

Gathering Information

STEP SIX Institutional & Social Data



Step 6 Institutional Data and Social Data

INSTITUTIONAL DATA

Institutional Data means identifying associations or agencies affiliated with your topic. Institutional Data is broken up into two categories: Private and Public. For every topic you should be able to find at least one government agency monitoring, if not regulating, it and a private organization with special interests and affiliations to it. Both of which provide great potential sources of information because the people contacted here are going to be experts in their field.

Private Institutions = Business and/or Professional Associations

Private companies often publish free pamphlets and guides related to their industry or products. For example: Evenflow, a maker of products for babies, provides free information and advice to expectant mothers about exercise, nutrition and childcare. By contacting a firm's public affairs department, you can inquire about free materials (a media packet) available to the public. But even more important, the people who work at these companies or associations are going to make excellent expert interviews for their particular areas of expertise.

To find information on Business and/or Professional Associations, we will be using:

- **Encyclopedia of Association**

Trade and Industry Associations are identified here, along with addresses, phone numbers, and other pertinent information.

- **Washington Information Directory**

Has listings for both government and private agencies with headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Public Institutions = The Government

To find information on Government Agencies, we will be using the:

- **Washington Information Directory**

Because it carries listings for both government and private agencies with headquarters in Washington D.C., the Washington Information Directory falls into both categories.

- **U.S. Government Manual**

Has listings for government agencies and government produced books. It lists the addresses of government (public) agencies, the names and titles of people who work there, and a description of the agency and its activities.

OR

- **Government Web Site FirstGov**

Responding to the need for a central clearinghouse of U. S. federal government sites, the U.S. government developed FirstGov (www.usa.gov) and linked every federal agency to its site as well as every state government.

NOTE: The U.S. federal government is the largest producer of printed material on the planet.

ALSO NOTE: NONE OF THESE SOURCES ARE AVAILABLE ON DATA BASES. ALL OF THESE ARE GOING TO HAVE THE MOST RECENT COPY STORED BEHIND THE REFERENCE DESK IN THE LIBRARY. YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CHECK THESE BOOKS OUT OF THE LIBRARY. YOU WILL WANT TO COPY THE PAGES YOU NEED. YOU MIGHT TRY AND SEE IF ANY OF THESE REFERENCE BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE YET.

SOCIAL DATA

Researching Social Data means finding statistical data about people or organizations. Most statistical data is presented in the form of polls, surveys, or tables. Collecting statistical data provides researchers with a solid base from which to make comparisons, find correlations and draw conclusions.

EXAMPLE: If you wanted to find out how many murder victims we had in this country last year, collecting social data would not only be able to give you a number you should be able to find out what weapons was used most frequently and compare which states had the highest murder rate with which states had the lowest.

To retrieve social data, you will be required to use two sources:

The first source is called the:

STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE U.S.

The Statistical Abstract of the U.S. is considered the most authoritative source for statistical data. (This will mean more to you when we discuss how unreliable statistical information and surveys and polls can be). It is published by the U.S. Census Bureau and carries statistical information on the social and economic conditions in the U.S. as well as selected international data. A hard copy volume is stored behind the reference desk in the Neumann Library. This volume will have the most recent statistics. The reference librarian will get it for you and allow you to make copies out of it but like all reference material, it cannot be checked out of the library. It is also available online at www.census.gov/statab.

The second social data source is called the:

LEXIS NEXIS STATISTICAL (UNIVERSE) Database

Like the periodical and newspaper data bases we used last week, Lexis Nexis Statistical is one of the data base options you can access from the Library's homepage. All of the Social Data Sources that we used to have to track down separately are now compiled into this one database.

Three of the most reliable sources we've used in the past are now included on Statistical Universe. These sources include:

1) Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 2) American Statistical Index, and 3) Statistical Reference Index.

Statistical Abstract of the U.S.

The reason why I have you check this source separately is because the information in the reference desk volume or online is probably more current than what's included on the database.

American Statistical Index (ASI): The ASI carries information/statistics on Federal Government Sources.

Statistical Reference Index (SRI): The SRI carries information/statistics on State Government and Private Sources (including polls and surveys).

In addition to tables and charts, Lexis Nexus Statistical database provides links to the full text publications on government websites.

AS AN FYI: You can still use the hardback bound Annuals, which are published according to year. This is how we had to retrieve information before Lexis Nexus Statistical (Universe) came along. Each year is separated into two volumes: an Index and an Abstract.

VOL. 1 INDEX

Do a subject search. The Index will give you a document number (example: 5402.7) You will use this document number to look us a description of the document in the Abstract.

VOL 2 ABSTRACT

Find a description of the document filed under the document number. If after reading the abstract, you decide this is pertinent to your research make a note of the Year, Document #, and the Page #, so you can find it on Microfiche.

To obtain data from the hardback volumes you have to go through a 3-Step Retrieval System: 1) Identify the topic through an Index 2) Further identify the topic through an Abstract 3) Obtain a copy of the fulltext article off of microfiche (even harder to use than microfilm)

HOWEVER, most of my students prefer to use the database as do I!

Hyperlinks to relevant websites:

U.S. Census Bureau

<http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/>

(Statistical Abstract of the U.S.)