Research Madness: Finding & Backgrounding People

I. Getting Started

- **Consider what you already know:** just a name? Name and location? Address (past or present)? Phone number? Social Security number? Etc.
- **Not sure where to start?** Ask a librarian at your firm what resources may be available (such as Westlaw’s PeopleMap or LexisNexis’s SmartLinx), and procedures for their use.
- **Still need help?** Contact the Goodson Law Library (http://www.law.duke.edu/lib); open Mon-Fri 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. in summer. Call, e-mail, IM through the web or Facebook.

II. Basic Searching

- **Pipl** (http://www.pipl.com) searches the “deep Web” by name, email address, online username, or phone number. Results mix online profiles, websites, and news articles. Links to premium data broker reports.
- **Zoominfo** (http://www.zoominfo.com): free front-end to Intelius; links to premium reports.
- **Social networking profiles** may also yield background information, although privacy settings may restrict the information you can see publicly. Try Facebook (http://www.facebook.com) and LinkedIn (http://www.linkedin.com), and also Pipl results.

III. Addresses & Phone Numbers

- **Anywho** (http://www.anywho.com): popular online telephone directory; includes some address information also. Does not include cellular phones.
- **Fonefinder** (http://www.fonefinder.net): cannot identify the owner of a phone number, but can tell you whether it is wireless or a land line, as well as the service provider.
- **Pipl** (http://www.pipl.com): includes phone listings; offers option to search by phone number (including cellular phones).
- **Educational or alumni directories** may include address and phone number; some institutions may restrict access. E.g. Duke University directory (http://duke.edu/), or Duke Law alumni directory (http://www.law.duke.edu/apps/alumnidir2/searchform).
- **LexisNexis Locate a Person Nationwide** (under Public Records > View More Sources): includes current and past address/phone data; limited birthdate and Social Security number information. Information from private data brokers; may contain numerous errors.
- **Westlaw NEWMOVERS database**: new utility hookups, with name and address information.

IV. Vital Records

- **Vital records** (birth, marriage, divorce, death, etc.) are generally housed at the county clerk’s office where the event occurred. Find a county at http://www.naco.org.
- **Not all vital records** are freely available online! Databases such as Clark County (NV)’s marriage license search (http://recorder.co.clark.nv.us/oncorewebcommerce) are the exception, not the rule.
V. Miscellaneous County & State Records

- **Property title** (real estate and often vehicles also) can usually be found at the county level, under the department of tax administration, e.g. Durham County (NC) Tax Administration Records Search [here](http://www.co.durham.nc.us/departments/txad/Tax_Record_Searches.html). For a view of real property, check out Google Maps [here](http://maps.google.com) or Bing Maps [here](http://www.bing.com/maps).

- **Voter Registration** information is kept at the county level, although usability will vary.
  - Durham County (NC) gives back names and current addresses [here](http://www.durhamcountync.gov/departments/elec/votersearch)
  - Los Angeles County (CA) adds required search fields for additional privacy [here](https://lavote.net/SECURED/VOTER_REG/)

- **Licensing boards** are usually found at the state level, and can range from professional status (e.g. disciplinary proceedings) to recreational activities (hunting, fishing).

VI. Employment

- **Colleges & universities** often provide online profiles or directory information of employees. State institutions may also provide salary information [here](http://apps.newsobserver.com/know/uncga).

- **Government employee directories** are often online, and in some cases salary information may also be available [here](http://apps.newsobserver.com/know/osp/).

- **LinkedIn** [here](http://www.linkedin.com) profiles may yield clues about employment history.

VII. Brushes with the Law

- **Lawsuits:** Docket search help on library research guide to Court Records & Briefs [here](http://www.law.duke.edu/lib/researchguides/records_briefs)

- **Criminal Searches** [here](http://www.criminalsearches.com/) provides limited information on convictions (such as sex offender registration); information varies by state.

- **Inmate directories** are available at federal [here](http://www.bop.gov/iloc2/LocateInmate.jsp) and state bureaus of prisons [here](http://www.doc.state.nc.us/OFFENDERS/).

VIII. Death

- **Social Security Death Index** [here](http://ssdi.rootsweb.ancestry.com/) confirms death date.

- **Obituaries** may be published in local news; try America's Newspapers [here](http://library.duke.edu/metasearch/db/id/DUK00848) for mid-1990s to present.

IX. Researching Legal Professionals

- **Judges:** See library research guide to Directories of Courts & Judges [here](http://www.law.duke.edu/lib/researchguides/dircourts).

- **Attorneys:** See library research guide to Directories of Lawyers [here](http://www.law.duke.edu/lib/researchguides/dirlawyers).


X. Additional resources
