

## Be An Online Detective!

  
Steven Jablonski  
Skokie Public Library

## 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 in Illinois)

## Property Records

- ↳ Cook County Property Tax Portal ([www.cookcountypropertyinfo.com](http://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](http://www.cookrecorder.com))
  - Search by name to see property owned by a person as well as other records
- ↳ Zillow ([www.zillow.com](http://www.zillow.com)) and Redfin ([www.redfin.com](http://www.redfin.com))
  - Find estimated market values for homes

## Crime Maps & Reports

- ↳ Spotcrime.com ([www.spotcrime.com](http://www.spotcrime.com)) & CrimeReports.com ([www.crimereports.com](http://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.skokiepolice.org/p2c/official-public-safety-bulletin.html](http://www.skokiepolice.org/p2c/official-public-safety-bulletin.html))
  - Evanston ([www.cityofevanston.org/government/departments/police/reports/daily-crime-reports](http://www.cityofevanston.org/government/departments/police/reports/daily-crime-reports))

## Malpractice, Mug Shots, & Sex Offenders

- ↳ Illinois Physician Profile Search ([www.idfpr.com/applications/professionprofile](http://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](http://www.healthgrades.com))
- ↳ Mugshots.com ([www.mugshots.com](http://www.mugshots.com))
  - Commercial website publishes arrest records
- ↳ Chicago Police Arrests ([publicsearch1.chicagopolice.org](http://publicsearch1.chicagopolice.org))
  - Search for arrests made by Chicago Police Department
- ↳ Illinois Sex Offender Information ([www.isp.state.il.us/sor/sor.cfm](http://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](http://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](http://www.vitalchek.com))
  - Private company expedites records requests for a fee
- ↳ Vitalrec ([www.vitalrec.com](http://www.vitalrec.com))
  - Good finding aid for out-of-state and foreign vital records

## Old Vital Records

- ↳ FamilySearch ([www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org))
  - Good source for Cook County vital records 50+ years old
  - Requires free registration
- ↳ Cook County Genealogy Online ([www.cookcountygenealogy.com](http://www.cookcountygenealogy.com))
  - Search 8 million older vital records with free registration
  - Records can be purchased online
- ↳ Ancestry ([databases.skokieilibrary.info](http://databases.skokieilibrary.info))
  - Genealogy database that must be searched from a library computer

## Other Interesting Record Sites

- BGA Payroll Database ([www.bettergov.org/payroll](http://www.bettergov.org/payroll))
  - See salaries and pensions for public employees in Illinois (not comprehensive)
- The Smoking Gun ([www.thesmokinggun.com](http://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.skokieilibrary.info](http://databases.skokieilibrary.info))
  - Doesn't include deaths within the last three years
- DeathIndexes.com ([www.deathindexes.com](http://www.deathindexes.com))
  - Provides links to hundreds of online death indexes
- MelissaDATA Death Check ([www.melissadata.com/lookups/deathcheck.asp](http://www.melissadata.com/lookups/deathcheck.asp))
  - More current than the SSDI
- Unofficial Social Security Number Verification/Decoding ([www.ssnvalidator.com](http://www.ssnvalidator.com))
  - See if a SSN is valid, when it was issued, and in what state

## Specialized Phone Directories

- ReferenceUSA ([databases.skokieilibrary.info](http://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 People Search ([databases.skokieilibrary.info](http://databases.skokieilibrary.info))
  - Identifies related people such as parents and siblings
- GetHuman ([www.gethuman.com](http://www.gethuman.com))
  - Find the best way to contact a big company
- Hoover's ([databases.skokieilibrary.info](http://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](http://www.phonevalidator.com)) and WhitePages.com ([www.whitepages.com](http://www.whitepages.com))
  - Indicates whether a phone number is from a cell phone or landline, its geographic area, and provider
- Melissa DATA ([www.melissadata.com/lookups](http://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](http://www.intelius.com)) and other companies sell email addresses and cell phone numbers
- ↳ Spy Dialer ([www.spydialer.com](http://www.spydialer.com))
  - Allows people to listen to the voicemail answering message attached to a cell phone number
  - Check to see if a number is reported as spam
- ↳ Email Hunter ([hunter.io](http://hunter.io))
  - Good tool for finding or verifying company email addresses
  - Similar to Voila Norbet ([www.voilanorbert.com](http://www.voilanorbert.com))

## Online People Finders

- ↳ WhitePages.com ([www.whitepages.com](http://www.whitepages.com))
  - More comprehensive than ReferenceUSA
  - Good for reverse look-ups and neighbor searches
- ↳ Family Tree Now ([www.familytreenow.com](http://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](http://www.intelius.com)) and USSearch ([www.ussearch.com](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.blackbookonline.info/people-profiler.aspx))
  - Pipl ([www.pipl.com](http://www.pipl.com))
  - PeekYou ([www.peakyou.com](http://www.peakyou.com))

## Where Else Can I Find Online Public Records?



## Links to Even More Public Records

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