

# FOIA Marker

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Subject Files - WH008 (Telecommunications, White House)

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Folder Title:

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WH008

May 23, 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR: BRETT KAVANAUGH  
COUNSEL'S OFFICE

FROM: TERRY GOOD *Good*  
OFFICE OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT

RE: INCOMING COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED AS FAXED  
DOCUMENTS

We have an opportunity to apply a technological solution to what has become a fairly expensive and burdensome challenge within the Correspondence Office. If employed, the result could decrease significantly the costs and the time required to read and process incoming communications from the public that are sent to the White House fax number.

The Correspondence Office, the Post Office's White House Mail Room, the Information Systems and Technology Division (IS&T) of the Office of Administration, and the Office of Records Management all endorse the following recommendation.

Currently all incoming faxes, averaging 28,000 per month, are printed out in the Mail Room and transferred to the Mail Analysis Section where they are individually read and sorted. Approximately, 10% are culled for further action. The other 90% are boxed and stored, along with other correspondence from the public that has been marked for disposition, pending a request from the Office of Records Management to the National Archives (NARA) to review and sample these communications prior to being macerated.

It is worth noting that the majority is, as it has been true in previous administrations, almost exclusively "propaganda mail" from special-interest groups lobbying for their individual interests.

The offices involved are in agreement that much is to be gained by switching to a system that allows the communications to be read and sorted at computer stations. Only those requiring further action would be printed out. The rest would be stored in their electronic format and transferred to the National Archives at the Administration's conclusion or, if an agreement with NARA can be reached, deleted, as has been the case with paper based communications since the Carter Administration.

I might add, that if this proposal offers advantages for the Office of Correspondence, it might provide an appealing option to other White House offices that receive large quantities of faxes from public interest groups.

If you see no legal problems with this approach, we will move forward with the technological requirements.

Attached is an in-depth memorandum by Markus Most of ORM on this subject.

APPROVE ✓ LET'S TALK \_\_\_\_\_  
*Brett Kavanaugh*

MAY 18, 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR: TERRY GOOD  
FROM: MARKUS K. MOST  
RE: INCOMING COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED AS FAXED  
DOCUMENTS

In an effort to reduce the resource burden of the approximately 28,000 pages of faxes the White House receives every month, I have prepared the enclosed proposal and cost/ benefit analysis for consideration.

## **Introduction**

The White House is currently receiving on average, 28,000 faxed pages a month. The volume of faxes is placing a financial and human resource burden on the offices that must print out and process the documents. By implementing a separate system to handle the incoming volume of faxes, one would free these resources to focus on other mission critical areas.

## **Process**

Currently, the Mail Office has two faxes running uninterrupted to handle the incoming faxes. An incoming fax is printed out and placed in a mail tub. When the tub is full, it is sent to the Office of Correspondence where staff look at each fax and decide if a response is necessary. Those chosen to be responded to are entered into the Quorum system for further tracking. The majority of documents, about 90%, are not responded to and are transferred to archival boxes. After a period of time, the untracked faxes are macerated.

## **Proposal**

In an effort to more effectively utilize resources, it is proposed that a separate fax system be implemented to handle incoming faxes. Rather than having two fax machines print out every fax, a fax server would be installed. The new system would receive the incoming faxes in electronic form and would store them in electronic form on a server. This fax server would be tasked only with serving and storing faxes. These electronic faxes could then be viewed by the Office of Correspondence staff: those that will be responded to, are printed out and data entered. Those faxes that do not require a response will remain on the server for storage and eventual transfer to the National Archives. At *no* point in the process will faxes be disposed of.

## **Difficulties**

The faxes will be retained on the fax server in an image format. One could perform an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) function on the images. However, due to fax transfer quality and handwritten messages, performing OCR is not an option.

Faxes will be viewable as they were received, however, there will be no searchable metadata associated with the images. Eventually, only those faxes that were responded to will have metadata. This means that only the faxes that the White House took action on would be searchable, all other faxes would be retained, but would not be searchable. (It might be possible to automatically capture "sent date", "sent time", and "sent phone number", but only to the extent that this information is not blocked by the sender.)

Question to be addressed:

- Do the received faxes need to have metadata to make them searchable even if no action was taken on them by the White House? (In other words, does one need to treat these electronic faxes as email, or can one apply current paper disposition practice to these faxes?)

## **Risk Analysis**

There is a certain risk involved in continuing to print out faxes. Two areas stand out as introducing the greatest risk:

- Sometimes a fax machine will jam or run out of paper. The fax machines have a 250 page memory, which might cover a one day volume of faxes. However, if a machine were to jam or run out of paper on a Saturday, one would simply not receive those faxes that are sent after the 250 page memory is filled. Those who attempted to send faxes while the memory is

filled would get a busy signal and would be forced to re-send their faxes at a later point. Currently, whenever the fax machines are busy, the White House operators receive many phone calls from irate public citizens asking about the fax machines.

- Because of the demand placed on the print cartridges, it is possible for the cartridges to run out while printing faxes. If a print cartridge were to run out on a weekend, one could lose approximately 2000 pages due to faded or blank printouts. Also on a regular work day, if a dry cartridge is not noticed, one might print a fair number of illegible faxes.

An electronic fax system would address both of these risk areas by providing a virtually limitless storage capacity and eliminating the need to print all faxes.

### **Cost/ Benefit Analysis**

#### **Costs incurred by the current system that could be avoided by switching to a fax server:**

- Each fax machine requires 2 toner cartridges every week.  
The average cost of a toner cartridge is \$75.  
 $2 \text{ toner cartridges} * 2 \text{ fax machines} * \$75 \text{ per cartridge} = \$300 \text{ cost per week}$   
Cost per year = \$15,600
- The White House receives approximately 28,000 faxed pages per month  
500 pages in a ream of paper  
A ream of paper costs \$2.50  
 $28,000 \text{ pages per month} / 500 \text{ pages} = 56 \text{ reams per month}$   
 $56 \text{ reams per month} * \$2.50 \text{ cost per ream} = \$140 \text{ cost per month}$   
Cost per year for paper = \$7280
- The high volume of faxes causes the fax machines to degrade quickly. The current fax machines are no longer sold and would have to be replaced by a comparable system. Currently a similar Canon product costs approximately \$2,000 and two machines would be required.
- The Office of Correspondence fills approximately one archival box with faxes every day.  
An archival box costs \$2.20  
 $250 \text{ work days a year} * \$2.20 = \$550 \text{ a year for boxes}$

**Total Cost: \$27,430**

Additional costs to consider:

Maintenance contract with Canon

Post Office Mail Room staff time

Box maceration

**Cost of switching to a fax server:**

Server and FAX Software Installation:	\$2500
Server: N/A (use a spare server)	\$0
Server memory:	\$3224
Fax Modem:	\$194
On-site support:	\$500
Fax Server Software:	\$39
Fax Server Software Node License:	\$629
<u>FaxWare Port License:</u>	<u>\$430</u>
Installation Cost:	<b>\$7516</b>

Continued yearly maintenance to be handled by IS&T.

Regardless if one purchases a fax server or continues to print incoming faxes, certain types of costs will remain the same, but at different levels. For example, certain faxes will continue to be printed out even under the new system. Theoretically though, only 10% of current volume would be printed.

**Final Analysis**

By moving to a fax server, one would mitigate the risks of not receiving faxes and print cartridges running out. One would also be able to reduce the overall cost of providing a fax service to the public. After implementation, the cost of the fax server would most likely be recuperated within a short period of time.

**Redundant System**

As a backup to the fax server, one could design the system to send faxes to the old fax machines if the server were to malfunction.

Terry W. Good 06/14/2001 12:45:07 PM

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Record Type: Non-Record

To: Brett M. Kavanaugh/WHO/EOP@EOP

cc: Deborah K. Hair/WHO/EOP@EOP, Manuel A. Mendoza/WHO/EOP@EOP, Gertrude A. Roddick/WHO/EOP@EOP

Subject: Faxed messages

Brett:

You may have people you have never met thank you for approving the request to explore ways to electronically process these faxed messages without the need to print them out.

This will have a significant impact on processing these communications.

Thank you again.

Terry