a state, so it should NOT have the power to surreptitiously spy on the citizens of our nation (or anyone else in the world!).

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FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

I can request a copy of records (some records are excluded) in writing and the FOIA officer for the agency involved has a certain amount of time to comply and make those records available to me

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

I have never requested copies of emails

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

The process is never easy to find.....it's always obscure as to how you file the request, etc. It needs to be centralized and easy to locate.

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

Anything else you would like to add?

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### FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

Letter Request

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

Some government agencies have electronic reading rooms containing material already released under FOIA

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Yes, bad lawyers and incompetent FOIA officials -- especially in the intelligence agencies

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

Yes, but my comments would be considered impolite and offensive.

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

State

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

Currently being changed or in process of search for new system - Unclassified system is adaptation of a commercial product; classified system is something on the cheap developed for another agency - a legacy that looks like it's from the 1980's. User unfriendly, not integrated well if at all with the actual systems where information is stored -- pretty much a menu-driven flat file where everything has to be scanned - yes scanned - in or electronically loaded in through a largely manual process. This system needs an entire contract staff to maintain and run it. Even to run a report, a program needs to be scripted to extract information. The end user cannot do it, so everyone tends to keep their own separate cuff records in Excel to be able to answer questions, for instance.

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

There is an outline on the agency website of how things are supposed to work. However, the procedures internally are very stove-piped and opaque. There are no overall process maps. Knowledge or ability to move the process onward often resides with one employee, resulting in significant bottlenecks. The process steps are truncated among various offices, units, or 'teams' so as a request moves it is thrown over a wall -- only to be thrown back if there is even a minor 'mistake'. There is no ability to track the status of a request that has been farmed out to other bureaus or posts to gather information, since most information cannot be accessed centrally and the process is handled largely through email or paper. This is an enormous systems and knowledge management issue that affects FOIA -- the agency is in frequent violation of the timetable for fulfilling requests. There are no internal consequences for offices that sit on requests or fail to respond. There is a lack of training as well for the average employee on their responsibilities under FOIA which means that information submitted by an office in reply to a request often must be returned for missing information. There is heavy reliance on email and attachment of documents which must then be uploaded into the FOIA system by staff.

---

If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

There is a rudimentary search function at the agency for information that has been posted to the intranet or sent in email. There is no real search ability across different types of records. Offices have their own 'drives' on the IT system that they control access to. The agency is only very slowly moving to a cloud architecture that may enable centralized management and searching of all records. The ability to search on classified systems is even worse than on the unclassified systems. Additionally, any information pulled out of the classified system has to be redacted - currently a tedious and time-consuming manual process that has not been automated.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Where to begin... The information systems are 'balkanized', outdated, and inefficient. There is a plethora of 'cuff' records, largely in Excel, because of the shortcomings of the processing systems. The process is truncated, not tracked, and rife with redundancies. There is still a reliance on paper because the systems are not trusted or because the staff brought in to work on 'surge' requests (think Clinton emails for instance) are 'uncomfortable' learning technology. People are not cross-trained but only know one little piece of the work so some are overloaded while others sit idle. Access to certain systems is restricted to team leaders so only they can handle certain tasks, resulting in enormous bottlenecks. A thorough redesign of the process is needed supported by systems that work across the enterprise, and appropriate training around FOIA responsibilities and processes for all staff.

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

<https://foia.state.gov/>

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Anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for the opportunity to vent...

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

GSA

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

FOIA Online. Not sure of the age. Software okay. Notable limitations is access to complete a task is locked down to a few people.

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

FOIA request comes in; determine if it belongs to our office; do additional research; assign to internal responder; apply redactions with FOIA exceptions as applicable; vet through legal if redactions made; send two copies of electronic documents (one redacted a another not redacted) and draft response to FOIA coordinator; FOIA office sends out to requester.

If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Only have access to search FPDS-NG contract records.

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Not sure.

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

No; personal knowledge of contracting and FPDS-NG.

Anything else you would like to add?

Nothing else to add.

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

My experience as a reporter is that the FOIA offices I deal with most often FDA and EPA, are overworked, disorganized and amateurish. They are so bad that it's tempting to think it's intentional -- although I have no proof of that. An EPA FOIA officer told me last year that her daughter as helping her at home, with reading and redacting, because her workload was so overwhelming.

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

At FDA, when someone makes a request, the request goes into a queue. When it is time for them to search for your material, they send out an email to the staffers within the agency who might have it. This is very hit and miss, because the people in the FOIA office do not have a strong knowledge of the subject matter, or who does what at FDA. So it takes them a long time to find the right people to query -- if, as a requester -- you don't provide a name. The exception is the congressional liaison office. If you FOIA something from them, they search their emails with congressional staffers and lawmakers, and can find it easily -- although it seems to me they drag it out as long as possible. It's also tough to get material from the regional offices.

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

I think they need staffers who are better educated as to what their agencies do, and who does what. Also the culture needs to change -- that is the most important thing. They don't actually want to get the material to reporters.

Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

I'm not sure what you mean here but call if you'd like more info: .

Anything else you would like to add?

thank you for doing this survey

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

US EPA (as contractor)

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

In the Records Center I work in we have an Oracle-based database - Superfund Enterprise Management System - Records Management module (SEMS-RM)

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

FOIA requests are referred to the OSRR Records and Information Center by the Office of Site Remediation & Restoration (OSRR) FOIA staffer or any other EPA staff (mainly OSRR staff, but sometimes legal (OES) staff). Contractors in the OSRR RIC locate the applicable site file or section of site file. The FOIA staffer then reviews the files located. Answerable documents are scanned into SEMS-RM if not already captured. These documents are then provided to the FOIA staffer (via email or network drive) to upload into the FOIA Online web portal.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Individual staff identified by the FOIA staff as relevant to the FOIA request are responsible for searching their own email and electronic records unless they have been captured into a recordkeeping system.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Answerable records could be served directly out of SEMS or ported between SEMS and FOIA Online more easily.

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

I have been trying to get a hold of the State Department's records on its spending and contracts for internet freedom programs. Some of these programs might be in violation of the Smith-Mundt Act, banning domestic propaganda. The State Department's FOIA requester service told me the records were taking so long to process, because the records were in hard copy in a warehouse somewhere. I believe the State Department is lying, and even after more than 2 years, they have refused to hand over documents. The records in question should be in electronic format, because the State Department was requiring grantees to fill out certain forms on grants.gov (which is obviously in electronic format, not hard copy).

---

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Yes, there are serious deficiencies. The Privacy Act requires federal government agencies to disclose their databases, but often times agencies do not follow the procedures and do not post a notice on the Federal Register. Even worse, is when agencies believe that their databases are not subject to the Privacy Act. The FOIA law needs to be amended so that the existence of ALL databases (both classified and unclassified) have to be disclosed and published to the Federal Register.

---

Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

For example, the FBI recently unveiled its eportal for FOIA requests. The FBI did not even publish a Privacy Act notice for the eportal!!!

Anything else you would like to add?

FOIA needs to eliminate the requester categories. All information of interest to the public needs to be made freely available. It seems that I am constantly fighting with agencies over my status as a member of the news media, because they do not recognize bloggers.

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

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Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

Defense Information Systems Agency

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

We use a few different records systems which have their own search functions

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

1. Conduct search in applicable systems if not there coordinate search with contract specialist/officer in archived folders and files

If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

We do not search email at this location. We have the ability to search other records. However, there are some areas we have to coordinate with the point of contact

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

I am not sure it is an inefficiency in the FOIA search as much as the records management function. People are afraid of FOIA. Agencies still do not understand what they have to produce and why they need to produce it if requested.

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

No

Anything else you would like to add?

No

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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### FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

National Guard Bureau

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

No software used

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

Search declaration is given to office(s) that would likely have responsive records and they conduct searches / explain how they conducted the search, but it's up to the office to determine the best way to conduct an adequate search. Most use search in e-mails and network drives (search engine within Outlook or on network)

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Many have said the FOIA Officer should just "have access to search everything" but with documents not necessarily all having 'keywords' to search (search feature to search for content within a file when doing a network search no longer exists - Microsoft removed it), the FOIA office (in our case) doesn't have enough knowledge of the wide gamut of topics/types of records that would be responsive to a FOIA. In addition with the increasing amount of individual IT systems, that are not all linked together, the FOIA office is not in a position to know which systems to search and be the ones filling out search certifications.

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

Navy (field activity)

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

We don't use search software.

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

Generally we go to the office that would have the requested records and ask for them. (An exception is contracts - we often get them directly from EDA.)

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

We don't have access to employees' email and generally don't have access to their electronic files. Each department/division/branch has its own files, and each employee has his/her own emails.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Not really. It works well although we are dependent on the office holding the records to provide them to us (and to provide everything requested).

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

No

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Anything else you would like to add?

I don't think FOIA employees should have direct access to other employees' email or other organizational units' files.

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

Department of the Interior bureau

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

It depends on what system we need to search. We do not have any software that has the capability to do global or universal searches of our electronic records.

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

Again it depends on what is being searched. However, generally the search requires that we identify who in the organization might have responsive records. We then have to reach out to them and request that they do a search. In some cases, we can provide a pre-built search string, such as when we are searching our Gmail, but in most others we can only provide recommended search terms and rely upon the individual record holders and/or offices to conduct their search in a reasonable manner that is most likely to return responsive records. This is especially true when searching through paper or hardcopy records, as those files are located in more than 400 parks, field, and regional offices.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Although Department of the Interior implemented an email archiving system, which is called eERDMS, when they converted us to the Gmail based BisonConnect email system in 2013, our ability to use that system, which uses the Open Text electronic content management software, by the departmental FOIA and records staff. Currently there are only three situations where we can use it to conduct our searches. 1)if the person has left the agency and we certify that their email records were not properly archived; 2.) if it is determined that their legacy (pre-2013) emails did not properly migrate into BisonConnect; 3.) if the records are being requested from a former political appointee whose records were taken by DOI for processing.

Additional issues include the fact that it was up to each bureau to ensure that the emails were moved from their legacy systems, e.g. Outlook, Lotus Notes, during the migration to BisonConnect. And in many cases that migration was limited only to what was on the main server at the time of the switchover, so that most users' archive files still have not been moved into either the new system or into the eERDMS system. Worse yet many offices are now deleting the software for the legacy systems such as Lotus Notes, so that individual users will no longer be able to access the files in their email archives.

Additionally, there are serious limitations on exporting potentially responsive records from the BisonConnect system. As a result the output files are exponentially larger as the output includes multiple, duplications especially when the email is a chain or thread. Additionally the tools we have been provided extract the attachments out into separate folders so that staff have to spend time assembling them back into the PDFs with the appropriate messages.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

There are serious limitations on exporting potentially responsive records from the BisonConnect system. As a result the output files are exponentially larger as the output includes multiple, duplicate messages especially when the email is a chain or thread. This duplication can result in the material needing to be processed after a search being 10x as large as what would have been output using functions such as IMAP via Outlook.

Additionally the tools we have been provided extract the messages, strip the attachments out and put into separate folders. As a result staff have to spend time assembling them back into the PDFs with their appropriate emails. Some bureaus are allowed to use a system called GASMO, which allows staff to use Outlook in combination with Adobe Acrobat Professional, to extract specific messages including their attachments directly into PDF files. However, it is up to each bureau and in some case up to the IT staff in each office to determine whether or not they will allow users to have GASMO and/or Outlook.

There are also limited options for centrally collecting documents. In many cases we have to rely on using Google Drive, but the space there is limited. It also requires that staff upload and then download the documents. And since Google Drive does not integrate with Windows, it is not always possible to drag and drop search results. And the ability for Google drive to extract or download results from Google Drive to a network drive is limited so that in some cases you have to download files in multiple small batches, e.g. 50 items at a time.

Also, unless the person sharing the files has named their Google Drive files and/or folders in such a way as to include a tracking number and their name, the message that the person processing the request gets is all but useless in determining which request the files go to, as the Google system submits a message inviting you to collaborate on the folder name. So if the person doing the search only named their folder on Google Drive as FOIA search results, the person they are sharing the files with will only get a message saying something like, "you have been invited to collaborate in the FOIA search results folder".

There is also no way to deduplicate messages between search result packages and the output result is not in date order. There can also be differences in outputs depending on whether or not the person conducting a search has their Gmail set to conversation view or has conversation view turned off.

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

US Forest Service

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

None

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

Contact the content manager to conduct a search of information systems, Outlook (email), electronic and paper files for documents relevant to the request.

---

If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Only using Microsoft Explorer

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Search procedures work relatively well. The agency's official records are paper.

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

None

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Anything else you would like to add?

No

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

Department of Interior

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

We have an EMAIL search tool and other databases.

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

You task the Office of Primary Responsibility and give them search terms if need be.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Similar to the above,

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Very difficult with emails and duplicate strings.

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

DOD

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

not sure

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

We have listings of our documents; some are searchable, some not.

---

If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Most of our records are either hard copy or microfilm.

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

No central records databases. No serious IT/budget thought applied to problems.

---

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

No.

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Anything else you would like to add?

Until FOIA is a budget priority, nothing will change.

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

EPA Region 4

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

Relativity, databases and manual search. Yes, there are limitations to the software.

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

<http://intranet.epa.gov/foia/docs/FOIA-SOPs--Region4.pdf>

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Relativity. We submit a request to the EDiscovery Team and EPA HQ/

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

The regions are unable to download info from Relativity.

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

<http://intranet.epa.gov/foia/FOIA-Procedures.html>

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

DOC/NOAA/NMFS

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

Clearwell is a fairly good search product

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

The agency uses Web Help Desk for users to submit a ticket to retrieve documents from email, the Help Desk folks retrieve documents after the user creates a 16 character password and provides it. The documents are turned into pst files then moved to the appropriate drive. The Records staff then grabs those files from the drive and puts them into Clearwell where folks begin to review/redact the documents.

If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Yes

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

None that I'm aware of

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

No

Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

Bureau of Reclamation

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

Google, Infolinx

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

Our agency uses physical searches of paper files and electronic searches of databases, and email

---

If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Subject matter experts are asked to search their email and electronic files for responsive documents. Google docs is supposed to work for emails, but is not reliable, provides non-responsive documents, loses attachments, and creates long file names which have to be shortened before processing the documents can be completed. Challenges with electronic searches are not addressed due to lack of time and money.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Better software to reduce record duplication would reduce review time, better understanding of process by subject matter experts would reduce amount of non-responsive, more is better documents provided for review. Management support and prioritization helps reduce search times. Clear and consistent guidelines would streamline processes. Often people developing statutes aren't those who actually process requests. What sounds good on paper, may make the process harder for those doing the work.

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

Those making FOIA law would understand FOIA challenges better if they were required to follow the law as well.

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## FOIA Search Survey

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Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

DOI, Bureau of Land Management

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

No search software is used

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

All FOIA requests are logged, acknowledged, and reviewed within 1 business day of receipt. During review, the FOIA Office analyzes the request to determine what employees would likely have responsive records. A copy of the request is subsequently sent via email to the employees who are deemed likely to have records responsive to the request. This email notification includes detailed instructions and a checklist for employees to follow. The instructions and checklist ensure that all employees who are tasked with responding to a FOIA request fully understand their responsibilities in conducting a thorough search. Further, each agency field office located throughout the State has an employee specifically designated as a "Field Office FOIA Coordinator" to coordinate the respective office's responses to all FOIA requests that are tasked to the subject office. In addition, each district office also has a designated "District Office FOIA Coordinator" to serve as the FOIA focal for the specific district office.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

all emails are required to be searched for responsive records

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Gmail is not very "FOIA friendly." Although there is a gmail app specifically for FOIA document management, it is not very effective and is burdensome for FOIA processors to organize the records that are obtained via this app.

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

Basic knowledge of FOIA procedures via hundreds of requests, primarily to FBI during first term of Obama administration. FBI violates law, in my opinion, by "blackballing" files, as well as by limiting requests to its "central records system" by default.

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

None. I primarily request paper files.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

FBI is unwilling to release adequate digital scans or duplicates of multimedia-- in particular historic photographs, audio and video recordings. I have no clue how CIA files are indexed or searched for, but historic records related to historic civil rights and labor union figures (including those previously released via litigation) are nearly impossible to acquire, and the CIA blocks release of nearly all documents it produced that are located in FBI files.

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

Anything else you would like to add?

FOIA system is fundamentally broken. Unclassified documents should never be redacted, but still are. At some point, all files should be publicly available in full, but even documents 100 years old are redacted to protect the privacy of people who are long dead or to hide state secrets whose release could not plausibly harm national security. For instance, the IRS actually redacted a document indicating that Marcus Garvey was being investigated for tax fraud. The money spent on having someone read every single page of 50 or 75 year old documents is wasted, and the continued classification of historic files is absurd.

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FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

FOIAXPRESS, 5 yrs old, yes; need more memory space for scanning and adding voluminous records

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

I send a request for records to either a program office or field office; that office sends files/records (including email messages) to me. I scan and redact the responsive pages and do both initial and final reviews on the responsive pages.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

I can search electronic records located in our SMART software.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Our records are paper-based; the field offices do not send electronic records unless they are GPS data. I wish we had only electronic records instead of paper records because I have scan voluminous records on about 99.9% of the FOIA requests we receive and that takes about an hour+.

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

No.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

USDA Forest Service

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

FOIAXpress, 2 years and was just updated on February 1. I don't know about limitations as haven't used it very much.

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

We search electronically and search hard copy.

---

If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

For a particular FOIA request in my Region, we had to ask the CIO office for assistance so they could search for the particular emails the requester wanted.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

I haven't had a problem yet.

---

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

No.

---

Anything else you would like to add?

Once I'm more familiar with AINS FOIAXpress then I can add more to your survey.

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

The agency searches for relevant records and provides what is found.

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Needing to know the exact item you need, instead of more general search terms.

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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### FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

I've filed numerous FOIA requests, mostly with the FBI, over the years and have been treated fairly well, but I have two major complaints:

1) It's almost impossible to get the records on an individual until he is dead, which means a) that that individual cannot be held responsible during his lifetime for anything bad he did during his lifetime unless he's charged in court and b) there's usually much less interest in information unearthed about a dead individual than about a live individual.

2) Even for FBI records about dead individuals obtained under FOIA, it takes several years between filing a request and receiving the records, because, apparently, some poor FBI employee must go over all the records involved and remove the names of all informants, or any information pointing to other investigations, even though those informants are long dead and the investigations long closed. This can be a major time waster: I recently applied for the FBI file on a dead Detroit gangster and was told the FBI has 7,000, yes 7,000 pages of information on him. Some poor sap is presumably now going over those 7,000 pages redacting the names of long dead informants and long dead investigations. This will mean, probably, a three year delay in my receiving the information and a worthless waste of time for a bored FBI employee.

---

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

Department of Education

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

Clearwell

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

Clearwell and manual searches

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Clearwell

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Not aware

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

N/A

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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### FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

USFWS

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

No search software typically used

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

First determine who should participate in the search and if we should contact the requester to clarify the request. If staff have departed but are still with the agency, we ensure that they receive the request for production. For retired staff we can search legacy Lotus Notes Files and request their more recent emails by submitted a form with timelines and search criteria to the agency records officer. For current staff we work with them to assist with their search since our agency to ensure they are produced in a usable format. They might need to pull paper files or look at external hard drives that might have legacy documents on them. It can be very time consuming to do a comprehensive search. We also may need to contact other offices within the agency to participate in the search.

---

If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

We do not have the ability to search for emails or electronic records in a system per say. It is all done by accessing local and shared drives or scanned images. Use of advanced search in Acrobat can help but it can only search pdfs.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

For some FOIA searches, the department could allow us to use the existing department system to conduct broad email searches instead of doing it manually at each level of the organization. If we had better investments in records management and records managers, the search procedures would be vastly improved.

---

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

No

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Anything else you would like to add?

We do the best we can with the limited tools provided to us by the agency/department.

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

Bureau of Reclamation, UC Region

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

EOS.web – over 30 years (Updating bulk items could be made easier vs updating each and every item) Upper Colorado Region Document Electronic Management System; UCDEMS - 5 years old. Yes, I like this version for creating folders and records; and Infolinx 3.2 REDS – 14 years old. Yes and No this application is just an indexing system.

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

EOS.web - If the material is a library material I search in my database to locate the exactly search criteria that the requestor is looking at. If there is multiple searches I search all materials surround the topic and find them on the shelf.

UCDEMS & Infolinx 3.2 REDS - Once we receive the FOIA request we find out where, what, when, what they need from us. Which record application system to use. What project it is in, were the location of the documents may be.

---

If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

UCDEMS & Infolinx 3.2 REDS - Yes, we have the ability to search electronic records. When searching for emails and electronic records we read the the request and use key words for searching. We also locate by locate, time, class code, subject.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

None

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

None

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

HHS NIH

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

None

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

We work with POCs to retrieve any requested documents that may be under their particular area.

If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

We can search email. Sometimes we have the POC help with providing responsive emails. We have to get senior leadership approval to do a more expansive search.

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Disorganized record keeping and too many paper records. We currently are working with our immediate program areas to convert paper to electronic records and proposing an enterprise content management system.

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

No

Anything else you would like to add?

No

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

I understand that agencies are required to make a search that is "reasonably calculated" to produce the records requested. Typically this involves identifying an office or subject matter expert within the agency who would be able to search and identify responsive documents. This may also involve keyword searches or searches using other terms (author, title) through systems of records or other document management systems. For example if a requester asks for all reports on a subject, the agency might use a specialized report database and query the database by using the subject provided by the requestor. For emails, IT staff are generally asked to do a keyword search for an account or set of accounts for specified dates, and then return any responsive email documents to the FOIA Officer for processing. My knowledge is based on personal experience, reviewing FOIA request processing notes, and FOIA manuals disclosed on electronic reading rooms and via FOIA requests.

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If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

See above.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

There may be inefficiencies but I am unaware how to improve them, other than generally improving the technology used in the federal government to allow for more complete and specialized searches without much difficulty.

Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

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Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

---

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

---

Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

Department of the Interior, National Park Service

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

Google Email

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

Email requests for record searches are sent from the agency FOIA officers to offices that might have the records.

If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Employees search their own Google email accounts, and their own computer files for responsive records.

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

It is difficult to search for records held by former employees. Often their supervisors do not have their electronic records or do not know how to search them.

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

Request from sub-agencies, review of published documents; retention schedules

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

Look in printout folders

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

a) unaware of information collections; b) too little contact with IT staff or contractors to understand what's possible

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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### FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

CNCS

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

For emails, I send a request through our IT dept. to our contractor. They use Windows 365 to search, but that's limited to emails created since we adopted that software 3 or 4 years ago. Everything earlier is on magnetic tapes, so it's an incredibly cumbersome process to find and search through older emails.

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

Except for information available on our public website, or relatively recent emails, I send a search request directly to the relevant person or people and they use the Windows search function for electronic records, or search by hand through paper files.

---

If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

I have to either ask OIT to search for email records, or ask the relevant employees to search through the electronic records they have access to. I don't have electronic access across all of the agency's electronic records.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

We don't have de-duplication software, and I doubt we ever will (budget). Also, I'm dependent on others' good faith effort to conduct a complete and timely search. Mostly that works, but not always.

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

None.

---

## Anything else you would like to add?

I hope that any recommendations that come out of this process reflect the reality of agencies with tiny FOIA programs. At my agency, it's just me, and FOIA is not my only area of responsibility. Other than Adobe Pro, there's approximately zero chance we're ever going to get FOIA-supporting software. There normally isn't enough need to make it cost-effective, unless we're talking about something that's very, very cheap. However, that means that when we do get hit with the occasional giant request that the requester refuses to trim down, the requester has an unavoidably long wait ahead of them. Although you're not discussing legislation here, I'm thinking of the FOIA update this summer that only made provision for requests of over 5,000 pages to be eligible for extra processing days before a requester could take an agency to court for a late reply. Just \*gathering\* that much material would take most of the time allotted under the law, if not more. And as the sole person processing such a request, I'd realistically need months, and would need to ignore all subsequent complex-track requests.

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

USBR

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

N/A There is no standardized search software.

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

We try to find the appropriate responsive office(s) and have their management identify the subject matter expert best able to search for and identify responsive records, with instructions on scope and timekeeping statistics.

---

If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Direct the subject matter expert to use agreed upon search terms to search email and database(s), then use the search results to identify responsive records via electronic copies or duplication according to the method chosen by the requester.

---

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Usually, the subject matter experts assume that more is better and provide records that are outside of the scope of the request or are duplicative which leads to greater review complications. Most bureau personnel don't get involved with these searches and are not able to capably conduct a proper search, review, or provide release recommendations.

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

Don't understand the question. N/A

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Anything else you would like to add?

Our Department involves our Solicitors Office at the administrative stage of processing requests if we want to assert a denial of any kind, no matter how routine.

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

We have databases to be searched all have SORNS available for review.

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

Searches are completed by the component with access to the database containing the requested records. Access to databases are limited by job duties.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

See above.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Not that I'm aware of.

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

Not that I'm aware of.

---

## Anything else you would like to add?

People making requests for records should provide as much information as they can regarding the records they want a search conducted on. Vague requests that basically amount to some record contained somewhere take time away from processing requests 1) by negotiating with the requester and 2) if the requester is unwilling to narrow their search or provide more information to narrow the search then in the amount of time that has to be expended making a good faith effort to find the requested records.

The best people to request records are everyday people who request exactly what they are looking for.

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

NARA

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

ZL Archive and ZL Discovery Manager

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

An email is sent from the Office of General Counsel outlining how to conduct a search. This includes emails, share drives, and hard drives.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

N/A

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Too many false positives in the "responsive documents"

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Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

N/A

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Anything else you would like to add?

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Responses cannot be edited

## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures that you are aware of (from personal knowledge, government reports, and/or court declarations).

If not described above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records that you have knowledge of.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

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Please provide links or other references to documentation of FOIA searches that you are aware of.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

HHS

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

With any software there is going to be limitations. Sometimes it's the change in technology..everything wasn't done electronically before so there are a lot of searches that still have to be done manually or can't be done at all and that takes a lot of man power

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

you get the request, you determine if the request is proper for your agency, if so you determine what fees,if any need to be assessed then you send it out to various components trying to see who has the requested information. Depending on how that is stored, it takes time. It isn't a click of a button even with stuff on computers. Then the information is sent back and needs to be screen for security issues/cyber terrorism kinds of stuff then you stop processing according to FOIA rules and regulation

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

no, a specific department does that for security reasons and privacy issues. Do you want everyone reading your personnel file... a lot of that info is sent electronically now

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

the unrealistic timeline of 20 days. or the fact that searches aren't saved by components after a foia request is done.. then when another request comes in, double work

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

I think requesters and processors need to switch roles for a day because I think there is lack of understanding on both sides

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

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Anything else you would like to add?

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### FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

NOAA

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

N/A

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

Request is transmitted to subject matter experts (SME) to conduct a search. Completed search log is required. If scope clarification is needed, requester is contacted for clarification and clock is tolled until scope issue is resolved.

If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

Each SME/custodian conducts their own search. Email search is generally conducted by keyword. Other electronic records (hard drives, shared server locations, databases) are generally searched the same way (keyword search).

Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

Anything else you would like to add?

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## FOIA Search Survey

Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

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Anything else you would like to add?

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### FOIA Processors

Which agency do you currently work for? Your identity will remain anonymous.

DOC

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What search software does your agency use? Approximately how old is the software? Are you satisfied with it? Are there notable limitations with the software that you think should be addressed?

LaserFiche, Google Mail

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

Once the scope of the request is clear and there are no pending fee issues, FOIA points of contact in responsive divisions are tasked via FOIAOnline to conduct a search with an identified due date. The task includes instructions for completing individual and component search documentation forms, uploading responsive material into a designated repository, providing actual search fees in FO, and completion of FH statements for nondiscretionary withholdings, if applicable. These POCs task the search to custodians who have responsive material and are accountable for identifying any other offices that may have responsive material that is not tasked with a search. The custodians are responsible to search emails, hard copy files, electronic files.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

Requesters never provide key search terms and resist discussions on providing key searches.

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

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Anything else you would like to add?

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Are you a FOIA Requester or Processor?

Requester

Processor

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### FOIA Requesters

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U.S. General Services Administration

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FOIAonline

Please describe in as much detail as possible the FOIA search procedures at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of.

In GSA when an unassigned FOIA comes in, normally our search begins with the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS) followed by [www.usaspending.gov](http://www.usaspending.gov), FEDBIZOPPS and finally GSAdvantage Schedules e-Library Majority of our FOIA requests for the Federal Acquisition Service (FAS) contracts. There are also spreadsheets maintained going back to 2015 showing the requests processed, which are reviewed for previous FOIA with the same contract number. Also, Intranet Quorum is also accessible. There are numerous FOIA requests for the Public Building Service, which they use Rexus to search for leases.

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If you have not described it above, please describe the procedures for searching email and other electronic records at your agency or other agencies that you have knowledge of. Do you have the ability to search electronic records? If not, what is the reason given for this?

All email pulls requested go through a formal process. The FOIA director reviews the proposed query then has the GSA FOIA Officer review it. Next it is sent to the OCIO for the email pull. Once completed then personal emails are redacted and any other PII.

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Are there inefficiencies in the FOIA search procedures that you are familiar with? If so, what are they? How could they be improved?

GSA has the best FOIA team. Working in the FOIA Office gives me a feeling of accomplishment on a daily basis. Our FOIA Director Travis Lewis is a great leader by understanding his employees' needs and their various work styles.

Do you know of any links that document the search procedure at your or other agencies? If so, please paste them here.

<https://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/105305>

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Anything else you would like to add?

The FOIA Program is important, I'm glad to work in assisting the Presidential Initiative  
Transparency in Government.

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