

James J. Hill Reference Library Guide to Researching a Company

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This guide highlights some of the more frequently used sources for company research at the Hill Library. For further information and other sources, call our reference line at 651-265-5500, or email us at info@jjhill.org.

The Hill Reference Library is open to the public; stop by the reference desk to consult with one of our librarians, or search our catalog on our website, www.jjhill.org. All of our Hill Business Research Guides are available online at www.jjhill.org/research_online/publications_and_research_guides.cfm.

General Considerations

The following questions are designed to help you develop a research strategy for locating the information you need.

Private/Public

If you are researching a public company (one which sells stock to the public and must report information the U.S. SEC), you likely will have access to large amounts of information, and you may want to narrow your focus to a particular aspect of the company's operations. If you are researching a private company, you may find that much less information is published, as they are not required to file with the SEC. You may need to estimate some figures, or draw conclusions from peripheral information about the industry as a whole, or from competitors.

Headquarters/Subsidiary/Division

If you are researching a subsidiary or a division, you may need to look for information on the parent company as well as the individual subdivision. Many directories give information only for parent companies.

Local/National/International

Many information sources are limited by geographic area. Determine the location and scope of your company's headquarters and business early in your search.

Manufacturer/Wholesaler/Retailer/Service/Other

Determine in which line of business your company operates, as there are many specific sources that may apply.

Newsworthiness

Consider whether events have happened at your company that makes it newsworthy. Have they hired a new CEO, or produced a new product, or introduced a new marketing strategy? Indexes may help you locate useful information in newspapers and magazines.

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What information do you need about the company?

You may be interested in securing one specific piece of information or you may be interested in finding everything available. If the company is large or well known, you may want to be selective. Aspects to consider include:

- History of the Company
- Personnel
- Marketing Strategy
- Financial Information
- Products or Services
- Recent News

Sources of Information

Study the various sources you consult carefully. Note the kinds of information the source provides. Always analyze and compare your sources as to currency of the information. Where and how do the authors get their data? Review the introductory sections to determine the methodology used to obtain information and the timeliness.

Business Directories

Directories are listings of companies or individuals and usually include basic information such as company name, address, telephone number, SIC or NAICS code, number of employees, and sales or revenues. Other information, such as fax numbers, web addresses, and officers may sometimes be included. Industry-specific directories, such as the Chain Store Guides, can provide more detailed company information and an alternative source for size/revenue estimates.

Chain Store Guides

Subscription database available at Hill; also available in print editions

The *Chain Store Guides* are a series of databases that cover several industry sectors, including supermarkets, discount stores, hardware chains, drug stores, food service, and restaurants. Use the database to research individual chain stores or to build lists of companies based on very detailed criteria. An excellent source for finding distributors, key executives, and other internal company information.

CorpTech Directory of Technology Companies

Subscription database available at Hill

CorpTech includes tens of thousands of listings for U.S. entities that manufacture or develop high-tech products. The database covers a wide range of high-tech industries, including computer hardware and software, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, and biotechnology. A particular strength of *CorpTech* is its indexing, especially its detailed product index, covering over 16,000 products and technologies.

Dun & Bradstreet Million Dollar Database Total

Subscription database available at Hill

Dun & Bradstreet covers 14 million public and private companies in the U.S. and Canada, and an additional nine million abroad. The database may be searched by industry, geography, size of company (employee or sales size) and other criterion such as location type, year established, employment trends, and import/export. Company lists can be downloaded or printed.

GuideStar

Subscription database available at Hill; some free access available at www2.guidestar.org/.

The GuideStar database of over 1.8 million non-profit organizations can be searched using twelve different criteria, including geography, income, IRS subsection, and NTEE (National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities) codes. Company lists can be downloaded, and GuideStar also provides access to nonprofit 990 filings.

Kompass

Subscription database available at Hill; some free access available at www.kompass.com

The *Kompass* database provides information on nearly 1.8 million international companies, typically including product and service information, executives, revenues, and more. *Kompass* is aimed at professional buyers who deal directly with manufacturers, agents or distributors under standard business-to-business conditions. The database is searchable by country or region, product, or company name. Limited access is available for free on the website. Full access requires a subscription.

LexisNexis Corporate Affiliations

Subscription database available at Hill; also in print, Reference HG4057.A1N

LexisNexis Corporate Affiliations provides detailed portraits of corporate structures, listing corporate divisions and subsidiaries, and specifying their relationships within a corporation. The directory is flexible in its criteria for inclusion, but generally requires U.S. companies to have over \$10 million in annual revenue or over 300 employees. International companies must have revenues of over \$50 million to be included. *Corporate Affiliations* is indexed by company name, brand name, geography, and SIC code. The directory is useful for tracking down a company's ultimate parent or to locate a company that is a subsidiary of another. It also provides address, phone, stock ticker symbol, sales, officers and directors.

Company Profile, History, & Financials

EBSCO – Business Source Corporate

Subscription database available at Hill

EBSCO's Business Source Corporate provides access to over 10,000 detailed company reports from Datamonitor, covering basic company facts, history, key employees, products or services, top competitors, and SWOT Analyses. (Keep in mind that large, public companies will generally have much more information available than smaller, private companies).

Hoover's

Subscription database available at Hill; some free access available at www.hoovers.com

Hoover's provides information on 14 million U.S. and Canadian companies and almost 2 million international companies. Profiles for large companies generally include descriptions, history, competitors, detailed financials, and executives. Links to SEC filings are provided for public companies, and competitive landscape reports compare financials with key competitors.

Gale's Business and Company Resource Center: International Directory of Company Histories

Subscription database available at Hill; also in print at Reference HD2721.I56

This continuing publication covers thousands of the world's largest and most influential companies, with entries that provide information on founders, expansions, losses, labor/management actions, principal divisions, subsidiaries, and competitors. Searchable by company name in Gale's BCRC; check the cumulative company index in the most recent print volume (the series currently stands at 98 volumes) to locate entries for companies of interest.

Securities and Exchange Commission – EDGAR

www.sec.gov/edgar.shtml

If you are researching a publicly-traded company in the U.S., you can access detailed company information from the SEC's EDGAR database. The database has recently been enhanced with some advanced search options, including full-text searching for the last four years of filings. Corporate annual 10-k filings provide financial data and management statements reviewing results and discussing future plans.

Business Periodicals, Newspapers, & Trade Journals

Industry trade publications can provide articles focusing on a company's key personnel, business strategies, new products, or marketing initiatives, while local newspapers can provide information about the activities of smaller private companies.

BizJournals

www.bizjournals.com

BizJournals publishes 40 business newspapers around the country, including the *Business Journal* of Minneapolis/St. Paul. If you're researching a company in one of the *BizJournal* cities, you can check for articles on the *BizJournal* website. Not all content is available for free.

EBSCO – Business Source Corporate

Subscription database available at Hill

The *EBSCO* database provides access to over 3000 magazines and trade journals, dating back to 1965. In addition, the Regional Business News database covers over 80 regional business publications, and the McClatchy-Tribune Collection provides a 90 day archive of over 290 newspapers from the McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.

Gale Business & Company Resource Center

Subscription database available at Hill

Business & Company Resource Center provides citations, abstracts, and full-text articles from trade journals, business magazines and newspapers from around the country, as well as from important international sources. *BCRC* also provides quick access to company histories, directory listings, industry overviews, rankings, and market share data.

Google News

news.google.com

There are not many free sources providing coverage of magazines and newspapers, but Google News does a pretty good job of catching the recent online versions of magazines, trade publications and newspapers. You can search by state or locality and filter results by relevance or date. Local sources are often the most useful for coverage of smaller privately held companies.

Minneapolis Star Tribune / St. Paul Pioneer Press

Online access via ProQuest, subscription database available at Hill

Local newspapers are an important source of information on local industries and companies, so when researching Minnesota companies - especially in the metro-area - you'll want to check the local newspapers for relevant stories. ProQuest provide access to the Star Tribune from 1986, and has just added the Pioneer Press to their coverage, though the backfile only extends to April 2010.

ProQuest ABI/INFORM / Newspapers

Subscription database available at Hill

ABI/INFORM is international in scope and covers over 1400 business magazines, trade journals, and newspapers, with citations, abstracts, and full text articles on topics such as business, management, and

finance. The ProQuest *Newspapers* database provides access to important U.S. newspapers, including the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Chicago Tribune*.

Industry Overviews

The Hill Reference Library collects a number of sources covering individual industries. See the Hill Library's *Guide to Researching an Industry* for more information.

Outside Sources of Information

Government Agencies

The company you are researching may be required to report information to national, state or local regulatory agencies and that information may become publicly available.

Trade Associations

There is a trade association for most types of businesses in the U.S, and the Library has several directories of local, national and international associations. If your company is a member of an association, information may be included in association publications or on their web site.

Competitors

If you phrase your questions carefully, a competitor may give you valuable information. For example, asking questions about the industry, than zeroing in on two or three competitors of the company you are interviewing might lead your source to comment on the size, strength or strategy of your target company.

Suppliers

Suppliers and wholesalers are sometimes willing to provide size of shipments or other comparative information on the companies they serve.

Labor Unions

If there is an organized labor union in the company you are researching, the union may provide you with information on the number of employees and the type of work performed.

Local Public Libraries or Newspapers

These local institutions often maintain clipping files or other publications that are not widely available outside of their region.

The Company Itself

In some cases, a skillful, knowledgeable interviewer can call a company directly and successfully learn a great deal about its operations. Your reception may be warm and cooperative, or you may be immediately dismissed. This kind of call may be necessary when you have exhausted all other sources of information. Again, reasonable, well-informed questions will be most productive.

Questions? Consult with a Business Information Specialist
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