

White Paper

A High-Speed, COTS Solution for Processing ATIP Requests



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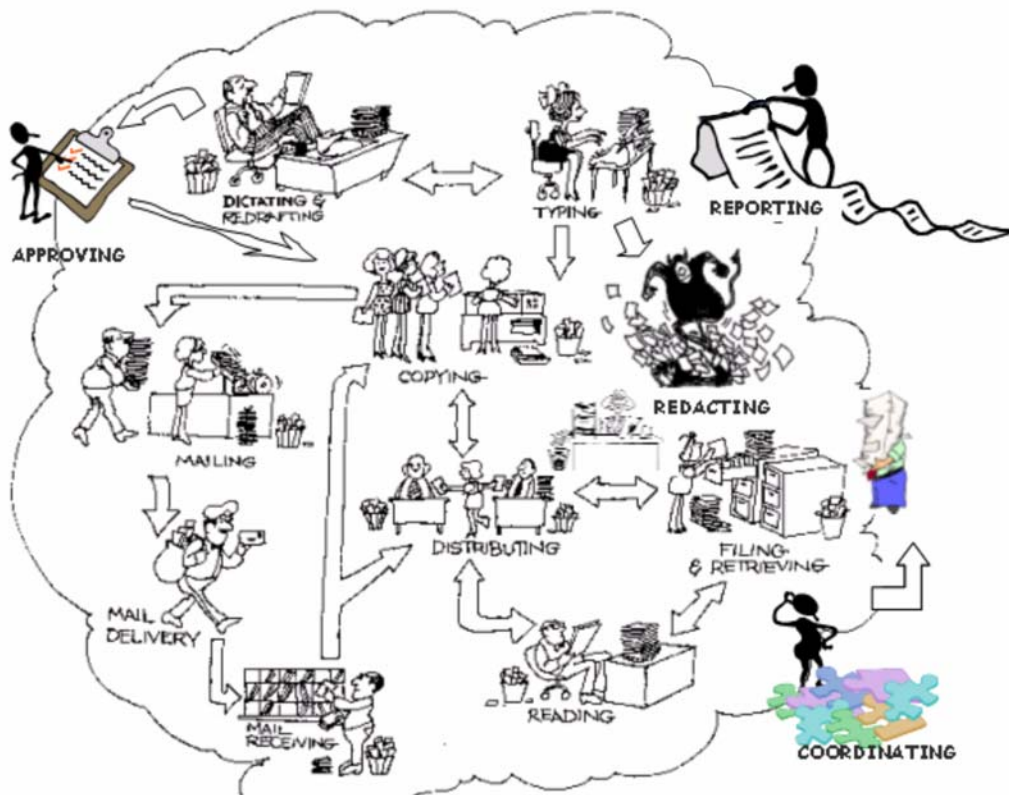
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1. PROBLEM

For many federal institutions, dealing with ATIP requests and preparing federally mandated reports is largely a labor- and paper-intensive process, with little or no up-to-date automated support. To be able to comply with Access to Information Act and Privacy Act (ATIP) requests, institutions need a solution that is designed specifically to manage ATIP requests and complaints; rapidly generate mandatory reports; improve institutions' responsiveness and ability to meet statutory deadlines; communicate effectively with requestors; provide complete, consistent and reliable performance data; automate functions such as fee calculations and invoicing; manage documents and statistics; and reduce time, labor, cost and paperwork.



Lacking a potent electronic ATIP system, the processing of requests creates vast amounts of paper documents for reviewing, redacting, revising, delivery to requestors, and office retention. This mode of operation wastes the time and skill of staff in shepherding paper documents, when it could be spent more effectively on higher priority tasks.

A completely manual or partially automated system often does not have a central repository where all documents for a particular request can be readily accessed. With distributed processing across field offices or otherwise geographically distributed locations, there is usually no standardized process for responses, content and style that makes use of templates to eliminate duplicative writing and keyboarding. The lack of a standardized, institution-wide, web based system means that ATIP Officers cannot rapidly and efficiently share information and documents and appropriately manage the processing

of the requests. This situation also increases maintenance cost and training requirements. Tracking the status of a case in progress, controlling and directing workflow, and redirecting priorities are but a few of the obstacles caused by the paper/manual process.

Even as institutions are overwhelmed with the high number of requests and face considerable backlogs, there is increasing pressure from the Office of the Information Commissioner, the media, and the public to respond on time without a concomitant increase in human resources. The following background section touches upon the legislation for freedom of information. Section 3 describes a web-based COTS solution designed specifically for ATIP Offices that is available today, and is rapidly being deployed throughout the federal government.

2. BACKGROUND

The purpose of the ATIA is to provide a right of access to information in records under the control of a government institution in accordance with the principles that government information should be available to the public. This right is limited by statutory restrictions related to specific types of information that either cannot be disclosed or, through the exercise of discretion, may be withheld. Other limitations are more administrative in nature, for example, fees can be charged which can, in some cases, restrict the information disclosed. This basic premise of the ATIA indicates Parliament's goal to create legislative requirements that contribute to transparency and accountability. Implementing the ATIA has been challenging for government institutions. Designing, developing and implementing appropriate administrative frameworks for proper service delivery has been made more difficult by a constantly increasing volume of requests and, for many departments, an increasing volume of records to be processed in response to those requests.

Since 1983, more than 277,000 Access to Information requests have been filed at federal government organizations. According to Treasury Board Secretariat statistics, the average cost to process an Access to Information request was \$855. in 2005. The average request cost based on the cost/request over the last six years is \$982. Over \$232 million has been spent on the administration of the ATIA since its inception. These numbers indicate that attaining the goal of the Act does not come cheap. The reality is that most government institutions currently subject to the Act are chronically short of the required resources. Their experience means that the challenges of meeting statutory requirements, such as the statutory deadlines, cannot always be met. This failure has resulted in public and regulator criticism that reflects negatively on the various institutions. The Information Commissioner of Canada began undertaking detailed performance analyses of specific institutions in 1999 and, in May of 2000 issued a Special Report to Parliament on the compliance with response deadlines. In that report, each of the six institutions assessed were given a grade of "F" for failing to complete at least 80% of their requests within the statutory deadlines. The public, including academics and the media, regularly criticize government institutions for not responding in a timely manner.

The Privacy Act protects individuals' personal information and provides them with a right to seek access to, and correction of, their personal information. While the Privacy Act contains detailed provisions on how institutions can collect, use, disclose and retain personal information, a highly resource-intensive component of the Act is the portion that gives individuals a right to seek access to their own personal information. For some government institutions, processing such requests represents a significant portion of their business.

Both acts set out detailed rules with respect to how institutions can respond to a request, and they establish legal restrictions on the actions that the organization can take in responding to a request. The unfortunate results include public criticism for 1) not disclosing on time, or refusing to disclose enough information or, 2) disclosing information that, to some audiences, reflects badly on the organization.

It is critical that any organization that is subject to the ATIA establishes all of the right ingredients to:

- Meet statutory compliance requirements

- Meet those requirements with appropriate and acceptable resource inputs
- Meet the statutory requirements in a manner that risk-manages the negative outcomes
- Maintain appropriate performance measurement capacities to support its resource inputs and defend itself against challenges from the regulator, elected officials and the media.

Of course, there is substantial variation among government institutions and their missions, and substantial variation in the extent to which they have provided automatic dissemination of information. To some extent, this is a legacy of information infrastructure. Agencies use a variety of electronic systems, including a range of databases and different kinds of proprietary and non-proprietary software, to create and maintain records. Even within many branches, component institutions have difficulty sharing electronic data among themselves, much less with the public.

3. SOLUTION

ATIPXpress is the most comprehensive, Web-based, COTS application available for processing Access to Information Act (ATIP) and Privacy Act (PA) requests. In a single software package, it is designed specifically to automate ATIP case processing and document review for public requests for information in records under the control of government institutions. The application is currently in use by over 40 US government agencies, and is rapidly gaining recognition throughout the world as the best value solution.

This powerful, feature-rich application automates compliance with ATIP regulations, and transforms the work of ATIP processing from paper, manual labor and needlessly repetitive tasks to automated processes commanded by menus and icons.

ATIPXpress electronically stores, retrieves, redacts, and prints documents for delivery to ATIP requesters. It also keeps track of ATIP processing statistics and fees, and generates reports on the number, types, and disposition of ATIP requests processed, as required by the Treasury Board Secretariat. Requests can be submitted and tracked over the Internet and records can be delivered electronically to the requestor.

ATIP Management Functions are Completely Automated

- **System Control**

Administrative users can configure audit trails and function-based user restrictions. All users can create documents and reports using powerful tools. In addition, users can add case actions and other functions as their specific business lines require.

- **Reporting**

Automatically generate required Annual Reports to Parliament (in seconds vs. weeks), billing reports, and audit trail reports. Producing s69 Schedules for consultation with the Privy Council Office is automated, saving your staff significant headaches and time. In addition, users can configure their own reports, using virtually every data element in the system, and save them for repeated use.

- **Document Review, Redaction and De-Classification**

Includes a complete advanced electronic redaction toolset for search, retrieval, review and redaction of documents. Once scanned into the system, there is no need to index the records. OCR search features working with UNICODE enable multi-lingual document searches. ATIP exemptions and exclusions are quickly and easily noted within the redactions for easy reference, and stored in the database for automated compliance reporting. The redaction toolset includes multi-layer redactions, which provide a history of who made what redactions to each page as they move through the process. In addition, the system provides rectangle and polygon redaction shapes, with stamping, sticky-notes and comments.

- **Workflow Control**

Assign and re-assign requests to staff, track progress requests, produce letters, memoranda and email, create productivity and case status reports, and receive reminders of outstanding or pending

actions. Add-on packages enable your remote program staff to assemble their records at their site, scan them, conduct a preliminary redaction, and securely send them to your central ATIP office.

- **Electronic Delivery**

Deliver responses via email or the Internet; use form letters in MS Word or WordPerfect for standardized bilingual responses, and any other authorized correspondence; reduce paper. Once the responsive records are severed, the withheld text is electronically removed and replaced by meaningless pixels so there is no way a recipient can reverse the severances and view protected information.

- **Fee/Payment Management**



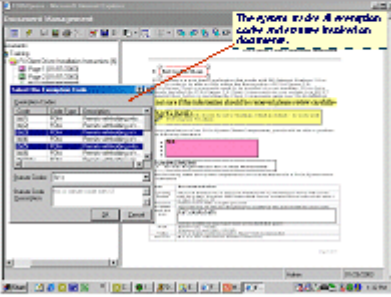
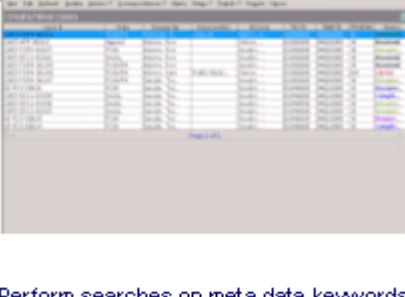
Manages fee structures by calculating payments required for search, preparation, and reproduction based on institution's policy.

- **User Group Committee**

Every department that uses ATIPXpress is welcome to participate in a User Group Committee that meets regularly to discuss system functionality and system improvements. The changes are reviewed by the AINS, inc. upgrade committee, and will be reflected in the next annual update to the system. All users around the world benefit from the upgrades.

ATIPXpress User Interface

AINS has developed a single graphic interface for all of the ATIP tasks, integrated with Documentum, Hummingbird, or OpenText, with Oracle or MS SQL Server as the database. Pre-designed and ad hoc reports and searches can be generated on demand.

 <p>Set up custom and ad hoc reports.</p>	 <p>Generate your annual DOJ report in just seconds</p>
 <p>Powerful, multi-layered, color redaction with just a click to insert exemption codes.</p>	 <p>Perform searches on meta data keywords and full text.</p>

ATIPXpress Open Architecture

As with all AINS COTS products, ATIPXpress is designed as modular, open architecture, ready for custom configuration and expansion as clients needs change and expand. AINS has developed a single graphic interface for all of the ATIP tasks, integrated with Documentum, Hummingbird, or OpenText. It uses Oracle or MS SQL Server as the database. Documentum is certified for records management (reference: DoD 5015.2-STD Compliant Product Registers). Figure 1 presents a simplified view of the general ATIPXpress architecture.

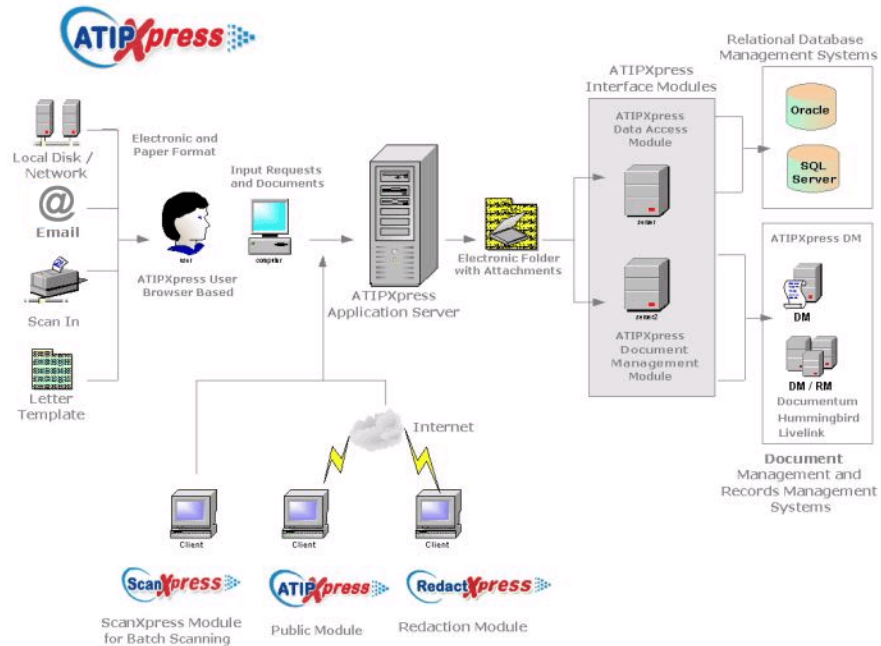


Figure 1. ATIPXpress Open Architecture

Build or Buy?

Some agencies are considering building a system from scratch, while others are seeking integrated, less expensive, COTS solutions in the marketplace. The answer is here: ATIPXpress is ready to go: no development, no delays!

Check out ATIPXpress today!

If you need a comprehensive solution for your Access to Information Act and Privacy Act responsibilities, call us for a free consultation and live, hands-on demonstration of ATIPXpress.

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