

Public Libraries Briefcase

No. 9, 3rd Quarter 2004

A publication of the BRASS Business Reference in Public Libraries Committee

Links Updated March 2015

Finding Company Information: Selected Titles and Tips

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Public librarians often receive requests for company information: sales leads, prospective employers, providers of a service, makers of tangible products. For the generalist, it is important to gather some basic information about the company during the reference interview. What does the company do? Is it a public or private company? Where is the company located? What else can you tell me about the company? Finding out as much as possible will allow you to match the patron information need with the appropriate resources. In order to provide information on companies, it is helpful to have an understanding of key terms and concepts: public vs. private, subsidiary vs. parent company, popular name (United Airlines) vs. official name (UAL Corporation). See BRASS Business Guides "Company and Industry Research" for more information.

Not all company directories are the same. These selected sources have different angles and strengths. Knowing the nuances will help point people in the right direction.

Standard & Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives

Good for locating executives of a company.

Ward's Business Directory of U.S. Private and Public Companies

Good for information on larger private companies.

LexisNexis Corporate Affiliations

The "Brand Name Index" makes this directory helpful when only the trade name or particular brand is known.

D & B Million Dollar Directory

Also lists public and private companies that are larger (must have a certain number of employees and/or a certain sales volume).

Manufacturers Directories from Manufacturers' News, Inc.

Directory of manufacturers. Available by state.

Free Web Sites

The Public Register Online

This free annual report service allows you to search by company name, ticker symbol, industry, sector, and more. Formerly Annual Report Service.

IRIN - Annual Report Resource Center

Search more than 11,000 current and historical annual reports from over 4,700 public companies. Search by ticker symbol or company name. Also provides links to charts and other company information.

SuperPages

Search for U.S. businesses with the online yellow pages. It is possible to search by keyword, business name, street address, zip code, phone number, keyword, and more.

SEC Filings & Forms (EDGAR)

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission's EDGAR system contains financial filings for public companies. Unique and detailed information may be found in these reports such as full balance sheets, executive compensation, merger & acquisition activity, portfolio holdings and corporate decision making. Foreign company securities (ADRs) that trade on U.S. stock exchanges may also be included. First time or infrequent users are encouraged to read [About EDGAR](#). There is also a tutorial.

Other Ideas

Special Files – Periodicals such as *Fortune*, *Forbes*, and *Inc.* often publish special lists of companies such as "Best Companies for Minorities," "100 Best Companies to Work For," "200 Best Small Companies," and, of course, "Fortune 500". While the online versions of these lists are available to subscribers, consider creating a special vertical file to house paper copies.

Individual Company Web Sites – A company's web site can provide a wealth of information including press releases, products and services, company officers, company history, stock quotes, annual reports, and more. It can also be used to verify print information, which can go out of date. Tip: On a company web site, annual reports are frequently located under "Investor Relations" on a web site. Other alternatives may include (but are not limited to) "Shareholder Information," "Earnings Releases," "Company Reports," "Company Profiles," "Corporate/Careers," "Financial Information," "Customer Service," or "About".

Subscription Databases – Whether generating a client list or gathering current news about a company, online databases have much to offer. Some examples of databases available at public libraries:

- ABI/INFORM (ProQuest)
- Business & Company Resource Center (Gale Group)
- Business Source Premier (EbscoHost)
- ReferenceUSA (infoUSA)