

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 for Some Counties
- ∞ 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)

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

- ☞ CriminalSearches' Neighborhood Watch (www.criminalsearches.com/neighborhood)
 - Search for criminals in your area
- ☞ 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 (www.skokie.org/publicsafetybulletin.cfm)
 - Evanston (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/vitalrecords)

- 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 Cook County vital records 50+ years old
- ✎ Cook County Genealogy Online (www.cookcountygenealogy.com)
 - Search 8 million older vital records with free registration
 - Records can be purchased online
- ✎ Ancestry (databases.skokielibrary.info)
 - Genealogy database that must be searched from a library computer

Other Interesting Record Sites

- ☞ Teacher Salary Database (www.familytaxpayers.org/salary.php)
 - See how much an Illinois public school teacher earns
- ☞ 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



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.skokielibrary.info)
- ✎ DeathIndexes.com (www.deathindexes.com)
 - Provides links to hundreds of online death indexes
- ✎ MelissaDATA Death Check (www.melissadata.com/lookups/deathcheck.asp)
 - Look up deaths within the last 24 months
- ✎ 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.skokie.library.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
- ☞ GetHuman (www.gethuman.com)
 - Find the best way to contact a big company
- ☞ Hoover’s (databases.skokie.library.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
- ☞ MyCallBot (www.mycallbot.com)
 - Good place to look up unidentified phone numbers from telemarketers and other nuisances
- ☞ Melissa DATA (www.melissadata.com/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) and Anymail Finder (www.anymailfinder.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
- 🌀 Zabasearch (www.zabasearch.com)
 - Provides both current and older information
 - Users must log in with a Facebook account

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)
 - Pipl (www.pipl.com)
 - 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.brbpub.com/free-public-records)
 - Collection of links to public record sites provided by major publisher of public records books