

# Land that job: Teaching students to find company information for interview preparation

Bridget Farrell, Auburn University Libraries

## Abstract

In the Fall of 2012 and Spring of 2013, I taught undergraduate supply chain management students and first year MBA students how to use library databases to find company information in preparation for interviews.

When developing the activities for these classes, I wanted to move away from the idea of “teaching the database” and instead ask students to think critically about the relative strengths and weaknesses of different sources of company information.

## Technology



The classroom management tool LanSchool was used to improve the flow of the students' group presentations.

## Want More Information?

E-mail me!  
bfarrell@auburn.edu



## In the Beginning there was Brainstorming (and it was good)

At the beginning of both classes, students were asked to brainstorm about what kinds of information they might like to know about a company before an interview. They were then asked to think about some possible places they could search to find the information they might need. When listing places they would search, students would invariably mention Google, the company's website, and sometimes free online sites like Glassdoor.com. These answers naturally segued into a discussion of bias and the authority of information found online when compared to information found in proprietary databases. The five to ten minutes it took to perform this brainstorming exercise served as a great way to get students warmed up to the idea of participating in class discussions.

## SCMN 4810: A Structured Approach

**SCMN 4810: What does it Best? Searching for Company Information Using Library Databases and Google**

Working in a group, you will be assigned a resource to search for information related to Amazon.com. Answer the questions below to the best of your ability. Be prepared to present your findings to the class.

Name of Resource: \_\_\_\_\_

- Indicate whether or not the information below is using your resource. If it is available, indicate where you found the information.
  - Can you identify whether Amazon is a publicly or privately traded company using your resource?
  - In your resource, can you find information on the industries Amazon operates in?
  - Using your resource, can you find Amazon's mission statement?
  - Can you find news articles about Amazon using your resource?
  - Can you find a list of Amazon's major products and services?
- Are you able to discuss whether or not Amazon has recently been a part in any mergers or acquisitions?
  - Is financial information about Amazon found in your resource?
- What did you think was the greatest strength of your resource?
- What was the most frustrating part of using your resource?

After the brainstorming session, students were given a brief demo of Hoover's in order to acclimate them to how one library resource presented company information.

### Ingredients:

- 4 Groups
- 4 Resources (Hoover's, LexisNexis, Business Source Premier, and Google)
- Mostly “close-ended” questions

A few open ended questions allowed students to think critically about what worked and what didn't for their assigned resource.

After finishing the worksheet, groups presented on how to find different pieces information in their resource and shared their opinions about their tool. On a whiteboard, this chart was filled out in order to keep track of what resources had different kinds of data.

	Hoover's	LexisNexis	Business Source Premier	Google
<b>Public/Private</b>	Yes	Yes	Kinda	Kinda
<b>Industry Info.</b>	Yes!	A little	A little	Yes, but
<b>Mission Statement</b>	No	No	No	Yes
<b>News</b>	Yes	Yes!	Yes	Yes!
<b>Competitors</b>	Yes!	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Major Products</b>	Yes!	A little	Yes	Yes, but
<b>Mergers &amp; Acquisitions</b>	No	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Financials</b>	Yes!	Yes!	Yes	Yes

## BUSI 7970: Freedom to Explore

For this class, the instructor wanted to focus only on resources provided by the library for finding company information. So after the brainstorming session at the beginning of class, we jumped right into searching Hoover's for information about The Boston Beer Company.

**BUSI 7970: Using Library Databases to Find Company Information**

Working in a group, you will be assigned a database to search for information related to The Boston Beer Company. Answer the questions below to the best of your ability. Be prepared to present your findings to the class.

Name of database: \_\_\_\_\_

- Which search tool did you use to search for information about The Boston Beer Company? If there was more than one company listed in the search results, how did you know which company was the correct one?
- Compare your assigned database to Hoover's Online (the database we looked at together at the start of class). Is there information available about The Boston Beer Company in your database that you could NOT find in Hoover's? If so, give an example.
- In your database easy to use? What aspects of the database make it easy (or difficult) to search?

**STOP!!! ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AFTER LISTENING TO THE OTHER GROUP'S DESCRIPTION OF THEIR DATABASE**

- Where can you search in the other group's database for company information?
- Name something you can find in the other group's database but not in Hoover's Online.

### Ingredients:

- 2 Groups
- 3 Databases: (Hoover's, LexisNexis, and Business Source Premier)
- Mostly open-ended questions

To insure that students paid attention to the other group's presentation, they were required to answer some questions about the other group's database.

## Conclusion

The two activities both worked well at getting students to debate the advantages and disadvantages of different search tools. The open ended questions included in both activities promoted discussion and the use of LanSchool kept the student presentations from taking too long. All in all, the activities were successful in engaging students and promoted students teaching one another.