

EXCALIBUR

News & Updates from Merlin Information Services

Spring 2008

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**LexisNexis Buys ChoicePoint - Is This Good for Us?
by Mike Dores, President**

In February, Anglo-Dutch publisher Reed Elsevier, the parent company of LexisNexis, announced its intention to buy its competitor, ChoicePoint, for \$4.1 billion. LexisNexis and ChoicePoint are two of the largest public record companies in the U.S.

Before considering how this major consolidation may affect us, here's a quick update: On April 29, U.S. antitrust enforcers at the Federal Trade Commission announced that they are conducting an extended investigation into the planned acquisition. ChoicePoint then released a statement indicating that the FTC asked both ChoicePoint and Reed Elsevier for additional information about the deal. This type of extension and request for more information typically means antitrust officials have determined that this transaction warrants an in-depth review.

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Product Focus: Criminal

Merlin's **Criminal** database is the best in the industry! We have more details, more data, and more sources than anyone else.

Search in a single state or search nationally by name only or name and date of birth.

With each search get all these details at no additional charge:

- Offender name, date of birth, address and state in which the offense occurred
- Aliases, race, gender, hair and eye color, height and weight, and a mug shot (when available)
- Details about each offense: description, case number, jurisdiction, offense date, offense severity, plea, court decision, sentencing information, plus many supplemental fields that vary with each jurisdiction.

Each jurisdiction has its own timetable for submitting updates; however the vast majority update monthly.

NEW PRODUCT!!! Warrants Research service -- your order will initiate a search into an exclusive national database of outstanding wants and warrants. Recognized as the most reliable in the nation, this database is used by federal, state and local law enforcement.

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Tips to Better Searching

These tips may improve your results when searching Merlin's **Link to America**, **Link to America Pro**, **Cross-Directory**, or **PeopleFinder Unlimited** databases.

When Searching by Name

- If the last name is unusual, run the search without a first name.
Example: If you are looking for William Zоргowski who last lived in Arkansas, the first query should be:
Last Name = Zоргowski
State = Arkansas
- Here is an example of some possibly valid results that would have been missed if you had run William Zоргowski:
Bill Zоргowski
Wm Zоргowski
W.J. Zоргowski
Willie Zоргowski
- If you don't get any valid hits in Arkansas, run:
Last Name = Zоргowski
State = All States

When Searching by Address

- Use the address number, the name of the street and the state only.
- Leave out the city name and ZIP code.
- Leave out street directionals like N, S, E or W, etc.
- Leave out street suffixes like Ave., Blvd., St., Cir., etc.
- Always enter the State to improve search speed.
- For example: If you are searching for all records pertaining to 1234 N Orange Grove Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90046, the query should be:
Address # = 1234
Street Name = Orange Grove
State = CA

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Customer Survey

In April, Merlin invited our customers to participate in our 2008 Customer Satisfaction Survey. The response was overwhelming - so much so that we had to close the survey sooner than anticipated. If you did not get an opportunity to participate, we apologize and want you to know that you can always send us your feedback, survey or not. Send comments to sales@merlindata.com; your opinion is very important to us!

Here are a few statistics about what we learned from our respondents:

- 70% first learned about Merlin from colleagues or through their trade association
- 96% are satisfied with Merlin's customer service!
- 86% wait less than 3 minutes on the phone to reach a Merlin representative
- 33% prefer to learn about new products through our website advertising
- 52% prefer e-mails about new product information
- **94% are overall satisfied with Merlin!**

And best of all, we received hundreds of comments, many praising Merlin and many offering valuable suggestions for improvement. We take each comment very seriously and will use your feedback to help drive our new product and service initiatives.

We are obviously very pleased with these results and are committed to continuous improvement at Merlin. And a very special **thank you** to all who participated!

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Meet the Sales Team!



[Kristin Hall](#)
Central Region Sales Manager

If you've attended an industry tradeshow, chances are you've met Kristin. She represented Merlin at the Texas Association of Licensed Investigators mid-winter conference in February, and exhibited at the National Defender Investigator Association tradeshow in Las Vegas in April.

Kristin is responsible for new client sales and has been with Merlin for 6 years. She enjoys helping customers, training them to use our products, and walking them through the new account process.

In her spare time, Kristin enjoys reading and spending time with family and friends.



[Mike Vanderbeek](#)
East Region Sales Manager

Mike has been with Merlin for one year and oversees growth for both the Northeast and Southeast regions. He handles new client sales and works with existing customers to ensure that they are happy with Merlin's service. When asked what he likes most about his job, Mike said, "I really enjoy helping customers find that breakthrough piece of information that solves their case."

Mike and his family moved from Florida to Montana to enjoy all the things that our beautiful state offers. He is an avid skier, loves to backpack, and has had a passion for rafting since he was 10 years old.

[Nichole Shirk-Mendoza](#)
Corporate Sales Advisor

Nichole educates corporations with 10 or more users on the effective use of Merlin's online data. She works with corporate managers to understand their strategic objectives, then offers solutions tailored to meet their needs. Her efforts often result in a time and cost savings for her customers.

NOT PICTURED

A self-described dog freak, Nichole enjoys spending time with family, friends, and her one-year-old Gordon Setter, "Boone." Nichole has a big heart when it comes to canines. It's not unusual for her to stop alongside the road to pick up a stray dog to be sure it finds its way home.

[Tina Berry](#)
National Sales Representative

Tina assists clients and prospects in the government and large corporate sectors. Tina has been with Merlin for 18 months and is a very proactive and energetic member of the Merlin team. She has a great relationship with her customers and possesses a knack for understanding how they can best utilize Merlin's numerous data tools.

Tina enjoys working with her four German Shepherds in obedience and protection training and spends her Saturday mornings teaching



obedience classes at an area pet store. When she's not working with her dogs, she enjoys hiking, walking, and spending time outdoors.

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Upcoming Trade Shows and Conferences

Merlin will be at the following trade shows and conferences. Please stop by our booth and meet the Merlin team!

May 14-16, 2008

California Financial Crimes Investigators Association
San Diego, CA

June 23-26, 2008

HFMA (Healthcare Financial Management Association)
Las Vegas, NV

Jun 29 - July 2, 2008

CALI (California Association of Licensed Investigators)
Costa Mesa, CA

July 13-18, 2008

ACFE (Association of Certified Fraud Examiners)
Boston, MA

August 13-15, 2008

SCFIA (Southern CA Fraud Investigators Association)
San Diego, CA

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Red Cross Blood Drive

Giving back to the community in which we live and work is a core value at Merlin. It's not uncommon to find employees volunteering their time at an animal shelter, fire department, Rotary, Scouting event, or with any number of other organizations.

Giving blood is no exception. In February, Merlin sponsored a Red Cross Blood drive with a goal of providing 20 units of blood. 26 employees volunteered providing 23 pints of blood and surpassing the goal. These efforts help ensure that there is an adequate blood supply for friends, family, and neighbors in need.

Look for more articles about Merlin giving back to their community in future issues of this newsletter!

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Merlin Supports CALI's "Leg Day"

Merlin is pleased to have made a financial contribution to the annual California Association of Licensed Investigators (CALI) Legislation Day held on April 21, 2008 in Sacramento.

"Leg Day" provides a forum for private investigators to meet with California State Senators and Assembly Members to discuss and promote interests of concern to PIs and related businesses. Private Investigators learn how to lobby and actively oppose or support legislation critical to maintaining access to information and protecting industry interests.

CALI Legislation Chair and East Bay Director Francie Koehler said "It is just great to see close to 70 people walking up and down the halls of the Capitol. This year several people told us they ran into their Senator or Assembly Member or one of the staffers in the hall and were not only greeted, but were greeted by name. It doesn't get any better than that!"

Year by year, CALI's objective is to build relationships with California legislators so that CALI PIs are a resource with credibility.

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LexisNexis Buys ChoicePoint - Is this Good for Us? continued

Mergers and acquisitions are investigated by U.S. antitrust authorities to assess the potential impact on fair competition and/or possibility of higher prices. When an investigation is deemed necessary, the FTC usually requires all parties to turn over large amounts of documents related to the deal. If the FTC approves the sale, which looks to be likely, the Reed transaction will happen some time later this year.

So, what do I think of all this? First of all, I'm experienced enough to not worry about things I can't control. That aside, LexisNexis and ChoicePoint are both good companies that supply wholesale data to companies like Merlin that are generally friendlier to smaller businesses such as private investigators, attorney services, and other small to mid-sized firms. One of my concerns is any possibility that the newly combined company would limit its reseller network, making it more difficult for public record companies such as Merlin to continue offering its customers access to the data they currently enjoy.

Another possible downside is the fact that the best investigators and researchers use multiple data sources because they know that search results can vary from company to company. The loss of a major provider narrows the available resources, making it more difficult to verify that important information has not been missed. However, another way to look at this is to consider the benefit of these two companies combined, as an even better single data source.

The public record industry is comprised of a relatively small group of providers, many of whom sell, trade, and resell data amongst themselves. The merger of these two giants, LexisNexis and ChoicePoint, will cause a ripple effect within our industry. As founder and president of Merlin, I intend to continue offering the very best data possible, enhanced by excellent search and retrieval software, and supported by the finest customer service. Merlin stands in strong support of the thousands of small to mid-sized businesses that depend on us.

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Your opinion is important to us! If you have comments or questions about this newsletter, please send them to newsletter@merlindata.com.

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