

EXCALIBUR

News & Updates from Merlin Information Services

Winter 2009

In This Issue

All Data is Not Created Equal
 Product Focus: Cell Phones
 Tips to Better Searching
 Meet the Sales Team
 Upcoming Trade Shows and Conferences
 Community Support and Involvement

All Data is Not Created Equal by Mike Dores, President

Merlin supplies investigative professionals with hundreds of millions of data records to help locate people, businesses, and assets. There are four distinct types of data found in Merlin's databases. Because the data type is a good indicator of the data's reliability and accuracy, understanding these differences will lead to more effective search techniques.

Publicly Available Data: Publicly available data is found in phone books, cross directories, and Google-type web searches. It is unregulated and available to anyone. While this data provides a great starting point, it can be outdated and sometimes inaccurate, and generally creates an incomplete picture of the subject.

[\(continued\)](#)



Archived Issues

[Fall 2008](#)
[Summer 2008](#)
[Spring 2008](#)
[Winter 2008](#)

Product Focus: Cell Phones

Merlin has combined multiple data sources to bring you one of the most extensive cell phone products on the market. The [Cell Phones](#) database includes millions of records, searchable by name or address.

Although it includes valuable cell phone numbers, the information in this database is consumer reported, which sometimes includes incorrectly reported information. A good feature of this database is "no hit, no charge", so there is no cost to searching the database if there are no records found.

For more information about [Cell Phones](#), or any Merlin product, contact a Merlin representative at 800-367-6646 or e-mail Merlin sales representative at sales@merlindata.com

[Top](#)

Tips to Better Searching

The Merlin Business Development team recently analyzed its search logs to understand what factors contribute to "no hit" results from the *Link to America*™ and *Link to America Pro* products. The goal was to gain a better understanding of customer search patterns, and offer search tips for improved results.

The results of the analysis and the associated search tips are as follows:

Result - 31% of the "no hit" results had a misspelled First and/or Last Name

Search Tip - Double check the spelling of your subject's name. If you are unsure of the spelling, a search by one of your subject's previous addresses may uncover the correct spelling or alternate spellings of your subject's name.

Result - 19% of the "no hit" results included a date of birth (DOB)

Search Tip - Start by running your search without the date of birth. If you receive a "too many results" message, narrow the search by including only the birth year. To narrow the search further, add the birth month.

Result - 11% of the "no hit" results included a middle initial

Search Tip - Start by running your search without the middle initial. If you receive a "too many results" message, then narrow the search by adding the middle initial.

[Top](#)

Meet the Sales Team!



[Adam English](#)
Account Manager

Adam has been with Merlin for one year as an Account Representative for the East Region of the country. Adam brings over 8 years of customer service and sales experience to the Merlin team. He enjoys Merlin's national sales environment while living in a beautiful, small Montana town. Adam is originally from Salt Lake City, but was raised in Montana and is glad to be back. He and his wife Pattie enjoy fishing, hiking, camping and all that Montana offers.



[Corby Parish](#)
Customer Service Representative

Corby has been with Merlin for one year, with a focus on customer service and support. She enjoys helping customers use Merlin to its fullest extent, and introducing new products that customers find useful. Corby's family moved to Montana 17 years ago after her husband, Bruce, completed his service in the U.S. Air Force. She is the proud mother of three boys - the most important people in her life. Corby loves camping and fishing with her family, and really enjoys curling up with a good book.

[Top](#)

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!

[April 8 - 10](#)
Northern California Fraud Investigators Association (NCFIA)
Monterey, CA

[April 30 - May 2](#)
National Association of Professional Process Servers (NAPPS)
Las Vegas, NV

[April 30 - May 2](#)
National Association of Retail Collection Attorneys (NARCA)
Boston, MA

[Top](#)

Community Support and Involvement

Merlin offered a helping hand this holiday season to families in need.

- Merlin hosted a Thanksgiving food drive for the local Veterans Food Pantry. Employees donated over 300 pounds of food plus a cash donation to assist the veterans in need. These donations helped create 50 Thanksgiving food boxes for local families.
- Thanks to Merlin employees, many children's holiday wishes were fulfilled! Employees purchased Christmas gifts for 32 local foster children, supporting the CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) for Kids program.
- In lieu of sending Christmas cards this year, Merlin made a cash donation on behalf of our customers to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

[Top](#)

All Data is Not Created Equal - continued

True Public Record: Governmental data, or true public record, is information filed with public agencies. Examples of true public record include corporation records, UCC filings, professional licenses, property records, and court records. This data is generally reliable and provides helpful clues about someone's location. However, it is common to see spelling errors, and missing or incorrect data in public record. Current and historical public record information is found in many of Merlin's products. Remember that the index, the portion of the public record found in most investigative databases, is not the full public record -- the document filed at the public agency will often have valuable information not included in the index.

Regulated Proprietary Data: A credit header, the top portion of a credit report, is a good example of a database where access is regulated by federal law. This data is owned by credit bureaus, and may only be used for the specific purposes outlined in the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act. Credit headers provide current and historical addresses as well as personal identifying information such as birth date and SSN. While credit headers are one of the best sources for determining someone's current address, the data is not always correct. A good skiptracer knows that the most likely current address reported in a credit header needs to be verified before reporting that address to a client. Merlin's Credit Header and *Link to America*™ products contain regulated proprietary data, making them among the most effective skiptracing resources on the market.

Consumer Reported Data: The information in Merlin's new Cell Phones database is consumer reported, a type of data just recently becoming available to investigative professionals. It differs from other data types as it is information supplied voluntarily by consumers, often through sales transactions over the Internet. Although consumer reported data is only as good as the consumer's accuracy (which sometimes leads to incorrectly reported data), it often includes information not available from other data sources. Consumer reported data should be used carefully, but when supplemented with other data types, it can offer extremely valuable clues.

Success in skiptracing depends on your ability to effectively use and understand the various data types. By combining all these data types, you have many tools and sources to put the pieces of the puzzle together.

[Top](#)

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