

Information Sources in Traveller

By Alex Ingram

Many different factors can affect an investigation: speed of the communications technology used (travel between planets can take time), inter-governmental politics, inter-agency red tape, lost or misplaced records, clerical errors, and the attitudes of those requesting or providing the data. Another important factor is the degree of openness of records. Some governments and commercial organizations have highly restricted access, while others may make information a part of the public record.

Some professions specialize in finding personal information on others such as law enforcement, private investigators, information traders, bounty hunters and credit lenders. Much information is available but there are many safeguards in place to prevent it from falling into unauthorized hands. This article is an attempt to identify sources of information for Traveller PC with the appropriate skills.

Databasing — This is a new skill that involves using advanced computer search engines to obtain specific digital records available on-line. It also is the ability to research paper documentation that exists in public archives and libraries to obtain critical data.

Levels of Access

Level 1 — Public Access — Records that are available to the general public (telephone books, public library books and directories, county court clerks office, newspaper microfiche files).

Local telephone books (white pages); internet directory search engines; consumer credit bureaus; commercial marketing databases; licensed information brokers; registered computer internet trackers; criss-cross directories (reverse searches); public library (who's who reference books and interviews or articles in back issues of magazines); newspapers and news reference library (social, business and financial events); television stations (television interviews or video taped articles and public access news footage);

Level 2 — Confidential Access — Records that are available to licensed agencies or registered commercial users with a specific need to know or in realty, an annual fee to obtain such access (i.e., private investigators, banks, insurance companies, mortgage companies, personnel departments, law firms, information brokers, news media organizations).

State departments of motor vehicles (driver licenses: i.e., private, commercial, taxi-chauffeur, motorcycle); state vehicle registration offices (license plates and vehicle inspection data); county records offices, also called vital statistics (birth and death certificates, marriage and divorce records, name changes, adoptions, business license, Do Business As; state departments of state (corporate charter filings, records of corporate officers, business tax information); county property tax office (property deeds and mortgage liens); county voter registration records; city, county or state civil and criminal court clerk offices; national or planetary civil and criminal court clerk offices; county probate court clerk offices; family court clerk offices; national or planetary bankruptcy court clerk offices; state or county professional licensing agencies (for attorneys, physicians, bankers, brokers, teachers, adoption agencies, morticians, accountants (CPAs), dentist, contractors, private investigators, bounty hunters, couriers, pharmacist, engineers, insurance agents, barbers, psychologist, pilots, shipmasters, plumbers); national, planetary or

Imperial ministries of state or foreign affairs (passports or travel visas); national post office (change of address records); state unemployment office (unemployment benefits and records of former employers).

Level 3 — Restricted Access — Records available only to authorized law enforcement agents and other governmental users that is needed in the performance of their official duties.

The release of such information would normally require a court subpoena or search warrant. Personal bank records and safe deposit box searches; telephone company line traces and call audits; health insurance company records; hospital or private physician records; business financial activity records; drivers license records; a search of another persons computer hard drive; a physical search of a private residence or office; life insurance policy records; credit card company statements and purchase audits; internet service company website and e-mail activity audits. Governments sometimes have problems obtaining this type of information since legal privileges exists between client-attorney, patient-physician, client-accountant, client-banker, parishioner-priest or patient-counselor.

Level 4 — Secret Access — Records available only to authorized governmental agencies on a need to know basis. Involves information, that if released, would be detrimental to the safety of investigative personnel or to the integrity of a criminal investigation or covert intelligence operation. Only personnel with appropriate security clearances and a genuine need to know should have access to this level of information. Criminal prosecution applies to anyone intentionally disclosing such information.

Classified military, foreign intelligence or criminal investigations or covert operations records or files that would compromise the security of operations in progress or identify informants and undercover operatives. This is next to impossible for a private citizen to obtain and obtaining it otherwise could get one convicted of serious felony crimes such as treason, espionage, or at the least, theft of classified government documents. Police internal investigations, internal security procedures, open and active criminal investigations, police personnel records, records pertaining to current ligation and records naming victims, children, undercover agents or confidential informants all fall into this category.

Other Sources of Personal Information

Academic Sources — High school records office or college registrar (transcripts, classes taken, honor roll, grades); interviews with former college roommates, coaches, professors, guidance counselors, school psychologist, principles, deans); extracurricular activities (cheer leading, football team, track team); fraternities or sororities; honor societies; college libraries (yearbooks); alumni organizations; published writings (dissertations & thesis); research grants awarded; teaching positions (internships or fellowships).

Employment Sources — Interviews with current or past employers and co-workers; professional organizations (for physicians the medical association, for lawyers the bar association, for ships crew the Starmans Guild, for mercenaries the Merc Guild, trade or labor unions; temporary employment services, state employment agency).

Business & Financial Sources — Consumer credit reporting bureaus (current and past creditors / recent inquiries / current credit rating); state departments of state (corporate or business filings, public stock records, lawsuites filed); interviews with former business partners, coworkers, creditors; mortgage and insurance companies; state land office (property purchases); security &

exchange commission (commodities and stock sales records); telephone companies (monthly call statements); banks and credit unions (monthly banking statements, loan applications); credit card companies (monthly statements); national patent office (patents and copyrights owned); IISS Star Patrol (starship annual inspection certificates and records); Imperial Spaceport Authority / Portmasters Office (flight plans, cargo manifests, maintenance records, clearance documents, recordings of space traffic control).

Family Sources — Public court records (birth and death certificates, marriage licenses, divorce decrees, adoptions, name changes); news service reference library (weddings, deaths, births, social events, promotions); social and community organizations (JCs', Boy Scouts, YMCA, Masonic Lodge, Toastmasters, Country Club, etc.); hobby and interests (astronomy or chess clubs), interviews with ex-spouses, children, other relatives, friends and co-workers; public library (genealogical records, books or magazine articles published, books checked out).

Military Service — Imperial and local military personnel records centers (Imperial military service records centers are only located on worlds who have a permanent Imperial military presence); interviews with former commanders and comrades, membership in para-military organizations (militias); Imperial Registry Office (mercenary license, military weapons purchases).

Health Information — Health insurance companies (medical claims information); insurance reporting services (Medical Information Bureau, a medical insurance database), hospital & pharmacy inpatient records; current or former physicians; social or mental health services; city or state public health service (record of communicable diseases); public courts (incompetence or commitment orders, court ordered drug or alcohol treatment, family protective orders, medical malpractice lawsuits filed).

Criminal & Prison Sources — Police records (Rap Sheet) (criminal history, wants & warrants, traffic violations, aliases, nicknames, court psychiatric assessments, juvenile record, fingerprints, DNA, photos (mug shots), permits & licenses issued); sex offenders list, most wanted list; criminal court records (trial transcripts, restraining orders, search warrants, sentencing reports, appeals); pardons & parole board proceedings; parole or probation officer reports; news service reference library (headlines and crime section); interviews with relatives, friends, cellmates, criminal associates, current or former police investigative personnel, street contacts; prison record (gang activities, schooling, known criminal associates, prison visitors or call logs).

Land & Building Records — City building permit office (building floor plans, home improvement filings); land deed office (survey plots); private construction contractors, public works office (location of water & electrical lines); private and government aerial recon or satellite geological mapping service; county assay office (mining permits).

Covert Sources — Electronic tracking of a targeted automobile, boat or aircraft using a clandestine GPS (or low-jack) device or miniaturized short-ranged location transmitter on a target person or their baggage; hacking into a target computer to obtain information as to websites visited, specific files, passcodes, e-mail traffic, on-line financial transactions; audio eavesdropping on a target's home and cellular telephone, vehicle, home and office. Finally, trash diving can sometimes be fruitful in surveilling a target; it's amazing what kinds of information people throw out in their trash.

Computer Databases

(one or more of the following computer databases may be available)

Fingerprint Database (i.e., AFIS)
Missing Persons Database
National Department of State Database (Passports / Foreign Travel Entry, Exits / Visas)
National Criminal Records Database (i.e., NCIC)
DNA Database (i.e., CODIS)
State Department of Motor Vehicles (Driver License / Vehicle License Plates)
Insurance Company Databases / Medical Information Bureau
(Life Insurance Policies / Medical Information)
WestLaw Database (Legal Research Service)
Credit Bureau (Credit Information / Credit Rating)
Ballistics Database (i.e., NIBIN)
State or National Prison Database (Prisoner Information)
County Vital Statistics / Public Records Office (Birth Certificates / Death Certificates / Marriage
Licenses / Divorce Decrees / Name Changes / Adoptions)
Marketing Demographics Databases
Criss Cross Directory Database
Death Master List Database (Social Security Administration)
Corporate Database (State Department of State / Incorporation Documents)
Travel Database (i.e., SABRE) (Airlines, Hotels, Car Rentals)

Currently, in the US several forensic databases have been established for law enforcement use only including the NCIC (National Crime Information Center), the CODIS (Combined DNA Index System), the AFIS (Automated Fingerprint Information System) and the NIBIN (National Identification of Ballistic Information Network). The FBI Laboratory also maintains a comprehensive library of industry samples from manufactures such as paints, fibers, tapes, papers, inks, shoe treads, etc.

If you find something there that you like, feel free to use it. If you have any comments please e-mail me at aaingram@ev1.net, otherwise, enjoy!