



Bramble.cc and Redacta help MoD release UFO “X-Files” to National Archives

The first in a series of Ministry of Defence UFO “X-Files” have been released to the National Archives, with the help of RapidRedact software, supplied by Bramble.cc.

Since the 1950s, thousands of individuals have reported UFO sightings in the UK, which are recorded on official forms at air bases and police stations. Thousands of pages relating to the sightings are being declassified and released, and Redacta’s RapidRedact is being used to redact information exempted under the Data Protection Act.

Freedom of Information Act

Since the FOI Act came into effect, the MoD has been overwhelmed by a deluge of Freedom of Information Requests relating to the sightings. This eventually led to the decision to transfer the collection of documents from Whitehall to The National Archives at Kew, because the MoD receives more FOI requests on the subject of UFOs than any other.

Prior to using RapidRedact, the Directorate of Air Staff and Defence Intelligence Staff had to print out all relevant documents, then manually remove names and addresses of the individuals involved. They then had to photocopy those documents for release.

This process was highly time-consuming and tedious, and wasted a great deal of paper. The MoD decided it needed to streamline the redaction process, and selected RapidRedact through Bramble.cc to electronically redact sensitive information.



The British “X-Files” will be released to the National Archives over the next 3 years. The first series of UFO files covering 1978 to 1987 are now available at the National Archives in Kew.

Exemptions

RapidRedact can be used with any electronic format document, including scanned documents and images, such as those submitted to the MoD.

In addition to redaction, staff are also able to add the relevant FOI exemption code. Under FOI, a reason needs to be given for the non-disclosure of the redacted information. In the case of the MoD UFO files, exemptions mainly relate to the protection of personal information.

Prior to implementing RapidRedact, the MoD would have to either remove via scalpel or cover the sensitive words with a thick tape, colour over the tape with a felt-tip marker, then photocopy as required to achieve a releasable version.

The first collection of UFO documents released to National Archives consisted of more than 3,000 pages, and it is estimated that more than 50,000 pages in total will be released. Each file has a minimum of 200 pages, with some files containing 900-plus pages.

The time saved in streamlining and automating the redaction process has meant that the MoD has been able to release the “X-Files” earlier than could have been expected.



Sustainability

With a greater emphasis on reducing the carbon footprint in government departments, the RapidRedact project has been an ideal example of sustainability in action. Since using RapidRedact, the MoD no longer has to print and photocopy hundreds of pages before responding to FOI requests. It can simply direct interested parties to access the documents immediately online via the National Archives website www.nationalarchives.gov.uk.



Bramble.cc is an independent information management consultancy. We have extensive experience in helping public and private sector organisations to embrace change in their information management strategies to achieve operational and bottom-line benefits.

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