

Skip Tracing – Public Sleuthing Resources for Finding Business & Personal Information

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Rita Kaiser
Reference Services Librarian
King County Law Library
206-296-0940
www.kcll.org

How does one "skip trace" a person? "Skip tracing" is - the procedure of tracking down a debtor, witness, company, defendant, etc. by following his/her paper trail from a known address to his/her new location. This can also include searching for other information such as financial, news, associates, relatives, etc. Many of the resources listed below are free web sites. However, to do a complete job of tracing someone or a company he/she owns, you may have to resort to a paid service - or at least use some paid databases.

Start with what you know about the person or company.

Standard background check checklist:

"Full Legal Name, Prior Names, Aliases, Social Security Number, Date Of Birth, Current Address, Past Addresses, Vehicle/License Plate, Driving History, Litigation History, Criminal History, Sex Offender Check, Bankruptcies, Tax Liens, Judgments, Corporations, Other Business Entities, News Check, Insurance Claims, Associates/Associations, Marital Check, Divorce Check, Internet Check, Death Index Check, UCC Filings, Professional Licenses, Former/Current Employers, Former/Current Neighbors, Former/Current Spouses, Former/Current Partners, Former/Current Landlords, Educational Verification"

(Taken from: Robert Scott, *The Investigator's Little Black Book 3*, Crimetime Publishing Co.
www.crimetime.com

Directories – Phone & Address

Use telephone directories if you have the name of a person or a company, but no other information.

- (A) Phone books (search by name, phone number) (can be out-of-date)
 - a. 411 – <http://www.411.com/> (phone directory for free people and business searches in the US and Canada – leads to US Search for cell phone numbers)
 - i. Directory assistance from your cell phone:
<http://www.free411.com/about/>, dial 1-800-373-3411
 - b. www.yellowpages.com (includes links to public records databases – for a price – check quality as these change)
 - c. www.switchboard.com (includes quick connections for your town)
 - d. <http://www.superpages.com/> - Verizon Superpages – leads to Intelius for cell phone numbers)
 - e. Argali – software based, find at: www.argali.com

- f. www.infobel.com (phone books from around the world)
 - g. www.fonefinder.net (by area code, prefix, or city; good for international too – finds the Phone company serving the area)
 - h. <http://phonevalidator.com/> - another one, tells you what type of phone line it is, who the phone company is, and general geographic location
- Directory Assistance (search by name) – this includes recent listings for this area – Use this to get the most up-to-date information for our area.
- i. <http://www.dexknows.com/> (Residential and Business)

(B) Other People Finder Guides

1. Yahoo! People Search at <http://people.yahoo.com/>
2. Seattle Public Library Directory Reference at <http://www.spl.org>
3. Virtual Chase People Finder Guides at http://www.virtualchase.com/topics/people_finder_index.shtml (**Web site was to close, but Justia purchased May, 2009**)
4. Internet Public Library Telephone & Address Links at <http://www.ipl.org/div/subject/browse/ref80.00.00/>
5. Librarians Internet Index Links at <http://lii.org/>
6. Sound Politics Voter Registration database: Washington State Voter information has been posted to the Internet by Sound Politics at: <http://www.soundpolitics.com/voterlookup.html>. This service provides online access to a public release of the **Washington State Voter Registration Database** (July 31, 2009). You can search it by address or name and find one normally private piece of information, the person's complete date of birth. Plus, if you do a block search you can find neighbors and apartment and condo dwellers.
7. Official State voter databases – and rules for look up: <http://www.fvap.gov/reference/links.html#svrvw>
8. Another place to get birthdates is: <http://www.birthdatabase.com/>

(D) Crisscross/Reverse Directories (search by number or address – use these if you have an address, but do not know what company or person resides at the address – or if you have a telephone number with no name associated with the number)

- j. Polk & Cole (In Public Libraries) Quick Information Line at public library in any city will do lookup for you – example: SPL call 206-386-4636
- k. Person or business reverse www.reversedirectory.langenberg.com
- l. 411 Locate at http://www.411locate.com/reverse_lookup.htm
- m. InfoUSA www.phonedisc.com (Phone Disc – also includes much company information – but not free) – unless you search it via a public library – great way to do that!
- n. www.merlindata.com (Link to Legal Phone Breaks for unlisted numbers)
- o. Cell Phone numbers: paid sources such as LocatePlus, Intelius, USSearch, or GorillaTrace (must have legal need or be an investigator)

(E) Product/Company Directories and Info (Use this if you know a company name and need more information about the company)

Thomas Register for business and manufacturing www.thomasregister.com

Hoovers Directory – part of this is free – more information needs payment
www.hoovers.com/free/

Better Business Bureau <http://welcome.bbb.org/>

Info USA/Reference USA – available via a public library

Proquest and other News databases – also available free via a public library

(F) Social Security Number State of Issue: <http://staylorpi.home.att.net/ssn.html>

Then you can go to the state for further information. Also a site called Searchbug will tell you if the number is active: www.searchbug.com

Or use the Social Security Number Validator: <http://www.ssnvalidator.com/>

Social Security Death Index: <http://ssdi.rootsweb.com/>

(The Social Security Death Index (SSDI) is a database of deaths reported to the Social Security Administration (SSA) from 1962 to the present)

Death Indexes by State and County (Most are subscription-based) but can link via: <http://www.deathindexes.com/>

(G) County/ZIP Code Lookups:

www.usps.com/ncsc/lookups/lookup_zip+4.html

Public Records Information Resources

Black Book Online: www.blackbookonline.info/ is maintained by the author of "The Investigator's Little Black Book." The site is particularly robust, with many good starting points, but does contain many paid links.

BRB Publics Records links: <http://www.brbpub.com/pubrecsites.asp>

This is my favorite one for linking to free sites. Includes good links to professional and educational verification. Sign up for their monthly email notification. Publishes *The Sourcebook to Public Record Information 7th Edition*, BRB Publications. Modest annual fee to use their online version.

Public Records Info: www.publicrecordsinfo.com This site links to USSearch for paid background information, at a premium price. But the site does contain categories and many free links that can be useful for further resources.

Public Records Finder: www.publicrecordfinder.com Business and personal records links. The site is organized by categories. Includes links to other countries.

Portico - collection of web sites, containing publicly available information, compiled for the use of the advancement community. Has good links to county assessor sites, plus some good general links for other types of reference information. Available at: <http://indorgs.virginia.edu/portico/>.

State and Local Government: www.statelocalgov.net/ will link you to information from other states. For instance, you can link to the Secretary of State sites for all states; find local county government entities and more. Great resource.

Government Sources

Inmate Locators, Criminal Background & Sex Offenders

- (A) Federal Bureau of Prisons Inmate Locator: www.bop.gov
- (B) Other Inmate Locators:
 - a. Corrections Connection (For state level) at <http://www.corrections.com/links/viewlinks.asp?Cat=20>
 - b. VineLink: <http://www.vinelink.com/index.jsp>
- (C) Sex Offenders: National Sex Offender Public site
 - a. From Department of Justice: <http://www.nsopr.gov/>
- (D) DEA National Clandestine Laboratory Register: <http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/seizures/index.html>
- (E) List of Excluded Parties: <http://epls.arnet.gov/>
 - a. Includes those excluded from contracts with the federal government as well as blocked and specially designated nationals (SDNs).
- (F) Basic Criminal Background <http://www.criminalsearches.com/default.aspx>
 - a. From the PeopleFinder public search – can help start your search. Records are not complete for most states.
- (G) Criminal Search (Paid): <http://www.crimesmasher.com/> (Cost about \$12 for basic search).

Federal Company Information

- (H) Edgar – Securities and Exchange Commission filings for public companies: <http://www.sec.gov/edgar.shtml>
 - a. Search from Edgar web site: http://searchwww.sec.gov/EDGARFSClient/jsp/EDGAR_MainAccess.jsp

Federal Court Information

- (I) Public Access to Court Electronic Records (“PACER”) + Justia <http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov/>
 - a. Federal Court docket search engine
 - i. Must signup nationally and identify all districts (BK, DC, CA) for which you desire access
 - ii. \$0.08/page
 - iii. 800-676-6856; pacer@psc.uscourts.gov
- (J) Federal District Court Filings & Dockets. Need subscription to PACER or other services once you have found the docket, but this can get you started. Justia has now added some court documents here. (May 2009) <http://dockets.justia.com/>
- (K) Free federal court dockets at: <http://www.freecourtdockets.com/>

- (L) Bankruptcy Voice Case Information System (“VCIS”) numbers. The public can access BK courts information system and search for filings by name, SSN or case number at no charge.
- a. Washington Western District: 1-888-409-4662 or 1-206-370-5285
Washington Eastern District: 509-353-2404

Washington State Government Sources

Company Information

- (A) **Secretary of State** Corporations Division – Registration Data Lookup by Name or UBI. www.secstate.wa.gov
www.secstate.wa.gov/corps/search.aspx
- a. The registration data lookup allows one to search for a corporation to determine if it is currently active in Washington. The record will indicate whether the company is a for-profit or non-profit business, the type of corporation, and show the Registered Agent information.
 - b. Voter registration data available for purchase, plus voter look up: Limited use – as you need to know much information to use.

(B) **Department of Revenue**

Public Records/State Business Records Database by name or Tax Reporting Account number. This record will show the state tax number, business number, any “doing business as” information and the standard industrial code for the business. <http://dor.wa.gov>

<http://dor.wa.gov/content/doingbusiness/registermybusiness/brd/default.aspx>

- a. Includes businesses not required to be registered with Department of Revenue, as well as those with closed accounts
- b. Unclaimed Property Records
<http://ucp.dor.wa.gov/>

Contractor/Electrician Information

(C) **Department of Labor & Industries** Contractors, Electricians, and Plumbers Database - look up by business or owner name, city, UBI number, and contractor registration number. <http://www.lni.wa.gov/>
<https://fortress.wa.gov/lni/bbip/>

Gives bond, insurance, summons and complaint information, including status as to whether the company has current L & I coverage. (Used to get to UCC filings, now charge for UCC searches)

Professional Licensing Information

- (D) **Department of Licensing** <http://www.dol.wa.gov/>
- a. List of Licenses <http://www.dol.wa.gov/listoflicenses.html>
 - b. Professional License Query by name, city, profession

<https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/dolprod/bpdLicenseQuery/>

Follow up with email to appropriate unit to obtain address tied to license filing: <http://www.dol.wa.gov/business/professionals.html>

c. Vehicle/Vessel Inquiry System – Must get access first (IVIPS online and phone access available; subject will receive notification if you are an attorney). Contact the Public Disclosure Section at (360) 902-3760 for more information.

d. UCC Search – paid search only:

<http://www.dol.wa.gov/business/UCC/index.html>

(E) Driver Services:

- a. If you have a driver's license, you can obtain address under some circumstances:
- b. Because driving records are confidential documents, only the individuals or companies listed below may request a copy of another person's driving record.

Attorneys Law, justice, or other government agencies Employers, prospective employers, or their agents, Insurance companies or their agents, Transit authorities or their agents, Volunteer organizations, School districts, State colleges, state universities, and local government

- i. Driver Services, POB 9048, Olympia, WA 8507-9048
\$10 plus explanation of need or signed driving record request.
- ii. Driver Status verification for Washington State -
<https://fortress.wa.gov/dol/dolprod/dsdDriverStatusDisplay/>

(F) Health Provider Credential Search – WA State Dept of Health:

- a. <https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/providercredentialsearch/> For health professionals registered in Washington.
- g. Vital Records – Center for Health Statistics:
<http://www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/CHS/cert.htm>

(G) Attorney Licensing and Disciplinary Information

- a. Washington State Bar Association at: <http://www.wsba.org>
Includes directory and disciplinary information: <http://pro.wsba.org/>
- b. AVVO – new search that rates attorneys – controversial at present:
<http://www.avvo.com/>

(H) State Personnel Records

Salaries of State employees <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/persdetail/>

Other salaries – counties, cities, etc.

<http://www.lbloom.net/>

Personnel salaries – other states:

<http://www.sctimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/99999999/DOCS/105250001>

- (I) **Public Disclosure Commission** maintains a database of election contributions at <http://www.pdc.wa.gov/QuerySystem/Default.aspx>

- a. The information provided here includes detailed contributions for statewide elections, state initiatives, and more. The user can search by initiative number, candidate, amount contributed, name of contributor, and year. The addresses of contributors are available here.

(J) **Washington State Criminal Records** – Washington State Patrol maintains the following web site: <https://watch.wsp.wa.gov/>

- a. Fee-based service. You must set up an account to use this. It includes conviction information, arrests less than one year old with dispositions pending, dependency proceedings, and information regarding registered sex and kidnap offenders.
- b. Department of Corrections Offender Search at:
<http://www.doc.wa.gov/offenderinfo/default.aspx> - Only current inmates, none housed out of state and not retrospective.

(K) **Statewide Sex Offender Search** – Comes from the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs - The information is only on Level II and III Registered Sex Offenders who may reside in an area. Now provided by Offender Watch.

<http://www.icrimewatch.net/washington.php>

County Government Sources

(A) King County:

- a. Auditor:
Unlike other County Auditors, King County Auditor does not handle licensing, recording, elections, assessments, and property liens
King County Auditor:
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/operations/auditor.aspx>
- b. Recorder's Office:
Records real estate documents, survey, condominium and plat maps, liens, marriage certificates, applications, and miscellaneous documents (wills, military discharges, notices, deeds, writs, judgments).<http://www.kingcounty.gov/business/Recorders/RecordsSearch.aspx>
- c. Vital Statistics: Handles birth and death certificates (cannot search online):
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/vitalstats.aspx>
- d. Assessor:
Has property assessment information: Need parcel number, but can get through address search at the Dept. of Development and Environmental Services in e below.
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/Assessor.aspx>
Can also do a search using eSales Search System – for comparative property values:
<http://your.kingcounty.gov/Assessor/eSales/Welcome.asp>
- e. King County GIS Center:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/operations/GIS/Maps.aspx> (property research main page; use iMAP or Parcel Viewer to hone in and get taxpayer names) -

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/operations/GIS/PropResearch/ParcelViewer.aspx>

f. Voter Registration:

Offers name, address, DOB, political party, SSN (must submit request in writing as PDR

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/elections/voting.aspx>

g. Jail Inmate search: <http://www.metrokc.gov/dad/inmatelookup/>

h. Electronic Court Records (ECR) available from the Clerk's Office. Civil, criminal and probate cases filed after November 1, 2004 are available. The cost is \$.10 per page via a pre-paid credit card account. <https://dja-ecreweb.metrokc.gov/ecronline/External/LogonPages/Logon.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fECROnline%2fDefault.aspx>

(B) Pierce County:

a. Recorder: <http://hartweb.piercecountywa.org/> Official Public Records (OPR) consist of all publicly accessible documents recorded by this office and may include deeds, mortgage documents, easements, powers of attorney, and liens.

b. Application/Permit Lookup (includes animal control/pet licenses): www.co.pierce.wa.us/cfapps/dcis/PermitSearch.cfm

c. Taxpayer/Parcel Lookup Assessor-Treasurer:

www.co.pierce.wa.us/cfapps/atr/epip/search.cfm

d. Pierce County Legal Information Network Exchange:

www.co.pierce.wa.us/cfapps/linx/main.cfm – great resource allowing the user to search civil, criminal and judgment court records, and find current jail inmates. In addition, this allows the user to look at current court filings. (This changed in November 2004 – have to pay for access to full information).

(C) Snohomish County:

a. Assessor's Office for parcel and realty information

i. Search by parcel number or address (hint: avoid street types and directionals)

ii. Gives current taxpayer name and address, property tax information, property sales information, property characteristics

iii. <http://198.238.192.103/propsys/Asr-Tr-PropInq/PrpInq01-entry.asp>

b. Recorder: <http://198.238.192.100/localization/menu.asp>

(D) City of Seattle:

a. Business license search: <http://www.seattle.gov/biz/>

b. Building permit and status search:

<http://web1.seattle.gov/DPD/permitstatus/>

(E) State, County & Municipal Court Records (JIS/SCOMIS/ACORDS)

www.courts.wa.gov/jislink/

Free statewide court search: <http://dw.courts.wa.gov/index.cfm>

Paid search Statewide Criminal and Court-specific Civil Cases

1. Appellate Court Records and Data System ("ACORDS") – available in web version – includes links to Superior Court case information.
2. Judicial Information System ("JIS") – statewide felony, gross misdemeanor, misdemeanor, infraction, domestic violence-related, harassment, family-related cases; civil and small claims search within district and municipal courts.
3. Superior Court Management Information System ("SCOMIS") – superior court civil, criminal, juvenile, judgments, etc. Search by county. \$100 sign-up; web-based only, \$6.00 minimum charge per month; Contact: JIS-Link/OAC Help Center at (360) 357-2407; JISlink@courts.wa.gov
4. Seattle Municipal Court case search: Includes alias information: <http://web1.seattle.gov/courts/cpi/>

Search for web presence or social networking presence:

Social networking is the process of sharing personal information with other people via a web site that is specifically designed to make it easy to share text, music, videos and other data. Thousands of social networking sites exist today. Some focus on a particular subject or common interest while others simply exist to allow people to communicate with one another. Typically, members create a user profile through which they share personal information. Profiles can be connected in a variety of ways to create "friends" groups that form subsets within the social network. Popular social networking sites include Facebook, MySpace, Friendster, and others. (Taken from KCLL's E-News Tech Tip by Rick Stroup).

Use "free" search engines such as www.google.com , www.ask.com , www.ixquick.com , www.clusty.com, www.kartoo.com www.cuil.com www.bing.com and others when looking for this web-based information. Never limit yourself to using only one search engine. Don't forget to search blogs, boards, posted videos, photos and newsgroups, too. Try a search such as Whostalkin at <http://www.whostalkin.com/> to find blog postings, twitter search at <http://search.twitter.com/> for twitter postings and more.

Search videos at www.youtube.com or <http://www.searchvideo.org/> or <http://www.blinkx.com/>.

Search photos at www.flickr.com or <http://picasa.google.com/>.

An interesting search for professional people is the site ZoomInfo. It will give you a profile of a person and attempt to list possible associates at <http://www.zoominfo.com/>. Don't forget to look at LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com and the other professional networking sites such as Spoke at <http://spoke.com/> and Xing at <http://www.xing.com/>, which partners with ZoomInfo.

A "deep web" search engine that includes results from within databases is: www.pipl.com. The site says in part: "Since most personal profiles, public records and other people-related documents are stored in databases and not on static web pages, most of the higher-quality information about people is simply "invisible" to a regular search engine." Pipl includes the linked information from many other sites, including such sites as Zabasearch at www.zabasearch.com. Zabasearch can sometimes find multiple older addresses, which can give you many clues.

A newer "deep web" people search is <http://www.123people.com/> This search finds telephone numbers, email addresses, social websites, blog entries, web documents, images ad more. Interesting information, especially useful for social networking investigations.

Or try another "social search" engine such as www.yoname.com or www.spock.com <http://www.isearch.com/> or <http://wink.com/> which will search sites such as Friendster, MySpace, Linkedin, etc.

You found an old address or P.O. Box Number:

Use Request for Change of Address of Box Holder Information Needed for Service of Legal Process form. This form can be found on the Internet at a number of places. Simply download it and modify it to include your letterhead.

Here are a couple of links for the document.

http://www.usps.com/foia/_doc/ProcessServerFormat.doc If above link does not open, go to www.usps.com and search for service of process.

www.ppsworld.com/forms/PostmasterDate.pdf

Call 1-800-ASK-USPS to get branch internal number or go online; www.mapsonus.com/ do a search for the Post office you want.

Or use the PO Box Locator at:

http://www.blackbookonline.info/bbo_poaddress.aspx

You can simply send a letter to the last-known address specifying, "DO NOT FORWARD, ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED." If there's a forwarding address, you should get the new one.

Information Brokers and paid databases:

Accurint – (www accurint.com/) - A professional skip tracing database, Accurint provides personal names, aliases, social security numbers, current and historical addresses (going back up to 30 years), telephone numbers, month and year of birth, names of those living at the current address, property ownership, names of relatives, neighbors, death information and more. Bought by Reed Elsevier - Lexis in 2005.

ChoicePoint – (www.choicepoint.com) - ChoicePoint Online, formerly CDB Infotek and cdb4web, includes AutoTrackXP which offers an extensive database of public records. It provides people locating tools, corporate records, real property records, driver records, boat and vehicle registrations, physician reports including criminal and disciplinary data, bankruptcies, liens and judgments, UCCs, Federal Employer Identification Numbers (FEIN), OSHA investigation records and more. ChoicePoint costs more than some of the others, but has a large database. (Reed Elsevier bought it – will add to Lexis databases – 2/2008)

LocatePlus – (www.LocatePlus.com) – Used by homeland security, many other government associated organizations, plus law firms and others. Contains cell phones plus unlisted telephone numbers.

Merlindata (www.merlindata.com) - Merlin Information Services offers a directory of sources for investigative research. Started in California, it has a particularly strong listing of government public records databases.

Other information brokers available to the public – do not need to be vetted first to use:

KnowX – (www.knowx.com/) - A former Information America product now owned by ChoicePoint, KnowX caters to consumers. It provides access to addresses and telephone numbers, death, marriage, and divorce records, bankruptcies, judgments, liens and more.

Intelius – (www.intelius.com/) This service is available to the public and says about its search, “People Search is great way to find family, old friends, relatives, and just about anyone! A People Search report includes phone number, address history, age, birthdates, household members, home value, income and more.” However, quality control for this service seems to be lacking (in my opinion), as it often returns incorrect information.

USSearch – (www.ussearch.com) This seems to be the most ubiquitous information broker on the Internet. Many sites link to it. The price of its searches, beyond a simple phone and address search is extremely high.

USA People Search – (www.usa-people-search.com/) This information broker gives you a quick search result that is often extremely accurate, and includes former locations. But at \$40 for a report it is another pricey option.

There are other sources. This is just an introduction to what is available.