

## Secrets of the Super Searchers IV - Old School Wisdom, New School Tools for Difficult Questions – Transcript of audio

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Welcome, I know it's probably hard to attend a session this week, hopefully you all will be able to walk out with some helpful information. With that I'm going to get started. Okay, so just begin with, I wanted to restate the goal of our session. It is to provide you all ways, effective ways to utilize tangible and electronic resources for answering library patrons' difficult questions. Suitable for anyone, new to government information as well as individuals who need a refresher. A lot of it is just practical knowledge, but I also am going to be doing a demo to show you kind of how I walked through one of them.

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So the table of contents for the agenda, before that, getting started, when you received the question, I'm going to get into roadblocks and detours, followed by a very brief demo, and any conclusion.

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Please feel free to put your questions in the chat or if it is very urgent and relevant to the slide that is currently on, please feel free to drop it in there, and we can ask the people monitoring the chat to let me know.

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Okay, getting started. I know a lot of you have been there, I wanted to start by using some actual questions that I have received recently to illustrate how these will go. The first thing I do, and the questions, I don't know about everybody else, I can recognize it the second they pop up, I kind of go oh. The first thing I do is I think about the search parameters. I don't mean simply the question itself, I think more about the constraints of the question. And then I think about what kind of tools do I want to use? Do I want to find print material, print finding aid or a electronic finding aid, I know a lot of us default to electronic but I want to keep in mind that both are available, and how often times they can often be more helpful than some of the more recent things.

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The next thing -- I skipped, the other thing is stakeholders, I'm identifying stakeholders as federal agencies that have a vested interest in this sort of information. Department of Commerce, Congress, if it's something to do with parts, the National Park Service and the Department of Interior. Especially one it is a historical question I try to look up what are the old versions of these federal agencies, what were they before and where were they before, because I need to look for that information on that name rather than this.

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The second thing I do is identify my best bets. I apologize for how small this picture is. These are kind of my best bet print publications. And they are all part of the resources at the very end of the slide which will be available after the session is done. So identify my best but databases and resources. The question that I kind of wanted to use for this was one I literally got this late last week, and it was somebody who was looking for executive reports, submitted by the president to congressional committees in accordance with public law, 114 151. And the president in their checked the law, the president was obligated to submit a report to the committee on foreign relations and the committee of foreign affairs, and lots of different ones that he had to submit this to. To know little bit more background information, this particular law had to do with -- I will probably have to paraphrase, the looting that can happen of cultural artifacts when there is an armed conflict going on. This was created in 2016 in response to the state of affairs in Syria, for lack of a better way of putting it. And people were concerned about them -- valuable cultural artifacts being taken from Syria. So one of the big things we did was, start getting imports of a certain nature just to prevent that from happening.

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With that said, it gets me to my best bet agencies or outlets. I wanted to return to that. Right here I have four committees immediately that I can look at, and I also have regular databases, like congressional publications and not forgetting, putting it last so we all remembered, also place where I can look forward. Guv Quest and lessening I do when starting up is, I will kind of already start thinking about if these go wrong, what do I need to do next? I will think about may be -- are there any other outlets or places that I might be able to find this? In the case of this search, my backup was a committee was created in the bill. So that was kind of my backup place to go.

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Okay now we have roadblocks and detours which we all hits, I definitely hit it hard with this question. Why are you finding it? The first thing, especially with these historical ones, is language, language changes a great deal, it changes from year to year, I think about the sling being used by teenagers and high school this year versus what was used when I was a teenager, I'm not going to say how long ago. And the same happens with our own language. I was use the example and teaching a class to students how cookery used to be the term instead of cookbook and library catalogs back in the day. That is one area where you could have a problem if they had a different word for it. The other thing is, there are certain words that were socially acceptable back then, but are most definitely not acceptable now. And definitely go for those words, right in front of me, on occasions when I do have them, and very carefully will explain, I need to use a word that is not clinically correct and offensive to many, is it okay to you, I can also do it while the person is away, that I want to make sure I find the information. And I joke I'm a little bit like Malcolm X, I don't know how I'm to get there but do it by any means necessary but not illegal because I don't think jail is fun. [ Laughter ] The next problem is metadata. And it has changed a great deal since I was even when I was younger so the metadata has changed. I was looking at articles that of what was cataloguing, back in the day when I had a different historical question in the types of data recorded was very different. These days we looked at restrictive and structural, administrative and that's just a handful of types of metadata that we collect. All of it is important. But that kind of data, if it was not collected in the past, then it is going to be a problem now, you have to find a way to work around it and get to it. And I've already kind of danced around it, for me the information can be something like, I don't know what happens with these congressional reports, is there a way for me to look at how they are submitted? Is my audio not working?

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Your audio is fine.

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I just saw a message that possibly my audio was not working, pardon me. I look at the information gaps. Perhaps I don't know how the materials are submitted, perhaps I don't know all the groups that could've been submitting these things, maybe I don't even know enough about the subject. Yesterday I was trying to find vanilla beans and I needed to know the scientific name for vanilla beans. [ Laughter ] That can also be another area where we are not able to find information. Usually it is a quick fix, just kind of look it up and find it. The last thing is technology. Part of it is, we lacks technology in the past and we have it now. And the two things don't seem to get along well time, when I get to the demo a portion of this, I will show you how much it ailed me with a different question than the congressional reports. I keep trying to forward it the way that I usually do.

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Here are some solutions, I kind of dealt -- delved into this little bit, do research, find it with the name of the vanilla bean is, how are -- reports from the president submitted to Congress? Look up help pages. I find on websites or databases if I'm not putting together what I think is the best search or my searches are not going the way I think they will, I regularly open of the help pages and I will go to tips and tricks, or how to put together a complex search. Just to see if they're using symbols in a way that I'm not used

to, or if there are tricks that they use. One website that I like to use when items searching is called duck duck go, they have a feature they call! Bangs, you do X summation Mark and then put in another word like USA or government. You do the baying, and it will tell the database to focus in on just those types of sites. A similar feature is on Google, where you can do site:.Geo V, that selling the database to only look for government website pages. So that's one way to kind of use the help pages to make sure you're using -- maximizing your ability to do the resource. And testing a wire net and checking for duplicates. I've had this happen so many times, I used to get one engineering student coming in all the time and I asked why they came to me, as I don't speak engineering, had to speak -- spell things out for me and everything. And something I learned in the reason that he came to me is because that always find things, and what happens is with academic searches and in particular academic articles, professors will milk a single topic all over the place, they will basically sell the paper and/or modified papers of it to a bunch of different pages. -- Places. I will say even if I can't this one, if I can find one that I believe is very close to what you are looking for, would that be acceptable to you? Another thing is, it can go beyond that. When I was doing a search for the gentleman I tried to do that, I didn't find it that way but I did find a reference to it in the sort of catalog publication from NASA, he was looking at aeronautics. That's when I learned that although he was looking for an article, the products that he was on the other end of the search was actually computer software written in the 70s. So underneath that there was a mailing address and I said mail it to them and see what they can do. That's what I mean about cast a wider net. Look at other ways that this information could've come out or even if it's in a different format than you're expecting.

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This next one, probably trite and we hear and see all the time with phone a friend, especially a friend in government document land, a friend I call, they've had more years doing this kind of work that I have, and we learn from each other. So it is very helpful to us to try to call and sometimes it helps to have company in difficulty, again new terms, I think we all know that one, but go ahead and look up those alternative terms.

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Most importantly I know we know this one but take a break. When I'm sitting face-to-face with somebody and I can tell that is going to be a bit of a doozy, I will always get to a certain point where it is comfortable and I will say what is your deadline for this? When do you have to absolutely have it? The search right now is not going the way that we needed to go and I'm wondering if I could find out is due and I will work on it in my own time and call you back and let you know that I'm ready and I can share my findings with you. I have yet to find somebody say no, they couldn't do that. And taking a break from something, is so helpful, I find I can't find something it gets frustrating, longer take some were frustrated gets, to the point where I get I want to give the see what's written on my face, it's obvious but it really does help. I kind of think of it as its routing a perfectly good rabbit hole, I love these questions, my favorite things to get, kind of like playing a videogame where I'm going to win against his boss, happy to take a break, moving along to the next slide. If anybody has questions and needs to raise their hands, please let me know.

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I'm just going to take a quick look. I don't see any, so I will continue on. So now we are moving to the demo, before I do that though, I'm going to share my screen I'm going to show you what I found 10 stratifying report submitted to Congress. Real quick I'm going to share my desktop oh, my God is my screen black for all of you?

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Yes, it is appearing black to us. Alone, I will stop. That is weird, it worked just a minute ago for us.

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I can vouch for us, it works.

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It was tested extensively, what did I do?. I'm a senior background image like you did when you first walked in.

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I don't think so but didn't give me that prompt. Maybe I will try something real quick. Let's try again. Okay I'm the client that's what I'm going to pull up this. In the process of searching for that person, 100% it did not work for me, I was very sad and starting to devise other places to look and are these things in getting submitted, figure out how they're deposited and where, I can tell a patron how do that. Get super lucky, I didn't expect but it was super helpful. On July 30, 2021, the Congressional research service about this, power reporting requirements submitted to Congress? All about how her agencies and the different offices, the president and whatnot, summoning their reports to Congress. I'm going to go down to show you the places, go to page 5, so what I found out in the process of this article is that there is a variety of ways that these things can be submitted, including orally, there's not even a written report sometimes, it's just looking there Congressional record, member agency sites, hearing transcripts, committee clerks, federal agencies and the standby freedom of information requests. I had to pause here because I did find testimony in one of the committees, and so I directed the patent to that but I told her unfortunately have to get ready for a presentation I'm giving to you all now, so I can continue looking, but if it doesn't work please contact me and I am able to get on it once I get my other work done. She was quite happy and glad to do that part of the search, and hopefully she was able to find it but I'm here she didn't.

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-- If she didn't.

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The demo, I think I bounced out of the slides too much but I will show you, vanilla beans imports, I had a patron come to me, looking for vanilla imports by country and if possible the New York price data from 1980 until the present, had consulted a number of other libraries and people in agencies and whatnot, and he hands it to me is kind of a lark, to see what else can happen here. So, I decided to generally as people were have you already searched, so I don't take their efforts. So I did that but I also decided I was going to also search in the laces just in case. I wanted to kind of try to make sure I was getting a good lay of the land here. So, pardon me I'm looking at my notes. It already looked at agriculture, farm imports and whatnot, and also look at something called spice markets in the United States. And both of them had not really fulfilled all of that. Was able to get 1851-1908, and 1990 -- I'm sorry, yes, 1882-1908, and 1980-8490 fill in all the gaps for him. So I did a number of things, I consulted the usual suspects, and I'm going to show used to you right now. Those are the usual suspects, monthly catalog, group census catalog publication, that's when I guessed, I know you know the guy he was publications by Andrea but also government statistics, also by Andrea out -- ANDRIOT. Denies this publications, by Boyden rips in 1950, when I consulted their side, I found something very interesting. Technology wants to betray me today. I might have to close this. Basically, what I discovered is, that for a very long time, listings were published in a variety of places, and I checked the shelves and online, and statistics and consulate reports from a variety of countries but I didn't find vanilla, so was very frustrating, they had five things just and I was like where you're getting these information -- this information. Cite your sources please! And the department our culture and census documents and going all of the place, and getting I want to go, but not getting there, even though I had a suspicious -- suspicion that the Census Bureau was the most likely thing for investment but these did not even get transferred to the Census Bureau officially until about midway through the period that the gentleman was looking for. So it was basically a mess of confusion. So I was able to establish the best way in place to go online, it was super basic, I did was use Google and said import statistics. International trade census.gov but they also have U.S. trade online. Since yesterday, this is what happens to me. Is a trade online, this is what happens, rethink it and go

back to it, I even tested it, I will go this route. There we go. This is the site, you have to register for an account but it's free, I highly recommended. The only thing that was frustrating, they are pretty on top of you for your login, they want you to renew it fairly regularly, obviously because cyber security is a thing in government websites, as we won't know, we could be easily hacked, belittled frustrating, I just signed up, why do you need a new password already? With a great website, especially for the more recent stuff, I was able to get the last years he wanted through the website, I logged in, then conducting the search that he wanted, you can login again today. What you are in here, where did then, and this is to look, I still have this up, I chose the commodity in the country, and time because I wanted to know by year, a lot of these countries don't have a lot for a given year because they're not producing it, but I was able to get information going back to 1982, more information is needed, and I was had to get this, you can download it and using it is in the area. You at least have the amount, I was able to create a second chart, with customs values, to make sure I have both of those, no that that goes directly for the New York prices but of the bare minimum to the quantity and many can do other cite research about the prices, using some business resources. Relief another thing, don't be afraid to ask a friend, a business library and hit me with a request they said how my going to get the historical pricing data? Turnabout is fair play. [ Laughter ] after all the searching, I decided to try something I tried before. Let's go in. Just try import statistics, I know was a bad search, is kind of wanted to see what I would hit. Had superduper lucky. The first results being U.S. import statistics. I'm going to take the second one, it was on that I was able to sighted the end of my slides. Show you point or technology betrayed me I get to this page, the beginning of it, I get here, looking for, Jamele goes to -- there we go. We make that bigger real quick, still a little hard to see, both leaves little bit better. I went to the table of contents, capital is not measured right now, under a subsection, they had vegetable food products and vegetables and beverages, and animal inedible and edible in the same with vegetables and I went through nice Coke and coffee and tea, spices were right next to each other, and spice aisle and so is Coco and I decided I was going to try that. I wanted to be certain. I want to search inside which -- relies on OCR and there was zero results. I try to before and I had the failure and I saw the letters were fairly close together, I thought it was a bust. But I was desperate so I decided I was going to scan it myself and go to page 29. Hopefully I can do this right now. Okay, we are at 29, hard to read, were my readers, when your eyesight is not very great. The OCR did not work because there's an extra space between these letters. It is hard to tell what's going on where, it has the number and LB, I'm not quite sure what that means, it has value, and what I did was I scrolled a bit, olive oil and peanut oil, didn't need any of those, we would more. I swear I saw yesterday. There it is, extra blurry, I apologize. There we go. Right here we have this code number, I can look things up in the future, we have vanilla beans in the countries that sent them, quantities and value, and shipping weight, was able to do that. The specific publication goes on for a good number of years and we probably need all of his requirements. The only problem there was some variation, for example this report is under FT 110 and the numbers change in another year, FTI am and a two digit number, something like 40, so I warned him about that but today this is a starting point. Is a is a place to go. So I was happy to be able to help him.

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Funnily enough he was looking for the information for eight years. So there's no way to find out where vanilla bean, vanilla would be from that side, if the table of contents fails I go to the index, I was looking through one of them yesterday I didn't even have an index, they did mention vanilla but they wanted percent did have a we're looking for. From that lesson I learned to skim through it a little X, it very well could be there but the way they connect -- collected metadata was so different from the way we collect metadata now, they just enlisted there whereas 100% we would have.

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Has couple of points. The key takeaways, and I do I could've done more about the search tricks and tips in the search mechanisms, but I kind of want to take a step back, please, the mechanism searching, is

consistent from site to site, allow them to come to a similar point with how you did the search. Someone to come to the point of what is the thought process of one of the other resources you go to. The first thing is, when you get the question, the tough one, plan your search, write it down, other things we teach our students, I find it tell my students to do it but that I forget to tell that's my do it myself or rush through it, but I really do encourage everyone to do that. Taking a break, I can tell you how important it is, I always misplace my glasses, today my head and sometimes a put them in a drawer, but I get so frazzled, looking everywhere, as it can only find, so we tour the entire house up, the glasses were on my head, I should've known because I could see. I could've done a lot faster, just to that, vanilla beans the reports are at the got important if nothing else, that's why say take a break. I will have what have moved for desperate a rabbit hole had a difficult. Date something to note, if you're working in another language at all, translation the way people write things has changed, what may have worked in 1943 doesn't work anymore, because there are changes in how it's done. For your own information gaps taking a step back and saying I don't know this topic, I don't know anything about this, is a request

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This. Over and over again. Phone a friend talk your friend said neither Esther was something or can you help me with something -- hey I need to harass you with something. Or something that's off-topic, it's different tremendous help, in the process, I can't tell you the times that had breakthroughs, coworker, found something I didn't know and I 100% was going to take advantage of that.

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So that gets to the end of my -- always do this teaching session, a healthy amount of time to answer questions? Could be a question you had to do with, a question about what my methodology is,

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Really great. Any questions.

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Did not mean to do that. [

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Could the LBB pounds? I don't know what she's referring to there. One of the tables may to clarify that?

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Anyway. Anymore questions for Selena? There we go is there and LB somewhere, there we go. Anymore questions? These are great tips, Selena, didn't you list your best bets, the five or six or seven publications? Did you list of those in your slides anywhere? Those books you have up there. Liquor --

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You are on mute.

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My apologies, the online government publications, it really depends, the question tells me what I need to go for. For example, I recently was asked about a government poster that my institution received and digitized, we are doing a migration project and we discovered we didn't have metadata for it at all, literally the title was filled with, this is where the title goes. So they're asking me if I could find any metadata, so I ran my butt to the catalog of government publications and I ensured that, I linked it to them, and I used a second one via world cat because it had a little bit of extra data. I find it 100% useful, especially for things that were published between the 60s and the 80s. That is kind of a good zone for me to go for that, I know there's a lot more that is current, but I find when I get a question in that zone, that is the first place I go to, that time..

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Great, thank you, anymore questions? How about Internet archive, and the trust.

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I was using both of them to get ready for today actually. [ Laughter ] When and how I use it kind of varies. When I was doing the vanilla bean one, the Internet archive was my Hail Mary pass of swords,

exhausted everything else and didn't know what ago, the problem I had was they had so many records it was hard for me to sort through them all and they were all with assorted agencies. So was hard for me to know what belonged and what didn't belong and it took me quite a while. Was getting the right results early enough, I put in the sloppiest search alive, that happens with the Internet resources and databases, is the first place I go to, such a viable resource for historic items, and even some publications that are in the resources are available in Heidi trust, but some of them can be unpredictable or more than the usual.

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Anymore questions for Selena? -- Celina.

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Commodities these -- research.

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I'm going to take a picture of your comment and save it, I have a feeling this person will work their way back to me. I feel like I saw the question but you know what happens, when you saw that they keep coming back. [ Laughter ] I will say, I don't know if this helps at all, but I think part of what helps me with the -- with mine is attitude. I'm stubborn, once I get a difficult question my attitude becomes either I'm going to find the answer find out why it I can't find the answer. It has to be one of the other. Almsy no this time is to quit what are the next steps, but when I go with that attitude I'm generally able to find what I'm looking for. It has been hopeful that way. But yes.

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Anymore questions? I keep thinking it must be hard itty-bitty -- busy reference desk, you got this question and more or flooding in, and back of that, how do you prioritize multiple questions at the same time -- time? Figure it is hard, attend to find out people's deadlines at the beginning, part of the parameters, his house and you need it. When I got the vanilla beans question I have spare time, there was times I can work in times I could, the patron was easy to work with, and I knew his do or die date I guess I can say everything I do is, I ask how urgent it is and who needs the information. Earlier this week I do prioritize a coworker because I knew I would be holding up her work, so I did her question first and was able to returned other questions. I can also usually guess how much time they're going to take, that's high-power ties them. Where they do and how much time is going to take in that kind of stuff.

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Thank you. Anymore questions? A lot of shutouts, please fill out a satisfaction survey. What started -- how valuable RLI be guides, do they say go here in Chickasaw?

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I do with some sorts of questions. Georgetown law, this citation guy gets a lot of traffic from me. I direct everyone that way, because it is such an excellent guide. Depends on the circumstances. What I'm doing my own search I find it helpful when I'm Trinity background information, if I'm having difficulty in experiencing a information gap, I will go to the guide and see what kind of information they have, you find that is been very helpful. NYU is help me out, I wonder if they know how much traffic because of that. I deftly do and I direct the students to them. That's why get more traffic than I might expect from me. But they have their place, sometimes as deadly with any, part of when I'm interviewing, I try to find out what they need and what format do they needed in, if I give them a guide, will they be able to take it music the way they need to or will I have to kind of teach them to use it. Those are all things that I factor in.

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Great, thank you. Anymore questions? This is great. The great resource in our repository that people can view later, then checked out. Actually just put the training repository, we keep the webinars of for two or three years, summer little bit older. So yes.

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Part of why content you -- I contacted you for this, I realize told some of my previous ones were. And I saw other searchers and what they covered, I decided to go this way, the way my been -- brain bends why work.

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This is our fourth soup researcher, anyone in the audience, if you think your expert in the area of government information, contact me and I would be happy to organize a soup researcher, we've done what was Chris Brown, statistics and lawn this is number 4. Please, we love these webinars.

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While you're mentioning webinars, when I'm searching, I 100% the 10 webinars, the statistics, I love the Census Bureau webinars, they're so helpful, they give me a nice historical overview of census data gathering in this country. Looking out what questions have been asked. Have been that's right it has been super helpful.

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We do quite a few, three or four and sometimes eight per month, other places too. Anymore questions? How about contacting agencies, census has good reps, one of my go to's, I don't like to overstay my welcome but low Library of Congress, they are terrific. Right away.

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I direct people their way and they reciprocated. That's in their webinars, I contacted the Census Bureau and that's how I discovered the Missouri State data Center, I got a question from a faculty member.

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Joe, could you please mute, thank you.

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They directed me to the Missouri State data Center, which had exact answer, a basic straightforward question, they wanted to know the names of unincorporated places in Metro Chicago, and once they put me at the Missouri State information, but I'm glad I found it.

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Okay. Anymore questions? I'm going to put in my contact, if you want to present a soup researcher webinar. -- Super search webinar. We are good on time, let me see if you things, first I want to thank you for a fantastic webinar, very good, Celina. I learned an awful lot. And thank you Ashley for great tech support work. One more webinar coming up in November, Tuesday, November 28, titled demo for FDO P exchange 2, -- FDLP exchange. That should be useful if use that, I am doing that with our colleague. And I think we have one left, the 4 national collective service meetings, this weekend I think we are finishing up Friday if I'm not mistaking -- mistaken, all those recordings, the training repository, Ashley put the link in, all of those recordings are there, in October. So there's a lot in the training repository, and if you want to present it webinar you can contact me. You will find out about all the webinars, for news and events, most of you probably signed up for that already. Let's check and see if there any last ones.

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Was the name of the last reference you mentioned for my slide? Do you remember what else was on the slide just so I know? Andrea, yes. I can vouch for that. Easier than that. Guide to U.S. government statistics. The U.S. guide, the guide to U.S. statistics, also by Andrea. Highlighted with that, the United States government publications by Boyd and rips.

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Thank you, any last questions? A bit of time for questions, that's good. Sometimes we don't. And just a bunch of shout outs. The last opportunity before close things out? Just a whole bunch of thank you's are rolling in.

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Thank you.



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I think I can probably safely close things out, I would like to think you will more time Celina, fantastic work, this will be a great resource for people listening today and anyone tapping into the recording and training repository. Thank you Ashley for great tech support work. If you want to be a super searcher, contact me. And like to thank you, have a great rest of your day, come back on November 28, the exchange webinar, got you did -- scheduled for November also. Have a great rest of the day and have a great holiday, thank you.

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Thank you, bye-bye.