

NexGen FOIA Technology Showcase

Day 2, Topic 1: The future of FOIA

Since its inception in 1967, the Freedom of Information Act/Privacy Act (FOIA/PA) has placed the onus on government agencies to disclose information and release documents upon request by the public. Agencies are facing a growing demand from its citizens to respond to these requests with speed and accuracy. In its current state, responding to FOIA/PA requests require large amounts of manual and time-intensive labor, cumulating in an increasing backlog of unprocessed requests. Fulfilling these requests is becoming increasingly expensive and directly contributes to ballooning overhead. Agencies require automated processing support services to close the growing capacity gap of documents that require manual processing for case management, redaction and eDiscovery.

IBM brings extensive experience deploying solutions, at scale, within Government environments in conjunction with unique past performance successfully delivering the largest Intelligent Automation Platform (IAP) in production within the Government. IBM is uniquely positioned to support our Federal Partners in closing this gap through the implementation of modern automation processes and technology to more efficiently process NARA's FOIA requests while maintaining a human-centric and quality management focus. IBM has successfully established partnerships to apply technologies that construct our automation platform, such as Robotic Process Automation (RPA), Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR), Intelligent Form Recognition (IFR), Natural Language Processing (NLP), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to automate document intake, redaction, and eDiscovery processes. In this capacity, IBM has worked side-by-side with Government agencies to start-up and scale programs and automation platforms that operate 24x7.

IBM's automation platform is an Authorized To Operate (ATO) Commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) solution that has been successfully deployed across development, test, and production environments within the Government; is operable across security levels and agnostic to cloud environments; and is integrated with backend databases and incoming document ingestion streams. We bring processes and procedures to facilitate continuous performance monitoring and human-in-the-loop interaction to improve processing quality and accuracy.

The Future of FOIA

IBM's Automation Platform outlined above is providing a path to enable Government Agencies to realize the future of FOIA processing today. Our expertise in automating workflows infused with AI to provide an automated redaction product places us in a unique position of being able to provide insights into where opportunities exist today, and what challenges may lie ahead. Some additional insights into the future of FOIA across 4 areas are provided as follows.

Case Management and Business Process Automation

Opportunities exist for organizations to infuse additional automation in discovery, retrieval, and redaction of documents and other digital media. Advancements in RPA, APIs, OCR/ICR, NLP, and other exponential technologies are accelerating digital transformation and business process automation. They allow organizations to rapidly and accurately identify requested information, connect and gather those requested items, and deliver them to the requester in a timely and automated fashion. As Agency confidence improves in our automated systems, less human



interaction will be required, allowing case analysts to move into more value-add roles and away from highly repetitive tasks.

OCR/ICR Engines and Content Intelligence

As OCR/ICR Engines and computer vision continue to advance, our ability to classify and redact documents and other digital media will only improve. The continued advancement in this space is critical as unstructured data continues to grow in order to gain insights and take action on the data. Critical for government agencies is the ability to rapidly adapt to and have access to the most current state of the technology. Leveraging platforms such as IBM's Automation Platform provides opportunities for Agencies to rapidly introduce new technologies, deliberately selected to overcome the challenges of operating within Government ecosystems.

Entity Detection and Redaction

Entity detection and redaction is a complex and ever-changing capability area. Technologies continue to improve; however, it is the upstream extraction as well as the non-technological governance areas that continue to be areas of opportunity as well. Government agencies must have the agility in their business processes and redaction capabilities to adapt to the changing landscape of privacy laws that may drive changes to what should and should not be redacted. Additionally, each organization may have unique business processes and business requirements, requiring custom models for each organization driving the need for a flexible solution to adapt to these changing requirements.

Continuous Improvement

IBM realizes the importance of continuing to ask ourselves how we can use data that is collected from our FOIA automation platforms to make the technology better and improve our processes. For example, utilizing redaction accuracy data from our platform allows us to make data informed decisions on areas that require additional human in the loop attention, where the platform is accurate and/or may require additional improvements.

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