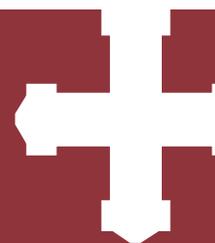# Prospect Research – A Summary
## Resource 1.18

**Reprinted by permission of Lisa Bellamy**
**The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society Development Office**
**2014 Fundraising Symposium: "Sacred Fundraising, Secular Tools" Prospect Research 101**

## Getting Started: Basic Free Electronic Resources

When using electronic resources to understand more about an individual:

1. Stay focused on what you need to know. If you've developed a simple, effective database or spreadsheet, this will help you stay on course.

2. Follow an "egg timer" approach: give yourself a set amount of time.

3. Accept loss! Often, you will not find what you wanted to find via electronic resources. On the other hand, you will probably find some surprising, helpful information, at least some of the time. The following list represents free selected resources to help you get started if you want to learn more. Try to supplement your Google searches with other search engines such as:

4. Clusty http://clusty.com/

5. DuckDuckGo https://duckduckgo.com/

6. Million Short: https://millionshort.com/. Million Short, when it works, can yield information that Google's regular indexing does not pick up. To search Google effectively, go to: https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/134479?hl=en

7. You want relevant, accurate information about the right person.

8. Notice the sources in your results lists. For example, use Wikipedia with caution as the information can be self-reported, maliciously-entered or inflated. Professional researchers present only information from Wikipedia that they can confirm through other sources. LinkedIn information is also self-reported. A prominent figure can generate bias and vitriol from bloggers, and so forth.

## University Prospect Research Bookmarks

Universities are at the forefront of prospect research and management. There are several prospect research resource lists but these three sites are excellent and can help you familiarize yourself with the categories of information available. They provide lists indexed by categories: biographical, business and employment, public records, real estate, philanthropic giving, and more. Some of the for-fee, subscription databases listed may be available via your public library (see below).

# Prospect Research – A Summary
## Resource 1.18 (cont'd.)

1. University of Southern California Development Research Site: http://www.usc.edu/dept/source/.

2. Stanford University Development Research http://web.stanford.edu/dept/OOD/RESEARCH/

3. Northwestern University Prospect Research bookmarks: http://www.nudevelopment.com/research/bookmark.html

4. Your library card! This is gold. Register on your public library website or meet with a librarian to discover what online database options are available to you either from your desktop or at the library.

5. Sample databases might include Proquest Historical Newspapers (family background), Hoover's (private company information) Zoominfo (aggregates information on individuals), Foundation Center or Guidestar (see below), Infotrac or Newsbank (news sources), and many more.

6. You might also have access to a university library's resources through alumni privileges.

7. Try Google searches on names by site type. Ex: "John Smith" site:edu or "John Smith" site:org. As Google help pages point out, searching a name several different ways yields the best results. Ex: "John J. Smith" or "John and Jane Smith," etc., will offer different results.

8. Google searches on names combined with terms such as "donor" or "philanthropy" or "gift" are also helpful.

9. Donor lists and annual reports often appear as PDF files. Another way to focus your search is to use Google Advanced Search to limit results to PDF files. However, a general unlimited Google search on a name can yield a news article or press release about a major gift.

## Philanthropic Database Sources

1. The Foundation Center: http://www.foundationcenter.org/. You can look online for a family foundation name with the "Find Funders" free search. In New York City, Atlanta, Cleveland, San Francisco, or Washington, DC, you can go to the Foundation Center and access the Foundation Directory and other databases for free. You can also access DonorSearch for free: http://www.donorsearch.net/ This is a for-fee subscription database that provide an overview profile of an individual, including gifts to and associations with nonprofits. The information is not comprehensive or 100% confirmed—it is gleaned from Internet and public records information, which vary widely—but it can be useful.

2. Guidestar: http://www.guidestar.org/. If you know the prospect has a foundation, you can read the IRS990-PF through Guidestar's free service. Political campaign contributions are a documented philanthropy indicator.

3. http://www.opensecrets.org/

4. http://www.fec.gov/finance/disclosure/norindsea.shtml

## Additional Reading

Prospect Research for Fundraisers: The Essential Handbook, by Jennifer J. Filla and Helen E. Brown (John J. Wiley & Sons, Inc: 2013). Several prospect research books are available, but this is a good place to start.

Major Gifts: two model role-plays

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Major Gifts: Diocesan role-plays

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Philanthropist Panel

Manual | Day 1 | Page 53

Reception

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