

Discovering Data in Today's Government

INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE



Introduction

Government organizations face growing volumes of data and increasing pressure to provide information more transparently. At the same time, they must maintain the privacy of citizens' data, reduce costs and provide user-friendly digital services and interfaces – letting users access data and services at the touch of a finger.

Much of the data government stores that would help meet these needs, however, is unknown or nearly impossible to find because it is in disparate areas or siloes – in archives, file shares, outdated and legacy systems, employees' computers and other hard-to-reach places. This unknown data represents a vast source of costs, risks and opportunities. It also causes public-sector employees and citizens who need to access this data quickly a variety of problems.

The solution may lie in technology that has traditionally been used for legal eDiscovery. This technology is capable of directly indexing virtually all forms of unstructured information, in any language, and processing complex proprietary formats.

To understand how eDiscovery technology can help government agencies search, investigate and better manage structured and unstructured data, GovLoop partnered with Nuix, a leader in solving data challenges—one of which is eDiscovery—for this industry perspective.

In the following pages, we will lay out how leaders at Nuix recommended the government can address working with big data volumes and complex file formats, find fast answers to data challenges and discuss how to consolidate data into searchable and manageable intelligence – no matter the size or complexity of the data set.



The Data Challenges Government Faces Today

As technology continues to evolve and advance at an unprecedented pace, new and unforeseen data management and indexing challenges are emerging. Personal computers have been supplanted by smartphones and tablets, and storage capacity in these types of devices is routinely measured in the tens or hundreds of gigabytes and, in some cases, even terabytes. These are volumes that just a few years ago were only found in servers.

While government is reaching new heights with this data and the information and insights it provides, many agencies are still struggling with a number of issues, particularly in data structure, data integrity and processing capabilities. Making sense of all the data that government must collect and share is hard enough for any one individual, let alone an entire organization. And specifically for government agencies, today's explosion in data growth is fueling greater demands for solutions that can help them analyze data and ultimately make better decisions.

But achieving that goal is no small task, due to a variety of reasons, including insufficient manpower, the sheer volume of data, a variety of mandates that agencies must now comply with and insufficient time.

“For the inquiries that are coming in, organizations need to be able to respond in a timely fashion,” said Stephen Stewart, Chief Technology Officer at Nuix. “And accordingly, the expectations of response from citizens have also increased. But the amount of time allowed for them does not also increase relative to the amount of data that an organization has under its control.”

Many agencies are facing records management challenges that affect their ability to respond effectively to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Those challenges are resulting in severe backlogs that are frustrating for the responding agencies—and also to the people making the requests.

The 2011 *Managing Government Records Memorandum* and the 2012 *NARA Records Management Directive* required agencies to begin managing their email records in an accessible format by the end of 2016. By 2019, they must retain all electronic records in a digitally accessible format for preservation by the National Archives and Records Administration. And more recently, the proposed *OPEN Government Data Act* would require all federal agencies to publish their information online, using nonproprietary, machine-readable data formats.

These mandates, the increasing number of FOIA requests from citizens, the ever-growing data volume and shrinking budgets and skillsets are all combining to create eDiscovery, investigations and records management challenges that even spill over into the realm of cybersecurity. After all, if you don't know what kind of information you have on your systems or you haven't prioritized it properly, how can you ever begin to protect it?

“The ability to adapt and deploy new systems moves nowhere near the speed that the data has been stacking up,” said Joe Babineau, Senior Solutions Engineer at Nuix USG. “Agency leaders can't get new systems demoed to them as fast as their data's growing.”

Agencies need to streamline their processes and ensure their systems will be capable of handling the increased demands for processing and reviewing data. Implementing technology to meet these requirements will make it easier for agencies to manage data as well as curb skyrocketing costs and the risks of data loss or theft.

The Shrinking Silos of Data Management

Dealing with the reality of these data challenges comes with a new way of thinking about data: total convergence of data despite the “box” a government agency may want to put that data in.

The fact is, the distinctions between data for investigations and eDiscovery, or information governance and cybersecurity, are small and getting smaller.

“When you hear the words eDiscovery or investigations, oftentimes people categorize that sort of data into different areas depending on their perception of it,” said Stewart.

But you may be trying to find data that relates to a variety of different requests, or you may be trying to make interagency decisions – so you need to be approaching your data from a more holistic approach.

“Any government agency could have tremendous nuggets of information, but if it’s squirreled away in some proprietary format, or buried out on some old file-share, that makes that data useless,” said Stewart. “That’s why thinking of your data management and eDiscovery technology as a more holistic solution is more important than ever.”

The Solution: **Enterprise-Level Analytics and eDiscovery Software**

Today more than ever, government agencies need to better understand their data, know how it is stored, be able to search it easily, review and access it seamlessly and get technology that can be applied to the discovery process to come up with innovative and cost-effective ways to conduct discovery.

Without the ability to wade through the large and ever-growing volumes of data to find key documents and data points, government agencies will not be able to make better decisions in a more efficient way. And while technology has created new challenges related to growing data volumes, today's eDiscovery technology also makes gathering, searching, and analyzing the data easier than ever. You just need to apply the right eDiscovery tools to the right job.

As government agencies look for new solutions to deal with the discovery of their massive volumes of data, they must focus on three capabilities in any solution: processing speed, search, and information management capabilities.

"Data comes in a variety of file types," said Al Nieves, Director of Sales at Nuix USG. "And so one of the biggest challenges is that a lot of agencies can't ingest data and get it into a format where a system can recognize it and put it in front of an end user."

That's where Nuix's technology can make a difference, Nieves explained. "The way we process data allows us to process a couple thousand different file types, which is a huge asset, because that means you can take your data analysis and search to an enterprise level and search all different kinds of formats from different operating systems," he said.

Government agencies and educational organizations are challenged by growing, largely unknown volumes of data stored in hard-to-reach places, resulting in additional risks and costs. Nuix's technology gives these organizations a powerful, intuitive suite of investigation, cybersecurity, incident response, eDiscovery and information governance software tools with unmatched speed and the ability to scale to the largest data sets.

Their solutions process all data sources into a single location and enable government investigators to search, triage, analyze and cross-reference multiple sources at one time.

"The technology that Nuix has brought forward is high-speed, able to reach across multiple platforms and devices and discover, pull out and bring back in a reportable way all of the relevant pieces of information you might need."

Stephen Stewart,
Chief Technology Officer at Nuix

Nuix Solutions

In both legal and electronic search eDiscovery, Nuix's speed and ability to process enormous amounts of all types of data very quickly are key differentiators that result in a critical bottom-line difference for agencies.

Nuix eDiscovery Workstation:

Nuix eDiscovery Workstation directly indexes virtually all forms of unstructured information, in any language. It can process complex proprietary formats such as Lotus Notes, Microsoft Exchange, Microsoft SharePoint, webmail and forensic images. It is also powerful enough to handle human-generated data, mobile data, and legacy file formats like EMC EmailXtender/Source One and Enterprise Vault.

Nuix Web Review & Analytics (WRA):

This web analytics software delivers fast, collaborative eDiscovery review and true early case assessment from any web browser. It provides secure and compartmentalized access to case data for multiple reviewers, subject-matter experts and external parties — and it rapidly scales to tens or hundreds of reviewers per incident, with no complex databases or tricky client plugins to install.

Nuix Voice:

Nuix Voice powered by Voci integrates Voci's V-Discovery speech analytics platform with Nuix's portfolio of products for eDiscovery, investigation, information governance, cybersecurity and intelligence. It turns recorded and live speech into accurate and fully punctuated transcripts for analysis, search and additional downstream processing, eliminating expensive and time-consuming manual transcription processes. With Nuix Voice powered by Voci, you can search and analyze human speech alongside emails, text messages, documents, chats and many other sources.

Nuix Insight Analytics & Intelligence:

Nuix Insight Analytics & Intelligence is a powerful data analysis platform that makes it easy to extract and interact with intelligence from any data source or file type. It combines the Nuix Engine's high-speed data processing capabilities with advanced and scalable analytics to correlate and contextualize information.

Case Study: Flexibility and Cross-Agency Collaboration at a Federal Agency

In 2014 at one federal agency, staff was facing a data crisis: They had 50-plus non-technical investigators and staff who needed access to digital evidence for a case. Secure and effective cross-agency collaboration was paramount – and case data needed to be transferrable to bridge the gap between air-gapped networks.

The agency worked closely with Nuix to develop a solution that fit its unique needs, incorporating Nuix Web Review & Analytics into a workflow that already included core Nuix data processing and discovery capabilities. The project team at the agency worked directly with Nuix developers and

support staff to tailor the technology to the agency's environment and specific needs. Especially critical was ensuring that the solution worked on the agency's internal network and securely over the internet to allow cross-agency collaboration.

The Nuix Web Review & Analytics installation is unique because it's available at two ends, fitting this agency's need – being available from inside the agency network and an internet-facing portal that uses extra authentication to allow other agencies to log in and review data. This was unique among peer agencies.

Case data in Nuix Web Review & Analytics is now accessible to a wider range of end users with minimal training requirements or technical background. Reviewers in a variety of roles, within the agency and in partner agencies, are able to collaborate on data that would have been otherwise inaccessible.

“From an end-user perspective, they've had a much easier time navigating their data with Web Review than with previous review platforms,” said the agency's project manager, “because of the user interface and layout, with fairly minimal training.”

Conclusion

Today, government agencies need to have fast access and high-level visibility across all data to make informed decisions about classifying, migrating and protecting data; securing sensitive data such as personal, health, and financial information; optimizing storage systems; and increasing information availability across the agency.

“When you’re in a major hurry, time is of the essence,” said Stewart. “That’s where Nuix comes into its own, no matter what the problem you’re facing is. We can help with eDiscovery, with investigation, with cybersecurity, and our processing speed saves agencies valuable time, no matter the kind of data you’re needing to access.”

Nuix’s eDiscovery, investigation, security & intelligence, and information governance solutions are uniquely suited to quickly and accurately sort through the massive amounts of data that exist today in the public sector. With federal mandates, rising citizen expectations and security more critical than ever, now is the perfect time to take steps to address your agency’s eDiscovery and data-management needs.

About Nuix USG

Nuix USG protects, informs, and empowers the U.S. Government in the knowledge age. Leading local, state, and federal civilian, defense, and intelligence agencies turn to Nuix when they need fast, accurate answers for investigation, eDiscovery, cybersecurity incident response, insider threats, litigation, regulation, privacy, risk management, and other essential challenges. Nuix makes small work out of big data volumes and complex file formats. Our solutions combine advanced technology with the extensive knowledge of our global team of industry experts. We bring data to life with clarity and intelligence to solve critical data problems, reduce crime, and secure and manage information.

To learn more about Nuix USG, visit www.nuixusg.com.

About GovLoop

GovLoop’s mission is to “connect government to improve government.” We aim to inspire public-sector professionals by serving as the knowledge network for government. GovLoop connects more than 250,000 members, fostering cross-government collaboration, solving common problems and advancing government careers. GovLoop is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with a team of dedicated professionals who share a commitment to connect and improve government.

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