

A new book is out (2023) entitled *The Declassification Engine: What History reveals about America's Top Secrets*. The book is by Matthew Connelly, a professor of international and global history at Columbia University.

The book begins more-less, in 2013, when Connelly faced a battery of high-powered former government attorneys, in a meeting to determine if he could be prosecuted under the espionage act if he acted on his plan to examine the exponential growth in government secrecy.

The justification for that plan can be made with a few observations: In 1956, a defense department study found that over classification had reached serious proportions. By 1961, the National Archives had taken custody of almost 100,000 cubic feet of classified records. Over the years a series of high-level reviews all came to the same conclusion: The Cult of secrecy bred cynicism among government officials and private contractors, stoked distrust in the broader public, and made it harder to prioritize the protection of truly sensitive information. In 2013 the National Security Agency was already spending almost 50 million dollars a year just for basic research on “coping with information overload”.

Although an attempt was made to prevent his research from becoming public, he persevered, and was supported by Columbia, as well as the McArthur foundation. He began by collaborating with data scientists at Columbia, using natural language processing and AI/neural networks to collect and organize information from thousands of sources; public, unclassified, and declassified.

Based on his research, Connelly concluded that mixed with the most highly and justifiably classified material is information that the government would rather hide from the public. His concern is that some of this information may be important historically, but is in danger of being lost, or simply deleted.

His approach is similar to that of the Able Danger project, in which a military unit was able to show that many declassified and public documents contradicted the official narrative in the run up to 9/11/2001. Connelly's work is on a much broader scale, but to avoid possible prosecution, the initial study only covers the period of the mid 1970s. From this, patterns and anomalies have emerged which can shed light on what is being classified and why.

Connelly believes that a more accurate description of the “deep state” is the “dark state”, because it is occurring at many levels of the government. He observes that data mining is not just a tool for state or corporate surveillance; rather, citizens can use data science to turn the tables and restore accountability to a system that has spun out of control.

He argues that the story of Pearl Harbor contains in embryo all the elements of the playbook used by the rapidly growing dark state: projecting American military power around the world; using the perception of surprise and insecurity to expand surveillance powers, and—above all— presidential spin to conceal all of this, even while pretending to be open and transparent.

At the time of the book's 2023 publication, there are over 28 million cubic feet of government files locked up in record centers all across the country. The volume of classified information in digital form is already orders of magnitude greater, stored in server farms and black sites.

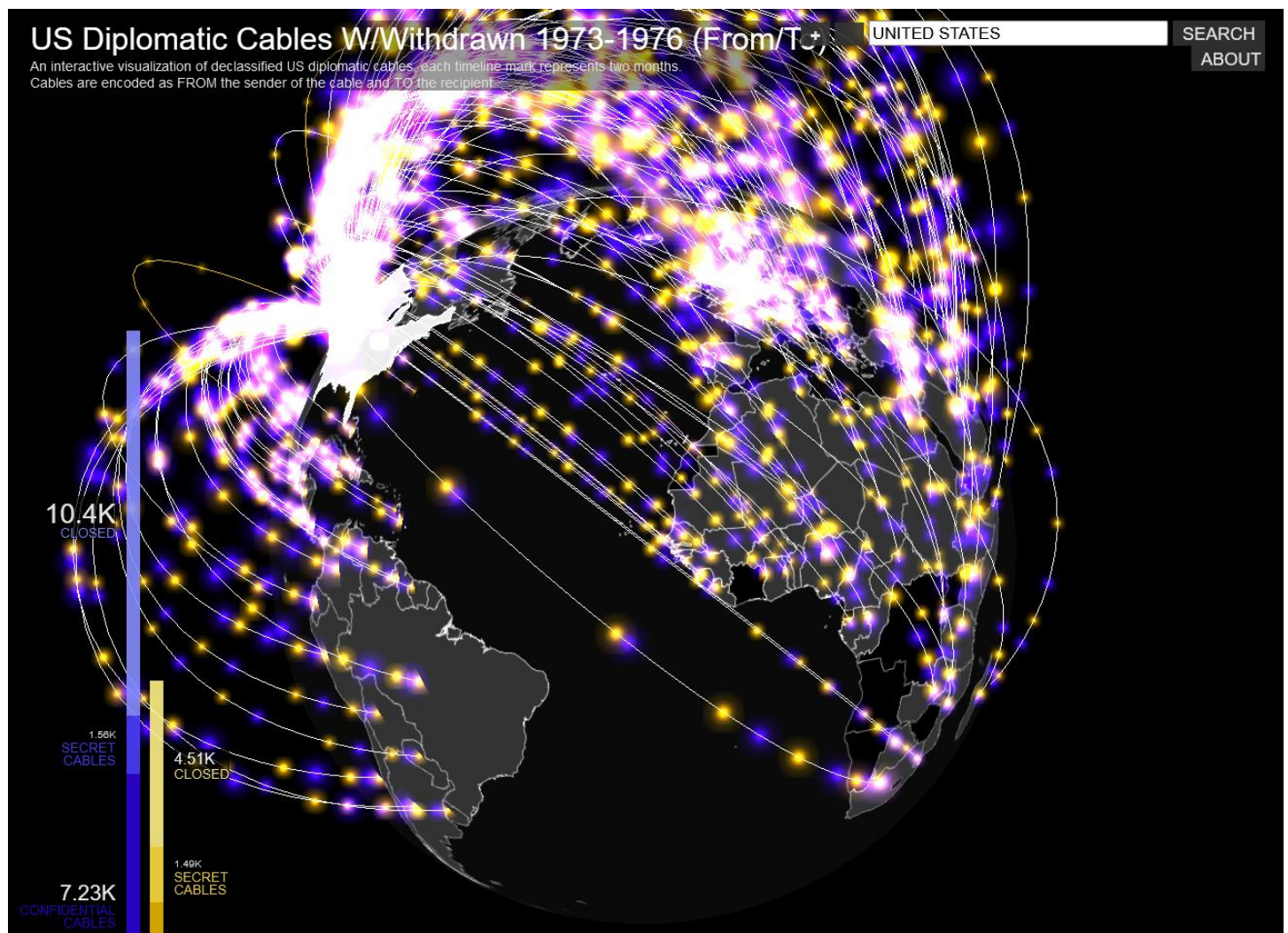
Interest has grown in his project. Columbia is now partnering with the Brown Institute for Media Innovation, The McArthur Foundation, the National Science Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, Arcadia, the National Archives, and the National Endowment For The Humanities.

Although nothing specifically about 9/11/2001 has been considered at this time, current projects include developing an online FOIA archive as well as documenting the history of Covid-19 as preserved in a covid-19 archive.

The History Lab website:

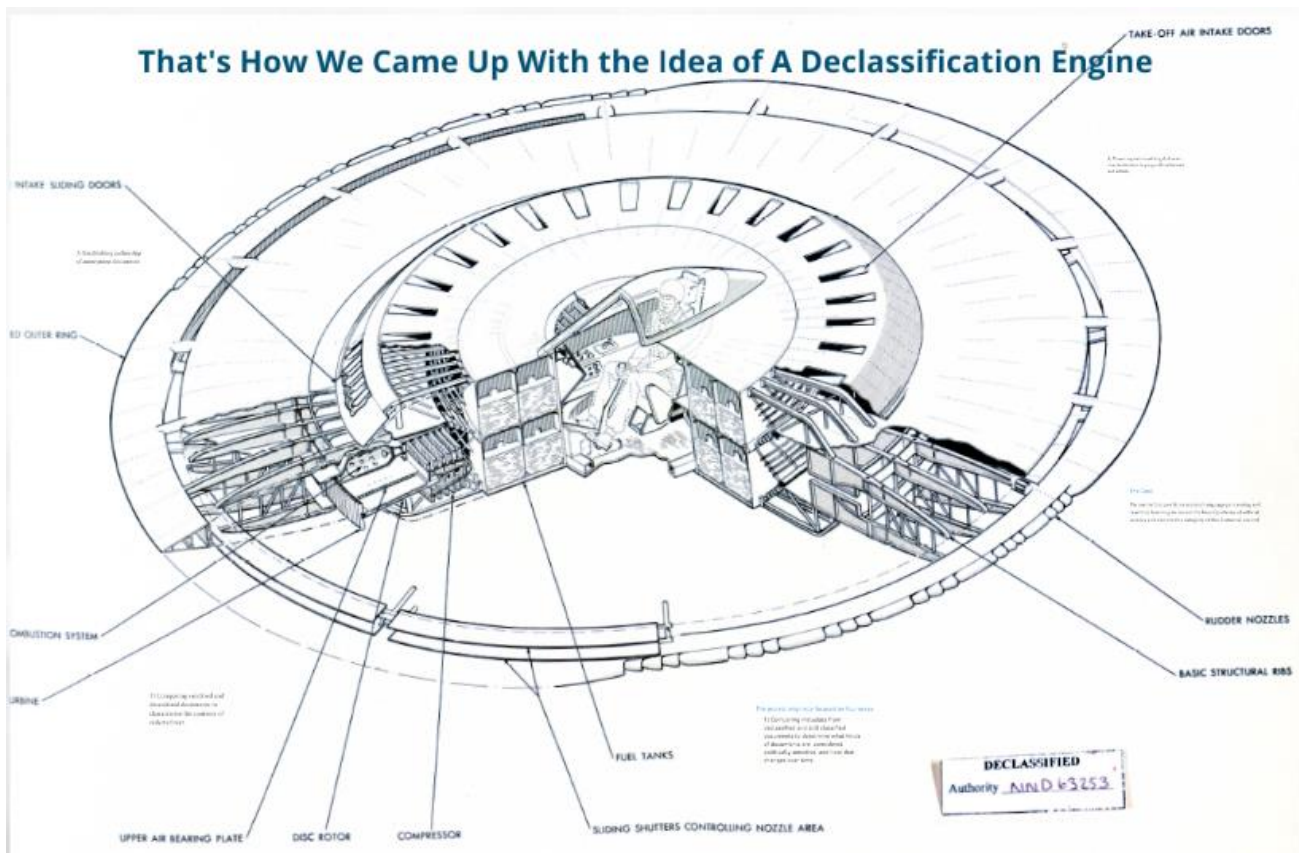
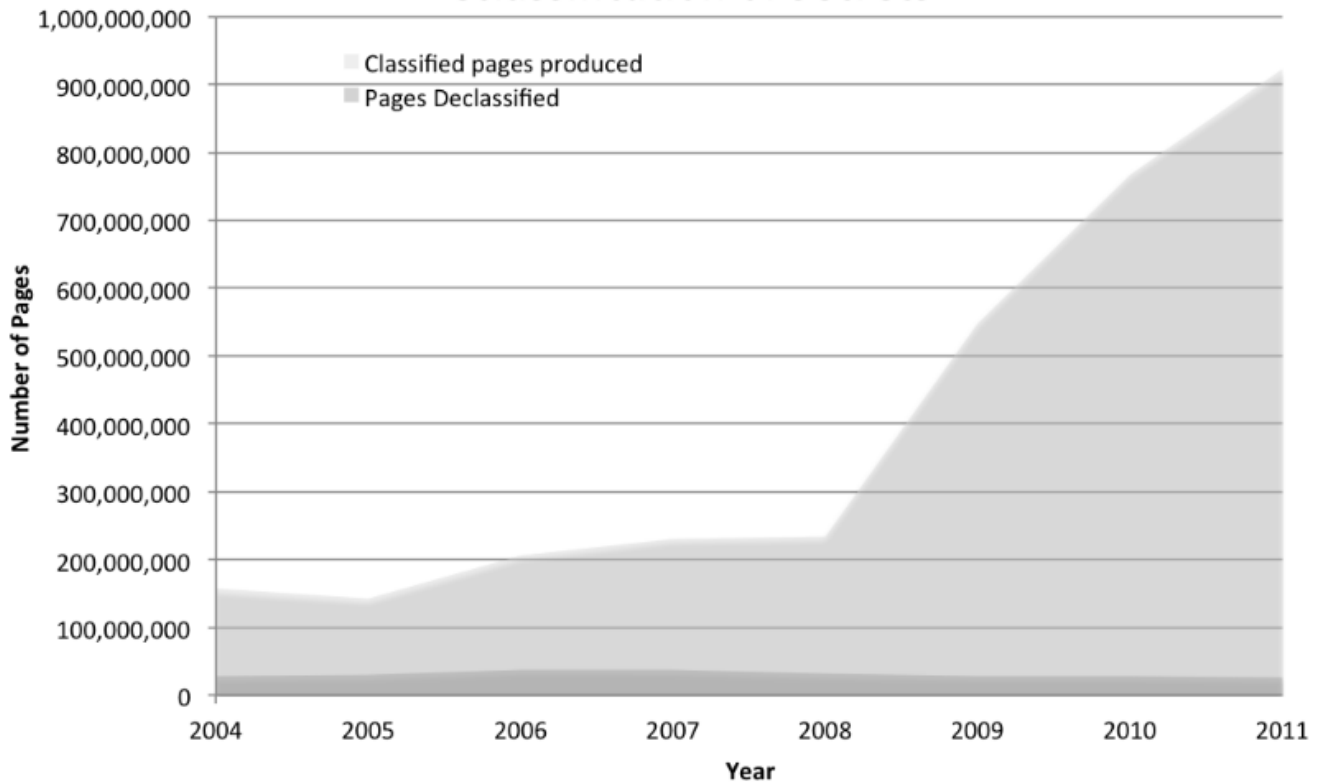
<http://history-lab.org> provides an introductory video, as well as a time line since 2013 of it's activities and media coverage.

Withdrawn and declassified US cables 1973-1976



<http://diploglobe.declassification-engine.org/diploglobe/indexwithdrawn-from-to.html>

How Does the Production of Secrets Compare to the Declassification of Secrets



<http://history-lab.org/declassificationengine/> slide show

Try a data search at <http://history-lab.org/search>

See <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/04/opinion/archives-document-destruction.html>