

# The Federal FOIA Ombudsman



FOIA =  
accountability  
through  
transparency =  
democracy

# The FOIA Landscape

99 Executive Branch entities:  
15 departments and 84 agencies  
= 350 or so components

# FOIA reform in US since 1966

- exemptions from disclosure
- fees
- time limits
- law enforcement
- technology

# U.S. FOIA reform 2007

- Dispute resolution
- Customer service
- Executive responsibility

# www.ogis.archives.gov

The screenshot shows the OGIS Home Page in a Mozilla Firefox browser window. The browser's address bar displays "https://ogis.archives.gov". The page features a navigation menu with links for "Glossary", "Subscribe", "Contact Us", and "Website Feedback". The main content area includes the OGIS logo, the title "The Federal FOIA Ombudsman", and a search bar. A horizontal menu contains links for "About OGIS", "About FOIA", "For FOIA Requesters", "For Federal Agencies", "OGIS Toolbox", and "News & Events". The main text area is titled "The Office of Government Information Services" and provides a detailed description of the office's mission. A sidebar on the right contains a "Search the OGIS Library" button, a "FOIA Improvement Tip?" button, and a "How Do I?" section with links for "Contact OGIS", "Make an OGIS Request", "Check the status of my OGIS request", "View the current case log", "Make a FOIA request", and "Appeal a FOIA response". At the bottom left, there is a section for "The OGIS Blog" with a small image of a blog icon and a link to "Read the blog (and comment on the posts) here."

OGIS Home Page - Mozilla Firefox


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OGIS Home Page

archives.gov https://ogis.archives.gov

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 **OGIS** The Federal FOIA Ombudsman  
OFFICE of GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES

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## The Office of Government Information Services

The Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) is a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) resource for the public and the government. Congress has charged us with reviewing FOIA policies, procedures and compliance of Federal agencies and to recommend changes to FOIA based on what we see. Our mission also includes resolving FOIA disputes between Federal agencies and requesters.

OGIS is a place where anyone can ask for FOIA assistance. In other words we also serve as the FOIA ombudsman -- answering questions, tracking suggestions and providing information. See something we should know about? Have a suggestion to improve FOIA? [Let us know.](#)

### The OGIS Blog

*The FOIA Ombudsman: Information and Advice* features posts on timely FOIA topics and events. [Read the blog \(and comment on the posts\) here.](#)

Search the OGIS Library

FOIA Improvement Tip?

## How Do I?

- [Contact OGIS](#)
- [Make an OGIS Request](#)
- [Check the status of my OGIS request](#)
- [View the current case log](#)
- [Make a FOIA request](#)
- [Appeal a FOIA response](#)

# OGIS Mission as FOIA Ombudsman (established September 2009)

- Review FOIA compliance, policy and procedures
- Provide mediation services to resolve disputes between requesters & agencies

# FOIA by the numbers

**644,145:** FOIA requests filed in FY 2011

**3%:** avg. rate of requests which are appealed

**>1,500 :** matters brought to OGIS for assistance since opening in Sept. '09





# U.S. FOIA reform 2007

(1) Systemic review and  
recommendations for  
improvements

# U.S. FOIA reform 2007

(2) Prevent and resolve  
disputes:

OGIS

+

FOIA Public Liaisons

# Providing Mediation Services

- Mediation
- Facilitation
- Ombuds Services

# Open Government Partnership - US National Action Plan 2011

includes:

- Modernize management of government records
- Continue to improve FOIA administration

**NO RECORDS  
MANAGEMENT?**

**NO ACCESS!**

“harness new  
technologies”  
+  
culture change

# OGIS's Blog: blogs.archives.gov/foiablog



## The FOIA Ombudsman

Building a bridge between FOIA requesters and Federal agencies

Site search

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[About The FOIA Ombudsman: Information and Advice](#)

[About the Bloggers](#)

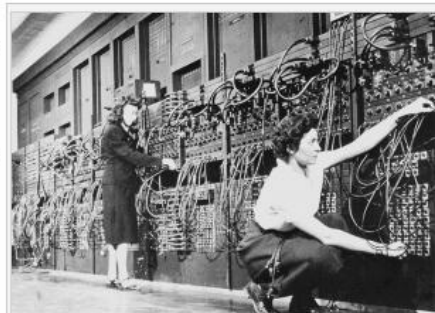
[Comment and Posting Policy](#)

### OK Computer: Announcing the FOIA Information Technology (IT) Working Group

In August 2011, OGIS hosted a meeting of FOIA IT professionals from the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, and State, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to discuss how technology can streamline the FOIA process. This single meeting spawned a group of FOIA and IT professionals who are sharing ideas, making plans and dreaming big about new ways to apply technology to the FOIA process.

Though the FOIA IT Working Group formed in October 2011, it already has big plans. Items being discussed include:

- Ways to collect the IT requirements of FOIA professionals and communicate those to the companies that create products for this audience;
- Technologies that agencies now use that can be re-purposed for FOIA (such as using the Intelink intranet to streamline consultations and referrals);
- Increasing participation in the **FOIA Portal** and helping agencies recognize the potential benefit of this effort; and
- Applying this group's unique knowledge to FOIA issues such as database requests and releasing best practices to help agencies better navigate them.



The more things change, the more they stay the same. Photograph of World's First Computer, the Electronic Numerical Integrator and Calculator (ARC identifier 594262)

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