Secondary Data Sources
In the quest for secondary data sources, humility can avert futility. Library professionals are able and eager to help—and the price is right.
Secondary Data

Data gathered and recorded by someone else prior to and for a purpose other than the current project

Is often:

• Historical

• Already assembled

• Needs no access to subjects
Database Varieties

• Bibliographic
• Numeric
• Directory
• Full text
Internal vs. External Secondary Data
Internal Data

Internal and proprietary data is more descriptive

- Accounting information
- Sales information
- Backorders
- Customer complaints
Relative Merits of Internal Data

Advantages
- Suitable geographic and product breakdowns
- Minimal time lags

Disadvantages
- Hard to handle volume of information
- Inputs tied to compensation
- Data in accounting format
External Data Sources

- Government agencies
- Syndicated research services
- Trade and professional associations
- Custom research firms
- Newspapers and journals
- Books and periodicals
- Vendors and producers
- Directories
- Internet
Commercial Sources

• Market share data companies like A.C. Nielsen provide information about sales volume and brand share over time
• Demographic and census updates—many organizations supply census updates, in easy-to-use or custom formats
Commercial Sources

• Attitude and public opinion research—syndicated services report the findings of opinion polls
• Consumption and purchase behavior data
• Advertising research—readership and audience data
Case Study: Automobile Leasing

An automobile leasing company that specializes in exotic foreign cars is considering a local media advertising campaign in the tri-state region—New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Due to more stringent IRS tax write-off requirements for automobile business use, this company plans to intensively market its leasing service to consumers rather than businesses. Company records indicate that past and current lessors are definitely "yuppie" types; thus the company would like to identify communities with median household incomes above $35,000 with more than 20 percent of the labor force engaged in managerial or professional occupations, and with a median educational level beyond high school.

Database:  Donnelley Demographics

Availability:  Dialog Information Retrieval Service

Type:  Numeric

Description:  Produced by Donnelly Marketing Information Services, this database contains selected demographic information from the 1980 census which has been enhanced with current and five-year projections for some data series. Arranged by a variety of geographic subdivisions, the database contains information on demographic characteristics, and is reloaded annually.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yahoo!</td>
<td>Portal that serves as a gateway to all kinds of sites on the Web.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.yahoo.com">http://www.yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEOexpress</td>
<td>The 80/20 rule applied to the Internet. A series of links designed by a busy executive for busy executives.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ceoexpress.com">http://www.ceoexpress.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New York Public Library</td>
<td>Library resources and links available online.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nypl.org">http://www.nypl.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Page</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census Bureau</td>
<td>Demographic information from the U.S. Census Bureau.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.census.gov">http://www.census.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAT-USA/Internet</td>
<td>A comprehensive source of U.S. government information that focuses on economic, financial, and trade data.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.stat-usa.gov/">http://www.stat-usa.gov/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising Age magazine</td>
<td>Provides content on marketing media, advertising, and public relations.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.adage.com">http://www.adage.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inc. Online</td>
<td>Inc. magazine’s resources for growing a small business.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.inc.com">http://www.inc.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNN Money</td>
<td>Provides business news, information on managing a business and managing money, and other business data.</td>
<td><a href="http://money.cnn">http://money.cnn</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAICS—North American Industry</td>
<td>Describes the new classification system that replaced the SIC system.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.census.gov/epcd/www/naics.html">http://www.census.gov/epcd/www/naics.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MapQuest</td>
<td>Allows users to enter an address and zip code and see a map.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mapquest.com">http://www.mapquest.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Europe</td>
<td>Provides links to obtain information about European countries.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.business-europe.com">http://www.business-europe.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Common Research Objectives for Secondary Data Studies
Fact Finding

- Identify consumption patterns
- Tracking trends
- Environmental scanning (tracking changes)
Model Building

- Estimating market potential
- Forecasting sales
- Selecting trade areas and sites
Database Marketing

- For maintaining customer data base and developing prospect list
- Names
- Addresses
- Past purchases
- Responses to past efforts
- Data from numerous sources
Advantages of Secondary Data

• Inexpensive relative to primary data
• Obtained rapidly
• Readily available
• Information not otherwise accessible
• Aid in design of primary research
• Enhancing existing primary data
Government Data Is Often Free
Disadvantages of Secondary Data

• Data may not be consistent with needs
  – Inappropriate units of measurement
• Data may be dated
  – Economic Census of the U.S. economy updated every 5 years
• May be difficult to assess credibility
Evaluating Secondary Data

- What was purpose of study?
- Who collected data?
- What data was collected?
- When was data collected?
- How was data collected?
- Is data consistent with other data sources?
Evaluating Secondary Data
### Evaluating Websites as Information Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Factor</th>
<th>Questions to Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Purpose**       | • Why does the site exist?  
|                    | • How evident is the purpose it is trying to convey?  
|                    | • Does it achieve its purpose?  
|                    | • How does its purpose affect the type and bias of information presented? |
| **Authority**     | • What are the credentials of the author or institution or organization sponsoring the site?  
|                    | • Does the site give you a means of contacting anyone for further information?  
|                    | • Who links to this site?  
|                    | • If facts are supplied, where do they come from? |
| **Scope**         | • How old is the information?  
|                    | • How often is it updated?  
|                    | • How much information is available?  
|                    | • Is it selective or comprehensive?  
|                    | • What are the criteria for inclusion?  
|                    | • If applicable, what geographic area or time period or language does it cover?  
|                    | • How does the information presented compare with similar sites?  
|                    | • Is it a series of links only (a metasite), or is there added value?  
|                    | • What is the nature of the added value?  
|                    | • What information did you expect to find that was missing?  
|                    | • Is the site self-contained or does it link to other websites? |
| **Audience**      | • Whom does the site cater to?  
|                    | • What level of knowledge or experience is assumed?  
|                    | • How does this intended audience affect the type and bias of the information? |
| **Format**        | • How quickly can you find needed information?  
|                    | • How easy is the site to use? Is it intuitive?  
|                    | • Does it load quickly?  
|                    | • Is the design appealing?  
|                    | • Are there navigation buttons?  
|                    | • Is there a site map or search button?  
|                    | • Is there an easily identifiable help button?  
|                    | • Is Help helpful?  
|                    | • Are pages in ASCII or graphic format?  
|                    | • Is the information downloadable into a spreadsheet or word-processing program, if desired? |
Global Secondary Data

• Typical limitations
• Additional pitfalls
  – Unavailable
  – Questionable accuracy
  – Lack of standardized terminology
Final Caveat

Beware of percentages and index numbers

• Values depend on base
Recap: Secondary Data

• What is it?
• What are the different types?
  – Internal vs. external
• How is it used?
• Advantages and disadvantages?
• How should it be evaluated?