

The Information Advisor™

A M O N T H L Y N E W S L E T T E R

Analysis, Advice, and Strategy
for the Knowledge Professional

Highlights:

Wanted: Reliable Chinese Business Data *p.1*

Nexcerpt: A Different Type of News Alert Service *p.3*

Where to Find "Big Name" Brokerage Research Reports *p.5*

Wanted: Reliable Chinese Business Data

PART 1 OF 2

Over the last few years, there has been an increasing focus on the business scene in China, which has heated up even more over the past few months. There are several reasons why this is occurring: there's the emergence and continuing growth of the country's new private sector; interest among global corporations in reaching the country's gigantic consumer market; and, most recently, the role of China as a current and future outsourcing destination.

Unfortunately, locating substantive, reliable data on Chinese companies is a major challenge. Although the Chinese government does collect data on companies, that information is kept locally in provincial capitals and is not published in any kind of open, accessible manner. Furthermore, because little of the data is audited and put together in a standard fashion, the information itself has the reputation of being of very questionable veracity.

A search on the open Web along the lines of "company information" and "China" will return an enormous number of hits. Many of those pages offer

free directory listings of companies in China. However, the data on these sites are of uncertain origin and did not inspire much confidence in us. So what we've done here is round up our favorite

“Because little of the data is audited ... it has the reputation of being of very questionable veracity....”

selection of solid sources that you can turn to when you need to locate basic information on companies in China. We've broken down this source listing into the following categories:

- Print directories
- Fee-based company directory databases
- Free Web-based directories and reference sources

- Other useful information sources
 - Government information
 - Specialized market research providers
 - Consultants
 - Credit Reporting Services
 - Further information sources

In this month's issue we cover print, online, and Web-based directories. Next month we will conclude this article by publishing a chart comparing features of major online company directories, and describe the other information sources.

If you are new to researching Chinese companies, there are a couple of key points to keep in mind. In China, there are both public (state-owned) companies and private firms. The public sector is much larger, but much of the recent surge in economic activity is reportedly coming from the emerging private sector. Also, China has four major stock exchanges, two in Shanghai and two in Shenzhen. Both the Shanghai and Shenzhen exchanges have an "A-share"

Continued on page 2...

Wanted: Reliable Chinese Business Data...

...continued from page 1
and a "B-share" board. The A-share boards have a much larger market capitalization, are open only to Chinese investors, and the shares are dealt in the local currency, Ren Min Bi. The smaller B-share boards are only for foreign investors, and transactions are done in U.S. dollars.

PRINT DIRECTORIES

There are many old and out-of-date print directories and guides to doing business in China. However, the following six print books are up to date and available from well-known reliable publishers.

Asian Marketing Information Sourcebook

Publisher: Euromonitor. *Publication date:* December 2003. *Price:* \$475

Provides contact information for over 2,000 data providers, such as news and media sources, governmental agencies, libraries, and other sources.

Ordering information: www.euromonitor.com/Asia-Pacific_Marketing_Information_Sourcebook

Asia's 7,500 Largest Companies

Publisher: ELC International, London, UK. *Publication date:* New edition scheduled for May, 2004. *Price:* £225.

Provides information on public and private corporations in Asia, covering about 200 firms in China. Information

provided includes year established, ranking, industry sector, sales, sales trends, number of employees, assets, profitability, and other data.

Ordering information: Email: snyderpub@aol.com or from D&B in the U.S. at: dibonaventuraB@dnb.com

Consumer China 2004

Publisher: Euromonitor. *Publication date:* December 2003. *Price:* \$1,090

Provides a wide range of detailed statistical market information on over 300 consumer markets in China.

Ordering information: www.euromonitor.com/Consumer_China_2004

Kompass China

Publisher: Kompass. *Publication date:* November 2003. *Price:* \$290

Provides detailed product and supplier information on 50,000 Chinese companies. Kompass China is a joint venture between China's Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation and the Coface Group, a credit insurance firm that acquired Kompass in 2003. (Note that Kompass also makes this directory available as a searchable CD-ROM as well, in two versions: one with nine searchable criteria, the other with 20.)

Ordering information: Phone: 1-877-KOMPASS. Email: mail@kompass-usa.com

Kompass China Web Site: www.chinatoday.com/kompass/

China High Tech Directory 2004

Publisher: Asia Direct and South China Morning Post Book Publishing Ltd. *Publication date:* November 2003. *Price:* \$225

Provides profiles of over 800 leading Chinese high-technology companies, covering the industries of telecommunications, computer hardware, computer software, Internet, system integrators, semiconductors, biotechnology, and medical equipment.

Ordering information: www.adhitech.com/index/. Note that Asia Direct offers a searchable database of high-tech companies and other information services on the high-tech industry in China.

Major Companies of the Far East and Australasia

Publisher: Graham & Whiteside. *Publication date:* October 2003. *Price:* \$1,625 for three-volume set or \$625 per volume (Southeast Asia, Eastern Asia, or Australia/New Zealand, Papua New Guinea)

Provides data on 13,000 major companies. The directories typically include: address, phone and fax; description of business; number of employees, brand names and trademarks; subsidiaries and affiliates; past two years of financial data; names of principal shareholders; and public/private status. Note that Chinese

Continued on page 7...

What Else from D&B?

As you might expect, D&B covers China through a variety of products and services. The firm gathers its information via its D&B China operation, based in Shanghai, where the firm claims to have collected data on 600,000 firms in the country. The best bet for Dialog users is probably to search File 518, International Company Market Identifiers, to get a basic directory and a little financial in-

formation. But full Business Information Reports (BIRs) and more detailed credit reports are available too, directly from D&B's own site, through the use of a credit card. You can learn more about D&B's services for China by linking to D&B China at: www.dnbasia.com/cn/english. Another D&B on-demand site, www.hoovers.telebase.com, allows visitors to run a search on a company

name in China (or any other country) and retrieve the address at no charge. Click on "International Reports" and then enter the company name and country.

D&B also has recently created a "China Risk Index Industry Norm" to help companies benchmark firms in China, and that index is made available in the D&B Report and Risk Guide. You can view samples at: www.dnbasia.com/cn/english/services/credit/rg.pdf

Nexcerpt

A DIFFERENT TYPE OF NEWS ALERT SERVICE

We recently came across a very intriguing news alert service called Nexcerpt (www.nexcerpt.com) that operates quite a bit differently than the ones we recently reviewed in our two-part series on alert services. While not perfect, and a little pricey compared to others, we feel that its unique features and its intelligent design make it an ideal niche product for information professionals. It would be particularly appealing if you manage a centralized information center and want to increase your visibility and value to the rest of your organization.

BACKGROUND

Nexcerpt, which is based in Kalamazoo, MI and employs eight persons, was launched in early 2003 by husband and wife team Julie and Gary Stock. The Stocks had previously been associated with an Internet monitoring company called InGenius Technologies.

Nexcerpt scans about 4,700 Web-based news sources, retrieving about 40,000 articles daily. Like other alert services, users create a specific keyword profile, and then each day receive an email with an abstract and a URL to the relevant articles. But Nexcerpt offers several unusual features and capabilities for a Web-based alert service. Among them:

- **Publishing:** Incoming alerts can be published to a Web site or intranet, allowing the administrator to easily produce an online news service.
- **Audience Designation:** The administrator can determine which groups of people in the organization should receive which news alerts.
- **Draft/Annotation Capabilities:** The administrator has the ability to review a draft of the alerts before they are officially published, add commentary, and even append additional news excerpts not picked up by Nexcerpt.

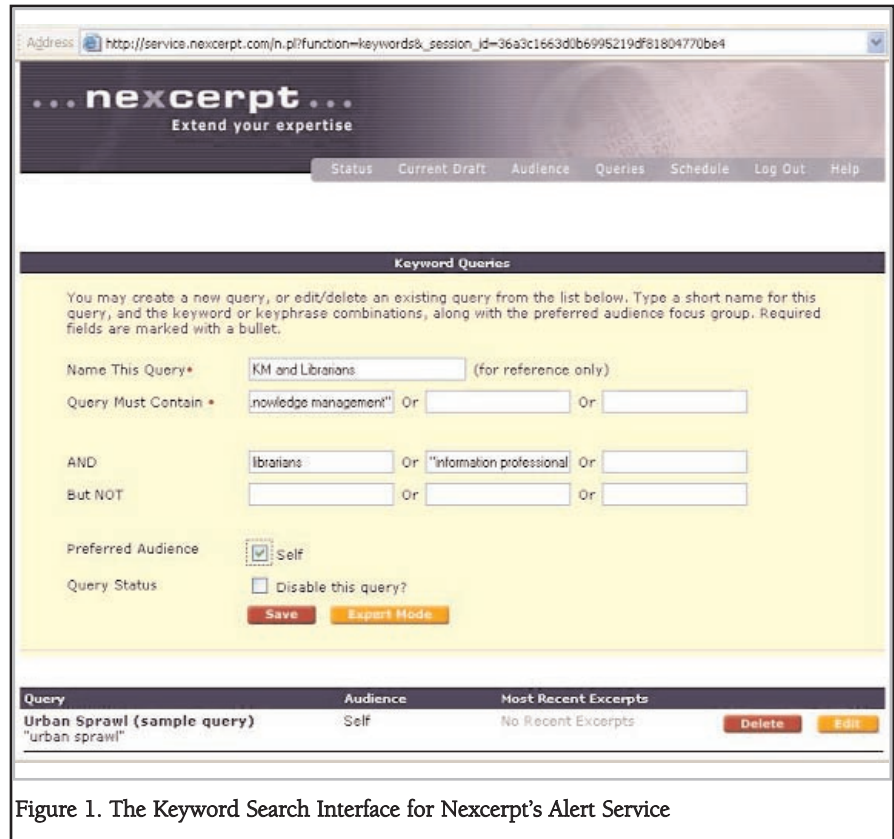


Figure 1. The Keyword Search Interface for Nexcerpt's Alert Service

OUR TRIAL

We signed up for a 14-day free trial to evaluate the service. The interface for creating our keyword alerts was pretty simple (see Figure 1). We simply gave a name to our various profiles, and clicked the fill-in boxes to input our keyword statement, using the AND, OR, and NOT operators.

Clicking on "help" provided excellent, context-sensitive search assistance. Nexcerpt searches for all word variations automatically, unless a word is placed in quotation marks (quotation marks should also be used for phrases). Clicking on the "expert" mode link didn't really offer any additional search options, but did provide the opportunity to string a longer number of Boolean search statements together, and use parentheses. We looked to see if there was an option to limit our search to words that occurred only in the title or headline, or use other field limitations, but did not see any.

Until this point, Nexcerpt operated like most alert services. But we noted a couple of special options. One was the ability to fine tune our search based on a "theme." Nexcerpt groups its sources into 33 subject themes, ranging from alternative, arts and culture, and business to government, industries, and world news. Interestingly, Nexcerpt makes a conscious decision to exclude sports news because, Julie Stock explained, sports news makes up a very high percentage of news on the Web and is unwanted noise for most of Nexcerpt's clients.

Clicking on the "resource selection" link let us view all titles or all titles within a theme, and select or de-select specific titles to include or exclude. We could also pull up titles to include or exclude based on their geographic location or by keyword. This is an excellent tool for focusing an alert just on items from favorite sources or eliminating those

Continued on page 4...

Nexcerpt...

...continued from page 3
sources that are retrieving irrelevant hits.

By default, all themes are set to a “medium” relevancy retrieval. However, we could also set each title in a theme to a retrieval setting of never, low, medium, or high.

Another very useful option when setting up our keyword profiles was to designate a particular group (“audience”) to receive a specific keyword alert. Since we were testing this on our own, we did not need to invoke it, but it would be an extremely useful option for organizational usage.

After inputting some settings on preferred time of email delivery and a few other small details, we saved our alert, and waited for our results.

RECEIVING A DRAFT

Each day, Nexcerpt sent us a “draft” of the day’s alerts for us to review before it was officially “published” to the designated audience (in our trial, that was simply ourselves). We received several relevant hits from our keyword searches, and our keywords were highlighted in the excerpts. Stock told us that Nexcerpt’s algorithm ranks news items based on a “resource authority” factor assigned to each news source, ranking each one based on criteria like the publication’s circulation, and (as Google does to determine its rankings) what other sites are linking in to the source. Our only problem was that we received a few irrelevant hits on a one-word search due to Nexcerpt’s automatic stemming; this was fixed by placing the word in quotation marks. Here, we had the ability to:

- add a prologue
- eliminate any unwanted news items
- make comments on each specific news item retrieved
- add additional relevant news excerpts of our own, along with a URL
- add an epilogue

When we were satisfied with our review and changes we made, we clicked “publish” and Nexcerpt sent out the completed day’s alert.

One of the tricky things in working with any news alert service is fine-tuning it to make sure that what is being retrieved is on target. Nexcerpt was impressive in what it offered here. Clicking on a link called “correlated keywords” identified other words that appeared most often in close proximity to our keywords. This helped us under-

“We quickly became a very big fan of Nexcerpt... a superb tool for business information professionals...”

stand the context in which our keywords were appearing, and provided suggestions for adding other keywords. Clicking a link labeled “query statistics” provided a graphical view of how each specific keyword “performed” during the last week in terms of number of items it retrieved. And we were most impressed when one of Nexcerpt’s librarians in customer service sent us this unsolicited email:

Robert:

Regarding your “low carb market” query: Because Nexcerpt is punctuation-sensitive, I have added “low-carb” and “low-carbohydrate” to your query so you capture both forms of the words.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Wow, a human being adding her knowledge to an automated service. That was an unexpected bonus—and turned out to be good advice too. (We confirmed

with Stock that this kind of unsolicited human fine tuning is offered to all customers—not just those that happen to be reviewing their product!)

PRICING

A subscription to Nexcerpt, which includes up to 10 different keyword queries, and full publishing privileges, costs \$200/month. That fee includes the right to send alerts to clients and others outside of one’s own organization as well.

OVERALL EVALUATION

We quickly became a very big fan of Nexcerpt. We think that the human intelligence that went into creating the product, the analytical tools, the annotation and publishing features, and its overall design make this a superb tool for business information professionals.

We appreciated how Nexcerpt’s annotation capabilities can be used to customize incoming news into a larger context relevant to your organization, facilitate internal discussion and knowledge sharing, and ultimately increase your visibility and enhance both the real and perceived value of the information center. Nexcerpt also integrates human intelligence into an automated procedure, offering the recipients of the alerts the best of both worlds.

All that said, we should point out that Nexcerpt doesn’t offer everything. For one, Nexcerpt’s sources are limited to the Web, and if you rely on this service as your major provider of information, you (and your audience) will be missing news and information from critical non-Web sources such as articles published in print-based academic and trade journals, and newspapers like *The Wall Street Journal*. Ideally, you’d supplement a Nexcerpt subscription with access to a vendor like Factiva, where you could search electronic feeds of important print sources.

Continued on page 7...

Where to Find “Big Name” Brokerage Research Reports

Research reports issued by Wall Street investment research firms have been a long-time standard—and premium-priced—source for locating detailed data and insights on companies, industries, products, and market trends. And while there are countless investment and brokerage firms, a handful or so of the largest of these investment brokerage firms are still considered top names for issuing reports, despite their recent scandals.

Although there is no one official list of such firms, based on our own research, we would say that the following brokerage firms have the reputation as the big names for research in the industry:

- Banc of America
- Bear Stearns
- CIBC World Markets
- Credit Suisse First Boston Corp.
- Deutsche Bank Alex Brown
- Goldman Sachs
- JP Morgan Chase
- Lehman Brothers
- Merrill Lynch
- Morgan Stanley Dean Witter
- Piper Jaffrey
- Prudential Securities
- SG Cowen
- Smith Barney Citigroup
- UBS Warburg

Most information professionals typically search for reports from these and other investment firms by turning to one of the primary research databases. The best known and most popular ones for business researchers are Thomson products Intelliscope, Investext (available on Thomson Research directly or via a third-party online service such as Dialog) and Reuters Research On-Demand (previously Mulfex Research On-Demand). Note that the collection of three other popular research report vendors—Profound (ResearchLine), MarketResearch.com, and MindBranch—are strictly collections of market research firm reports, and not investment/brokerage firm reports, al-

though MindBranch's users are permitted to search and access Reuters' collection.

If you want a report from one of these high-profile providers of research, how do you know if it's actually available from a specific aggregator? Recently, a spokesperson from Merrill Lynch announced that its research reports would no longer be available on either Investext or Reuters, but only on its own site. However, Thomson issued a statement on its Web site that “Contrary to reports regarding the status of a major contract between Merrill Lynch and Thomson, the contract remains firmly in place and the

partnership remains stronger than ever.” A spokesperson at Merrill Lynch then told us that the firm is still providing real-time reports to Reuters and Thomson, but is no longer providing reports to the Reuters' and Thomson's delayed, embargoed products (which for information professionals, would most notably be the Investext and Reuters Research On-Demand services).

If a brokerage firm makes reports available only on its own site, depending on its distribution policies, it can be incon-

Continued on page 6...

WHAT ABOUT THE INDEPENDENTS?

Although these 15 brokerage firms represent the big names in the field, many of these companies have been tainted by the scandals of the last year, and their reputations have been badly tarnished. We most recently discussed this issue in our January 2003 article, “Research Reports: More Options, More Concerns,” (*The Information Advisor*, Vol. 15, No. 1, p. 2).

In the fall of 2003, as part of the proposed settlement with the SEC growing out of the conflict of interest cases, 10 of the largest brokerage firms have agreed to contribute over \$400 million to fund independent research for the next five years.

Some investors and business researchers have been looking more to reports issued by independent research firms, with the hopes of getting information that is more objective and less likely for the analyst or firm to have conflicts of interests with the companies they are covering.

Several new sources for identifying and searching independent research firms' reports have emerged over the last year or so. Here are some places to turn:

* **Investars.com**

www.investars.com

Ranks and rates the performance of independent research and brokerage firms.

* **Best Independent Research**

www.bestindependentresearch.com

This is the Web site of a consortium of five independent research firms that received a high ranking for its research by the research report ranking site Investars. Its members are Callard Research, Channel Trend, Columbine Capital Services, Ford Equity Research, and Global Capital Institute.

* **2004 Directory of Independent Investment Research**

This directory (part of what had been the Nelson directory line) was released by the Thomson Corporation in December, and profiles over 200 independent investment research firms in the U.S. The listings are alphabetical, with an index on industries/research specialties and by service provided. The price is \$995. For ordering information, call 888-280-4864; or email: nelson.sales@thomson.com.

* **Morningstar**

Note that Morningstar is a popular independent research firm and has published about 1,000 reports. Morningstar makes a “library edition” of its reports available. For more information, link to: library.morningstar.com/mkt/splash/MLESplash_Page.html.

“Big Name” Brokerage Reports...

...continued from page 5

venient at best and impossible at worst to get a sought-after research report. (One tip regarding accessing a brokerage firms' reports no longer available on an aggregator: we heard of one business re-

searcher who was able to get the report she needed simply by contacting the office of the analyst at the brokerage firm and explaining to the analyst's secretary that she needed a specific report that was no longer available on her online servic-

es. The secretary then simply mailed her the report.)

We decided it would be helpful to do a round-up to identify which aggregators have which brokerage firms' reports, as

Major Investment Brokerage Report Coverage: Thomson, Reuters, and on Own Web Site

Subscription-Based Aggregators* Embargo period **		
	Other: Consumer Sites	On Own Site
Banc of America	Investext, Intelliscope (15-day embargo)	CLIENTS ONLY
Bear Stearns	Investext, Intelliscope (7-day embargo) Reuters Research On-Demand (7-day embargo) Other: Zacks	NO
CIBC World Markets	Investext, Intelliscope (7-day embargo) Reuters Research On-Demand (7-day embargo) Other: Zacks	Some free samples
Credit Suisse First Boston Corp.	Investext, Intelliscope (7-day embargo)	CLIENTS ONLY
Deutsche Bank Alex Brown	Intelliscope (15-day embargo) Reuters Research On-Demand (14-day embargo)	CLIENTS ONLY
Goldman Sachs	NO	YES: Research on Demand; available to all registered users (non-registered may browse) www.gsnews.com/index.html
JP Morgan Chase	Reuters Research On-Demand (7-day embargo) Other: Zacks	CLIENTS ONLY: On MorganMarkets and MorganWise
Lehman Brothers	Investext, Intelliscope (7-day embargo) Reuters Research On-Demand (7-day embargo)	NO
Merrill Lynch	Only to real-time product offerings (not available to librarians or other general researchers)	YES: askmerrill.ml.com Access to reports allowed to non-clients during a 60-day trial period
Morgan Stanley Dean Witter	Investext, Intelliscope (7-day embargo) Reuters Research On-Demand (7-day embargo)	CLIENTS ONLY: On "Client Link"
Piper Jaffrey	Reuters Research On-Demand (7-day embargo)	CLIENTS ONLY
Prudential-Bache Limited	Investext Intelliscope (7-day embargo) Reuters Research On-Demand (7-day embargo)	CLIENTS ONLY
Smith Barney Citigroup	Investext, Intelliscope (7-30 day embargo) Reuters Research On-Demand (15-day embargo/7 days for Notes)	CLIENTS ONLY
SG Cowen	Investext, Intelliscope (7-day embargo) Reuters Research On-Demand (7-day embargo)	CLIENTS ONLY
UBS Warburg	Investext, Intelliscope (15-day embargo)	CLIENTS ONLY

* For non-institutional investor clients such as librarians. Included here are relevant products from Thomson (Investext and Intelliscope) and Reuters (Reuters Research On-Demand)

** This is the contractually obligated number of days the aggregator must wait before making the report available. Availability of specific reports may be further delayed by other factors such as data and file transferring operations, production issues, etc.

Nexcerpt...

well as to note the policies of these brokerage firms regarding access to their reports on their own site. This information is provided in the accompanying table.

Regarding access to reports on a brokerage firm's own site, with only a few exceptions, the firms permit only their own clients to search and buy the firm's reports. Some firms' sites, though, did allow any visitor to browse some recent reports.

What about embargo times? When you access a research report from an aggregator, such as Investext or Reuters Research On-Demand, you should be aware that there is an embargo. According to Dialog, the typical embargo period for a report made available on the Investext PDF Index File 745 is 7 to 10 days. However, there is an additional lag time of a few more weeks before those reports become available on the fully searchable Investext File 545 (and not all reports on File 745 become available on File 545). For Reuters Research On-Demand, see the specific embargo times listed per provider in the accompanying table.

While both Thomson and Reuters offer products that provide real-time access to brokerage reports, (like First Call, now part of Thomson Analytics), access to these is restricted to institutional investors.

Note that Thomson has recently reorganized and renamed its different access points for obtaining research reports, and the result has been pretty confusing, particularly in determining which services have an embargo, and which do not. Here is their latest line-up:

Name	Embargoed Reports
Thomson ONE Banker (previously Thomson Research)	. .YES
Thomson ONE Banker-Analytics (previously Thomson Analytics)	. .YES
Thomson ONE Analytics (previously First Call)NO■

...continued from page 4

And you need to check that Nexcerpt is including Web sources most important to you. One of our keyword searches was to track mentions of "Asheville," a small city in North Carolina. We were surprised to discover that Nexcerpt only included two relatively obscure media sources for Asheville, but not the region's major newspaper, the *Asheville Citizen Times*, which is on the Web. Fortunately, users can suggest sources they think should be covered on Nexcerpt, and, says Stock, the firm is likely to oblige and add it, either as a special source just for that user, or as a wider source available to all its clients.

Also, while we liked the search interface, we would have appreciated hav-

ing the ability to limit our keywords to an article's headline or title, which is an important tool when doing broad searches to avoid getting too many hits.

We think pricing is reasonable for what you get. But if you're comparing low-cost news alert services we'll remind you that our "value choice" in our January issue was NetContent's IntelliSearch. IntelliSearch scans 9,000 sources and costs just \$29.95/month—though you don't get all those unique features that Nexcerpt offers.

Bottom line: The editor encourages everyone to give Nexcerpt a try—with the free trial, you have nothing to lose!■

Reliable Chinese Business Data...

...continued from page 2

companies are listed in Volume Two, Eastern Asia.

Ordering information: Available from Thomson Gale. 800-877-GALE or on the Web at: www.galegroup.com/servlet/ItemDetailServlet?region=9&imprint=356&titleCode=MCFE&type=1&id=186862 (sample pages from the directory are available at this site)

FEE-BASED COMPANY DIRECTORY DATABASES

There is a wide range of international company directory databases that include coverage of some companies in China. While we're not putting together a comprehensive listing of international company directory databases in this article, we did want to highlight a few noteworthy ones. These are two files on Dialog that focus specifically on Asia, a relevant D&B file on Dialog, and three specialized databases where Chinese companies are particularly well represented. Here is the list:

- **Asian Company Profiles**
(File 505 on Dialog)

- **Kompass Asia/Pacific**
(File 592 on Dialog)
- **D&B International Market Identifiers** (File 518 on Dialog)
- **ISI's Emerging Markets Information Service** (www.securities.com)
- **Osiris: Bureau van Dijk** (BvD)
- **Worldscope's Disclosure**
(CorporateInformation.com)

Note that updating has been suspended for another database on Dialog that covers companies in China, the Asia-Pacific Directory (File 758).

Asian Company Profiles: Dialog

This database is produced for Dialog by a Taiwan-based firm called Asian Company Profiles Ltd (Formerly known as FBR Database Inc) that produces a database (Asian CIS) and credit reporting services. Much of the data focuses on company products.

Kompass Asia/Pacific: Dialog

Kompass Asia/Pacific is the online companion to Kompass' well-known print directories and, like the print directories, is only updated on an annual basis. Kompass Asia/Pacific also focuses pri-

Continued on page 8...

Wanted: Reliable Chinese Business Data...

...continued from page 7
marily on product information, and uses a detailed seven-digit product code system.

D&B International Market Identifiers

This D&B file includes information on over 4,000 firms in China, and many records contain some basic financial information, in addition to basic descriptive data on the company.

Emerging Markets Information Service (EMIS): ISI

www.securities.com

We reviewed ISI's Web-based database of emerging companies, Emerging Markets Information Service (EMIS) back in our August 2002 issue. In our review, we called EMIS an "outstanding business research site." ISI's database includes about 200,000 firms in

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Available for use on your company intranet: \$595 per year for up to 20 users; \$895 for up to 100 users; over 100 users, please inquire.

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Fax: 212-633-4596

China. One drawback, though, is that while the financial data is nearly all in English, most of the company profile section is in Chinese, though the firm tells us it is in the process of translating these profiles into English.

Osiris: Bureau van Dijk (BvD)

www.bvdep.com/OSIRIS.html

We also reviewed BvD's databases in a past issue (BvD's "Suiter" Way to Search European Company Data, *The Information Advisor*, Vol. 12, No. 9, p. 7 September 2000) and we noted that this Brussels-based online service provides detailed coverage of European firms not commonly covered in popular U.S. databases and directories.

Although BvD offers several databases that include information on China (including BANKSCOPE, ISIS, and Zephyr), the largest database for locating information on firms in China is Osiris. The primary provider of data to this database is a credit consulting firm called Huaxia. Therese Terry, a reference librarian at the University of Pennsylvania's Lippincott Library told us that Osiris' "financial records are the best I have seen for China." (Terry has also put together a superb research guide to finding information on Chinese companies. Link to it at: gethelp.library.upenn.edu/guides/business/china.html. Terry told us she will be updating this listing for a presentation she will be making at this year's SLA conference.)

Worldscope's Disclosure: CorporateInformation.com

Worldscope is a Thomson database covering profiles and financial data on 40,000 public companies around the globe, including about 1,300 in China. Although available on various fee-based platforms, we are highlighting its availability on Wright Investor Service's site, CorporateInformation.com, as this site makes a certain level of data available for free to non-subscribers.

FREE WEB-BASED DIRECTORIES AND REFERENCE SOURCES

There are lots of directories of companies and product suppliers in China on the Web. But we found only a few that we liked and that are either well known or look to be solid enough to use:

Kompass

www1.kompass.com/kin/en/

In addition to its fee-based print, CD, and online databases, Kompass also permits some basic free browsing and searching of its database to locate basic contact information. On this site, you just need to choose the country/region, and type of information you are looking for to conduct a search.

China Online

www.chinaonline.com

China Online offers news, research tools, company profiles, and other useful information.

The below two sites are the best of the product/supplier locator sites for China we've come across.

GlobalSources

www.globalsources.com

Can search by province, and obtain company profile information

China Manufacturers Directory

<http://chinasuppliers.alibaba.com/>

This site has compiled a listing of "Gold Suppliers" in China that have passed certain levels of scrutiny, including a company profile authentication and a verification via a third-party credit agency, such as D&B. Data provided includes not just products but a short company profile and contact information

Next month we'll cover news, market research, governmental, and other services for researching facts on firms in China. ■