

Researching Individuals

Revised on 9/2010



This is a list of sources for you to use when researching individuals (like police officers, school administrators, and politicians). The list is organized by the type of information you can find on people. Some of the information is easily accessible; other information requires access to specialized databases.

The information and sources on this list applies to a wide variety of individuals. Not surprisingly, high-profile people, like celebrities, corporate executives and politicians, have the most information available about them on the public record. Less public individuals, including low-level public officials (like clerks or cops or principals) and unaffiliated individuals, tend to have less information available on the public record – but you’ll be surprised what you can find on anyone.

Ask yourself the following questions about individuals:

- * Where/how can they be contacted?
- * Where did they attend college?
- * What is their compensation and/or salary?
- * Do they or have they served on other boards?
- * Do they have connections to industry groups?
- * What did they do before?
- * Are they married? To whom? Are they divorced? Do they have children?
- * With which political party do they affiliate?

- * Who receives their political campaign contributions?
- * What is their religious affiliation?
- * With what organizations are they involved?
- * What hobbies are they active in?
- * What strong interests do they have?
- * Have they ever published?
- * Have they made any incriminating public statements? Or public statements that can be used against them?
- * Do they have a criminal record?
- * What is their contact information? What staffer should you be dealing with?
- * Who contributed to their campaign? Including in-kind contributions and loans.
- * Are there any connections between contributions and how a politician voted on a piece of legislation?
- * When are they up for re-election?
- * What is their voting record? Especially with issues of concern to you.
- * On which committees do they serve? Do they hold any leadership positions?
- * What past jobs have they held?
- * What does their spouse do?
- * Who voted (or not) for him/her in the last election (voting patterns)?
- * Do they or their spouse own stock? If so, in which companies?
- * Other family connections? (Where did the family money come from?)

Types of Public Information Available on Individuals

Finding Home Addresses and Phone Numbers

Local telephone directories FREE!
If you know the person's name and city.

www.four11.com or www.switchboard.com Online national "white pages" for finding an e-mail address and phone number.

For more information please contact Jay Donahue, Program Manager, jay@datacenter.org

www.superpages.com Directory site for business and individual listings as well as city pages including the U.S., Canada and a Global Directories section, with links to yellow (company) and white (individuals) pages, and other directories in more than 50 countries.

www.pipl.com This website searches the “deep web” and compiles addresses, social networking sites, public listserve activity, and public records.

Marquis Who’s Who FREE!

Available at public libraries. Contains biographies of well-known people, including business people, scientists and public officials.

KnowX \$

<http://www.knowx.com>

People Finder database searches residence and real estate public records to locate individuals. Good option when the phone book won’t work. Search fees range from free to \$1.50 per database. Charges for documents range from \$1 - \$7.

FEC-Info FREE!

<http://www.tray.com/fecinfo/>

Database of all federal election campaign donations by individuals. Search by an individual contributor’s name. It will often list the individual’s address, which is typically either their home or business address. At minimum, it will list a contributor’s city, state and type of work (often including the company’s name), which can narrow down searches using other sources.

Lexis-Nexis FREE! /\$

Often available for free at libraries (especially law libraries) or law firms, Lexis-Nexis is a massive research database. Its Public Records library includes a people locator similar to KnowX.

AutoTrackXP \$

<http://www.autotrackxp.com/>

AutoTrackXP is an expensive database that accesses “six billion current and historical records on individuals and businesses.” Only professional investigators can subscribe. It may be accessible through research organizations, private investigators or attorneys in your network of supporters.

Finding Someone’s Salary (for corporate executives)

Executive Pay Watch FREE!

<http://www.aflcio.org/corporateamerica/paywatch/>

Executive Pay Watch is maintained by the AFL-CIO. You can compare workers' wages with the salary packages of CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. The site also contains easy to use guides on how to research executive pay for (public) companies not in the site's database. The site is updated every year.

U.S. Securities & Exchange Commission FREE!

<http://www.sec.gov/>

Publicly-traded corporations must submit certain information to the Security & Exchange Commission (SEC) for the government, investors and public scrutiny. This includes revealing the salaries of top executives and board members. Compensation tables are found in SEC form DEF 14A, the company’s final proxy statement. The SEC provides on-line copies of these and other financial statements.

Free EDGAR**FREE!**<http://www.freeedgar.com>

Free EDGAR is a database of corporate Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC) filings. You can search by company name or ticker. Very easy to use.

Uncovering an Individual's Assets

(Including businesses, property, or stock owned, deed transfers, vehicles, and boats)

KnowX \$<http://www.knowx.com>

Asset database searches property, deeds and other public records to locate an individual's assets. Search fees range from free to \$1.50 per database. Charges for documents range from \$1 - \$7.

Lexis-Nexis FREE!/\$

Often available for free at libraries (especially law libraries) or law firms, Lexis-Nexis is a massive research database. Its Public Records library searches property, deed and other records to locate assets held by an individual.

AutoTrackXP \$<http://www.autotrackxp.com/>

AutoTrackXP is an expensive database that accesses "six billion current and historical records on individuals and businesses." Only professional investigators can subscribe. It may be accessible through research organizations, private investigators or attorneys in your network of supporters.

Getting Court Proceedings Information

(Including divorce, bankruptcy, liens, judgments, criminal and civil decisions)

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Local courthouse**AutoTrackXP \$**<http://www.autotrackxp.com/>

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BRB Publications Public Records Sites FREE<http://www.brpub.com/pubrecsites.asp>

Different information available depending on the state. In California corporations and death records are available while some states provide more information on individuals like court proceedings, drivers licenses.

Finding Campaign Contributions

Follow the Money

<http://www.followthemoney.org>

National Institute on Money in State Politics website. Database on campaign contributions at the state election level (no federal-level offices). You can search across states and by issue for contributors as well as by candidate. Not comprehensive or up to date (40 states for mostly 2000 information) but the database is under continuous construction. One of very few sites with this type of information.

Project Vote Smart

<http://www.vote-smart.org>

Voting records, campaign finance data, issue positions, performance evaluations, and biographical and contact information on president and current members of congress. The amounts received by current office holders from specific interest groups, such as agriculture, as shown back to the late 1980's. Has a section on Issues that provides a background on an issue with links to organizations working on that issue.

Center for Responsive Politics

<http://www.opensecrets.org/>

Special reports on the correlation between the sources of congressional lawmakers campaign funds and how they voted, as well as industry and topical analysis to campaign contributions (for example, top ten agribiz contributors). It can be searched by name of congress member, by issue, or keyword (for example, company name). Also has contact information for locating state campaign contributions. To get a representative's personal finances (including stock ownership), scroll down and click on "politicians", enter their name, and on the left side of the rep's page click on "personal finances".

Other Resources

Search Engines

Google

<http://www.google.com>

Google is the best introductory search engine. It will easily and efficiently search a billion web pages for mentions of an individual's name.

AlltheWeb

<http://www.alltheweb.com>

AlltheWeb currently covers approximately 2.1 billion web pages, hundreds of thousands of multimedia, video, and software downloads, and real-time news from thousands of sources. AlltheWeb will automatically try to improve your results by rewriting your queries. The transformations performed on your behalf include the addition of quotes around common phrases that are detected from the AlltheWeb phrase dictionary.

Dogpile

<http://www.dogpile.com>

Dogpile is the best multi-search engine. With one easy interface, it metasearches up to 18 search engines simultaneously, including Google and Alta Vista, both of which are good for researching individuals.

News & Article Searches

American City Business Journal

<http://bizjournals.bcentral.com>

Search for a business person's name from the regional business press.

Google News

<http://news.google.com>

Search and browse 4,000 continuously updated news sources. Very good for current news searches.

FindArticles.com

<http://www.findarticles.com>

FindArticles.com is a vast archive of published articles that can be searched and retrieved for free. Each of the hundreds of thousands of articles dating back to 1998 from more than 300 magazines and journals can be read in its entirety and printed at no cost. The Business and Finance section contains many industry publications. The News and Society section offers articles from publications with editorial viewpoints from right to left.