ReferenceUSA is a valuable research and reference tool, particularly for businesses researching markets, competitors, suppliers, and potential customers. Additionally, job-seekers may find it useful for identifying and researching potential industry sectors and employers. It can also search for address and phone number information for individuals across the United States and Canada.

**Learning Objectives:**
- Familiarity with business research capabilities of Reference USA.
- Awareness of data limitations in Reference USA.
- Ability to create and download lists of businesses based on search criteria.
- Ability to find contact (i.e., “white page”) information for individuals.

**Access Reference USA from the library’s business subject guide**
- In an internet browser, go to the library website: mesacountylibraries.org
- Hover over eResources tab at top.
- Click on Subject Guides.
- Click on Business. Or you could go directly to this page by entering guides.mesacountylibraries.org/business in the address bar.

Librarians at Mesa County Libraries have carefully selected books, websites, and other resources useful for businesses, large and small, new and old, and gathered them together in this Business subject guide.

- Click on the ReferenceUSA link. If you are accessing the database from outside the library, you will be prompted for your library card number.

**Access Reference USA from library website**
- Hover over eResources.
- Click on eResources A-Z.
- Scroll through the list or jump to Reference USA.
- Click on ReferenceUSA link. If you are accessing the database from outside the library, you will be prompted for your library card number.
Market research – businesses

From the home page, select the U.S. Businesses database. To move between databases, click on Available Databases near the top of the page. Hover over the database you want to use and click on the search link on the right-side of the blue window that appears.

If you are looking for a particular business – maybe you want to send a complaint or your resume or a product sample – you can obtain information about that business including contact information by entering what you know about the business in the Quick Search box:

If you searched for Hot Tomato without entering a state, you would have gotten 12 companies in the results. If you searched for Hot Tomato and entered Fruita in the city field, you would have received one result. ReferenceUSA displays summary information for all the business(es) it finds that meet the search criteria:
Click on the business name for more extensive information:

**Where does the business information come from and is it verified?**

ReferenceUSA uses a number of sources for its business information. For publicly-traded companies, of course, quarterly and annual SEC filings provide all or most of the information. For private companies, the most prevalent sources are:

- Utility connections.
- Yellow pages
- Change-of-address databases.

As a result, many smaller, particularly home-based, businesses may not be found in the database.
ReferenceUSA verifies the data on a regular basis through telephone interviews. Typically, however, ReferenceUSA callers simply talk to the first person who picks up the phone at the business. Approximately 7% of the database is verified each month – any given listing for a private company is probably verified once every 14 months or so. Financial data for a private company may be provided by the company through the telephone interviews but in most cases it is not. ReferenceUSA uses a financial model (a set of assumptions about how a company in that industry operates) to estimate the financial data it provides. Since the model is proprietary information, it is difficult to say how accurate the financial data is for private companies.

**Custom search using one or more filters.**

Even more valuable than searching for a specific company is the ability to search for one or more companies that fit your selection criteria. The available filters are:

- Company Name
- Executives (search by name, title, gender and ethnicity)
- Industry
- Geography
- Size (number of employees or sales volume)
- Ownership (public or private, headquarters or branch, foreign parent, home-based business, or government office)
- Financial information (stock exchange, ticker, credit rating, business expenditures)
- Other criteria (web address, Fortune 1000, Yellow page ad size, years in database, year established, square footage, number of PCs, whether all employees are professionals or only one employee is professional).

You can search using these filters in combination. For example, you could search for toy stores in California which have at least 10 employees and a female Hispanic owner. As you add filters, ReferenceUSA lists them in the above order, so you must scroll down in the Custom Search screen to see all of your filters. To begin, click on Custom Search for the U.S. Businesses database.

**Verified, unverified or closed.**

The custom search screen gives you three choice: Verified Businesses, Include Unverified Businesses, and Include Closed/Out of Business records. Usually, you will want to choose Verified Businesses, which should be the most accurate set. ReferenceUSA defaults to Verified Businesses.
Filter executives for name, gender and/or ethnicity – Click on Executives.

Perhaps you met someone at a conference who would be a good lead for your business but you only remember his last name. Or you have a new product you want to market to female executives. Or you are putting together a networking event for Hispanic business owners in your area.

To use the Executives criteria, click on Executives along the left side of the screen then click on any of the four categories. ReferenceUSA will open a form for you to enter or select your particular criteria for that category.
Once you have entered your criteria, you can click on Update Count or View Results on the right side of the screen to see how many companies ReferenceUSA found or see the list of selected companies.

**Filter a particular industry or kind of business – Click on Business Type.**

Instead of needing to find one particular pizza restaurant, you want to find all pizza restaurants in a given geographical area – maybe you’ve invented a brilliant pizza gadget, and you want to find potential buyers or you want to learn more about the potential competition for a new pizza restaurant you are considering starting.

Major Industry Group lets you select companies that fit into very broad categories like Construction, Manufacturing, and Transportation. Keyword/SIC/NAICS allows you to select companies based on narrower categories.

SIC codes and NAICS codes are standard codes used to identify industries. The NAICS codes provide a greater level of detail. In addition, the NAICS codes are grouped
so that similar kinds of processes can be found together. Unless you are doing broad industry or economic research, either code can be used satisfactorily.

Companies can have multiple SIC or NAICS codes, but the Primary code reflects the most important component of their business. Generally, use Search Primary SIC only or Search Primary NAICS only, which will give you a shorter, but more focused list. Use All codes for a larger all-encompassing list. If you do not know the right code for your search, type in the name of the industry and click Search. ReferenceUSA will give you a list of possible codes. Enter the code(s) in the table at the bottom of the screen. You may also copy-and-paste the codes into the table. If you enter more than one code, ReferenceUSA will find companies whose primary code matches any of the ones you listed. To remove a code from the table, simply delete it from the table.

Keep in mind that the data source for the business type may be as unsophisticated as the telephone directory listing for the business. Telephone verification does include asking the person who picks up the phone what the business does, but you may find some companies included in a business type search that, on closer examination, do not belong.
Filter a particular location – Click on Geography.

You can limit your search to companies in one or more selected states, metro areas, zip codes, even neighborhoods. Just click on the geographic division and Reference USA will open up a series of drop-down boxes to allow you to set your criteria. This is an example of searching for companies in the Grand Junction “metro area”, basically the towns in the Grand Valley. Click on each geographic area you want to include in your search. You can include multiple states, cities, zip codes, etc. ReferenceUSA lists your choices in the right-hand column. You can remove them from your selection list by clicking on them in the right-hand column.

Filter a particular business size – Click on Business Size.

You can limit your search to companies of a certain size. There are two options. You can pick either a range of annual sales volume or a range of number of employees. Keep in mind that sales volume figures may only be rough estimates. For private companies, number of employees may be more accurate. You can click multiple ranges to create a greater than or less than filter. For example, if you wanted to find companies with at least 100 employees, you would click to highlight 100-249, 250-499, 500-999 and so on. To remove a range from the selection criteria, simply click on it in the right-hand column.
Change your Search Criteria.

Based on your results, you may find you want to change the criteria – either broadening or narrowing them. Click on Revise Search. Remember that the search criteria are in order so you may need to scroll down to find the criteria you want to change.

View/Sort/Map/Download/Print Results

As you apply criteria, you can click on View Results to see a summary table of the companies found in the database that meet your criteria. You can sort your list by any of the fields by clicking on the applicable column title. The last column can be toggled among 5 fields: record type, corporate tree, title, employees, and sales. Record type indicates whether the record is Verified or not. If you did not change the default setting on the Custom Search screen, you should see only Verified records. Corporate tree shows you whether the record represents a parent or subsidiary company. Title shows you the title of the Executive in the summary record.

From the Results list, you can select all of the records (click on the white box just to the left of Company Name) or select individual records by clicking on the small box just to the left of the company name and choose any of these actions:

- **Review** – See the criteria that generated the results in a handy format. You can click on the small square to the left of the criterion to remove it altogether or click on the Edit link to change your search criteria.
• **Details** – get detailed information about the selected companies. Each record will be displayed as a separate page. Use the arrows or the page number field near the top to move between records.

• **Map** – view a zoomable and printable map of the selected companies.

• **Summary** – create a cross-tabulation by SIC code, NAICS code, sales volume or number of employees and an optional geographical breakdown. For example, if you wanted to analyze supermarkets in Colorado, you could create a cross-tabulation that would show you how many companies existed in each county at different employee levels.

• **Download** – download a file containing the results which you can then open in Excel for further editing. You can choose to download a Comma Delimited, Excel, or Tab Delimited file. You are restricted to downloading 250 companies at a time. If you have more companies in your list, simply download them in sets of 250 at a time. You can merge them back together in Excel. The download feature is very handy if you are creating a mailing list.

• **Print.**

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**Practice 1:** Create a list of pizza restaurants in Mesa County.

**Practice 2:** Download a mailing list of the restaurants you located in Practice 1 and view the downloaded list in Microsoft Excel.

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**Job search research**

ReferenceUSA is a great resource to help a job-seeker find potential employers using geography, size, and industry criteria. Besides the information we have focused on so far, ReferenceUSA usually includes the name of at least one key executives in the detailed company information.

Additionally, ReferenceUSA has teamed up with Indeed.com to provide job search capabilities. Return to Available Databases and select US Jobs / Internships.
Practice 3: Find a job posting in Austin, Texas that interests you.

Practice 4: Use the U. S. businesses database to find out how many other Texas companies are in the same industry.

Market research – consumers

ReferenceUSA includes a database of US consumers with the ability to filter for median home price, household income, and interests (for example, pets or outdoor recreation).

To switch to the Consumer databases, click on Available Databases near the top of the screen. Hover over U.S. Consumers / Lifestyles, then click on Search in the blue box that appears. Try searching for yourself in the Quick Search. To search for consumers, click on Custom Search. You can use one or more filters:

- Phone and Geography sections to search for consumers with a particular area code or living in a particular location, respectively.

- Housing Selections (home value and home income) are based on Census information at the census tract level, giving an average home value and average home income for all of the households in a neighborhood. It is NOT the home price or income for any specific consumer.

- Lifestyles section can be used to search for consumers with interests such as sports, pets, collectibles. This section is based on information ReferenceUSA has gathered from other companies, including magazine subscription, credit card or mail order purchases, and charitable donations. The information is not verified with the consumer. Use caution with this feature as searches will probably include people who do NOT have the lifestyle interest and exclude people who do. If you are curious, search for yourself using the Quick Search and see whether the “Lifestyles” information for you is correct and complete. If you are concerned about
privacy, you may contact Infogroup by phone or email (click on Contact Us near the top of the screen) to ask that your information be removed.

To search for consumers, click on Custom Search. The most useful of the available criteria are:

- **Geography:** use the same procedures shown on page 9 to select a particular geographic area.

- **Housing:** select the household income and/or home value. Click on all of the ranges you want to include in your search. For example, if you want to include all home values of $250,000 or more, then click on $250,000-299,999 and on every line that follows it, as shown in the following example:

- **Lifestyles.** Click on any of the lifestyles/interests that you want to include in your search.

Another feature of this database is the ability to generate a “consumer snapshot” for a geographic location. For example, someone contemplating opening a restaurant somewhere on the Western Slope might want to know compare the demographics of possible locations. This information comes from the US Census and is only available in summary form, so you can not drill down to find information about individuals. Rather, you would get a count of individuals fitting certain demographic categories for each location.
In this example, the selection criteria are individuals 29 years old or younger with incomes of at least $250,000 living in the Grand Junction metro area. The matrix view, below, is the output. You could also choose to view the results in a chart or table.

In comparison, the following matrix uses the same criteria except the geographic area is the Boulder metro area.

**Person search ("white pages")**

ReferenceUSA contains information from published telephone books for approximately 89 million residents. If an individual's phone number is unlisted, ReferenceUSA will not display the phone number. Also, the information is almost entirely limited to landline (not mobile) phone numbers. The database is very useful, however, if you've lost the contact information for an old friend or a relative. You could enter just the first and last name
and the state if you are unsure of the city. Or just the last name and the city if you are unsure what first name the individual uses (e.g., Bob or Rob or Robert).

Practice 5: Try to find the listing for a childhood friend.

Doctors/dentists search

ReferenceUSA can help you find a doctor or dentist in a given geographic area in a given specialty. Return to Available Databases. Click on US Healthcare.

As with the businesses database, ReferenceUSA uses utility connections and yellow page listings as sources of information for the U.S. Healthcare database. ReferenceUSA verifies the phone number, address, and personnel information but it does not verify that the doctor or dentist is board-certified or licensed.