

Be An Online Detective!


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Today's Agenda

- » The World of Online Public Records
- » Searching for People Using Online Tools
- » Where Else Can I Find Online Public Records?

Where Does *FREE* Online Personal Info Come From?

- » Public Records
 - Business registrations, campaign contributions . . .
- » Publicly Available Information
 - Phone listings, newspaper articles, death and wedding notices . . .
- » Personally Provided Information
 - Blog postings, social network sites . . .
- » Private Company Information
 - Subscriptions, sweepstakes, warranties, surveys . . .

What Are Public Records?

- » **Public records** are maintained by government agencies (federal, state, or local) as directed by law and made available to the public with or without restrictions (e.g., occupational licenses)
- » **Publicly available records** are maintained by nongovernment agencies and made available to the public without restrictions (e.g., telephone listings)

Finding Illinois Public Records

- » Few Illinois public records are available for free online from Illinois government websites
- » Private companies obtain public records in bulk from Illinois agencies and may publish or resell them
- » Some second hand public record information then shows up for free online on nongovernment websites

Free Online Illinois Public Records

- » Property Records
- » Business Registrations
- » Professional Licenses
- » Campaign Contributions
- » Sex Offenders and Current Inmates
- » Voter Registration (Verification Only)

What's NOT Available for Free Online

- ↳ Vital Records (Birth, Death, and Marriage Certificates) unless 50+ years old
- ↳ Criminal Records, with some exceptions
- ↳ Court Records, with minor exceptions
- ↳ Motor Vehicle Records (not a public record in Illinois)

Property Records

- ↳ Cook County Property Tax Portal (www.cookcountypropertyinfo.com)
 - Joint website for Cook County Assessor's and Treasurer's Offices
 - Search by address to find photo of property, owner's name, property tax info, and more
- ↳ Cook County Recorder of Deeds (www.cookrecorder.com)
 - Search by name to see property owned by a person as well as other records
- ↳ Zillow (www.zillow.com) and Redfin (www.redfin.com)
 - Find estimated market values for homes

Crime Maps & Reports

- ↳ Spotcrime.com (www.spotcrime.com) & CrimeReports.com (www.crimereports.com)
 - Create a map of recent local crimes by address or zip code
 - Doesn't work for all communities
- ↳ Check the websites of local police departments for reports of crimes
 - Skokie Public Safety Bulletin (www.skokiepolice.org/official-public-safety-bulletin.html#)
 - Skokie Recent Arrests (www.skokiepolice.org/recent-arrests.html)
 - Evanston Police Reports (www.cityofevanston.org/government/departments/police/reports/daily-crime-reports)

Malpractice, Mug Shots, & Sex Offenders

- ↳ Illinois Physician Profile Search (www.idfpr.com/applications/professionprofile)
 - Look up malpractice actions, felony convictions, and other information on physicians
 - Malpractice actions also available on Healthgrades (www.healthgrades.com)
- ↳ Mugshots.com (www.mugshots.com)
 - Commercial website publishes arrest records
- ↳ Illinois Sex Offender Information (www.isp.state.il.us/sor/sor.cfm)
 - Search for sex offenders by name or location

Recent Vital Records

- ↳ Cook County Clerk's Office Vital Records (www.cookcountyclerk.com/agency/vital-records)
 - Vital records can be requested in person, by mail, at currency exchange, or online
 - Request forms, fees, and ID required
 - Only related parties can request vital records less than 20 or so years old
- ↳ VitalChek (www.vitalchek.com)
 - Private company expedites records requests for a fee
- ↳ Vitalrec (www.vitalrec.com)
 - Good finding aid for out-of-state and foreign vital records

Old Vital Records

- ↳ FamilySearch (www.familysearch.org)
 - Good source for older Cook County vital records
 - Requires free registration
- ↳ Cook County Genealogy Online (genealogy.cookcountyclerk.com)
 - Search 8 million older vital records
 - Records can be purchased online
- ↳ Ancestry (databases.skokielibrary.info)
 - Genealogy database that must be searched from a library computer

Other Interesting Record Sites

- BGA Payroll Database (www.bettergov.org/payroll)
 - See salaries and pensions for public employees in Illinois (not comprehensive)
- The Smoking Gun (www.thesmokinggun.com)
 - View public records on celebrity mishaps

Finding People Using Online Tools

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Why Are Some People Hard to Find?

- Some names are very common
- Some people change their names or use variations on their names
- Some people have unlisted numbers, nonpublished numbers, or just a cell phone
- Some people are dead

Is Someone Dead?

- Social Security Death Index
 - Available from the Ancestry database on a library computer (databases.skokieilibrary.info)
 - Doesn't include deaths within the last three years
- DeathIndexes.com (www.deathindexes.com)
 - Provides links to hundreds of online death indexes
- MelissaDATA Death Check (www.melissadata.com/lookups/deathcheck.asp)
 - More current than the SSDI
- Unofficial Social Security Number Verification/Decoding (www.ssnvalidator.com)
 - See if a SSN is valid, when it was issued, and in what state

Specialized Phone Directories

- ReferenceUSA (databases.skokieilibrary.info)
 - Some residential information taken from print phonebooks—may be out of date!
 - Good for reverse look-ups and neighbor searches
 - Separate "U.S. Consumers" Search has more listings and information than "U.S. Standard White Pages" Search
- Mergent Intellect (databases.skokieilibrary.info)
 - Identifies related people such as parents and siblings
- GetHuman (www.gethuman.com)
 - Find the best way to contact a big company
- D&B Hoover's (databases.skokieilibrary.info)
 - Find company executives and headquarters contact info

Reverse Look-Ups

- Haines Criss-Cross Directories (ask at the Reference Desk)
 - Best source for reverse look-ups for Chicago and suburbs
 - Includes names and addresses for nonpublished listings
- Phone Validator (www.phonevalidator.com) and WhitePages.com (www.whitepages.com)
 - Indicates whether a phone number is from a cell phone or landline, its geographic area, and provider
- Who Called Me (www.who-calledme.com)
 - Good place to look up unidentified phone numbers from telemarketers and other nuisances
- Melissa DATA (www.melissa.com/v2/lookups)
 - Do many different kinds of reverse look-ups from this page

Cell Phone Numbers and Email Addresses

- ↳ No good way to get this information for free
- ↳ No free way to do a reverse look-up for a cell phone number
- ↳ Intelius (www.intelius.com) and other companies sell email addresses and cell phone numbers
- ↳ Spy Dialer (www.spydialer.com) allows people to listen to the voicemail answering message attached to a cell phone number
- ↳ Email Hunter (hunter.io)
 - Good tool for finding or verifying company email addresses
 - Similar to Voila Norbet (www.voilanorbert.com)

Online People Finders

- ↳ WhitePages.com (www.whitepages.com)
 - More comprehensive than ReferenceUSA
 - Good for reverse look-ups and neighbor searches
- ↳ Family Tree Now (www.familytreenow.com)
 - Genealogy website with very good information on living people
 - Provides current and older addresses, phone numbers, ages, and related person's names

Fee Sites with Free Info

- ↳ Intelius (www.intelius.com) and USSearch (www.ussearch.com)
 - Provides ages, previous cities lived in, and lists of relatives
 - May have different versions of names (e.g., maiden and married names)
- ↳ Check Illinois (consumer.public-record.com)
 - Preview search results for Illinois public records
 - Searches DUIs, divorces, felony arrests, bankruptcies, real estate transactions, probate records, etc.
- ↳ LexisNexis Person Reports (www.lexisnexis.com/privacy/for-consumers/request-personal-information.aspx)
 - Request a free report on yourself only

Meta Search Sites

- ↳ Search multiple public record and social networking sites at the same time from these sites:
 - Black Book Online People Profiler (www.blackbookonline.info/people-profiler.aspx)
 - PeekYou (www.peakyou.com)

Where Else Can I Find Online Public Records?



Links to Even More Public Records

- ↳ Black Book Online (www.blackbookonline.info)
 - Many useful links for the amateur detective
- ↳ BRB's Free Resource Center (www.brbbpub.com/free-public-records)
 - Collection of links to public record sites provided by major publisher of public records books