



# Wired to the World

by Ralph Lee Scott

From the address and phone number of lost friends to the current restaurant scene in a faraway city, telephone directories have been used by librarians and patrons to answer many reference questions. Now the power of these directories is available over the Internet. In addition to traditional telephone directories, specialized directories that give information on liens, bankruptcies, judgements, lost family members, adopted persons, and skipped/lost/missing persons are accessible via the Internet.

It is fascinating to see the amount of information that can be found about an individual on the Internet. Personal privacy, it appears, is becoming a thing of the past if you have a telephone, e-mail account, or live in a semi-permanent place.

Probably the most familiar directory listing is located at *Yahoo!* in their People Search section. (<http://www.yahoo.com/search/people>) Here you can search their directories by name, address, city, e-mail or home address. *Lycos* has a similar search service called *PeopleFind*. (<http://www.lycos.com/ppfinder.html>) I have found that *Yahoo!* is often the faster place to go, but on occasions have found people listed in *Lycos*, that I could not find in *Yahoo!*.

Another neat directory site is *WhoWhere?*. (<http://www.whowhere.com>) *WhoWhere?* has additional search tables: e-mail name, phone number, address, Internet phone number, personal home page, company name, U.S. government agency name, toll-free number (800 & 888), yellow page ad, and Securities and Exchange Commission EDGAR listing. A community advanced search feature enables the searcher to specify a city, school, and interest profile.

*Bigfoot* ([www.bigfoot.com](http://www.bigfoot.com)) is another directory listing that offers a variety of additional services. The user registers by e-mail address to access (naturally) *Bigfoot* FOR LIFE: a listing in their directory, a *Bigfoot* privacy list to stop unsolicited junk e-mail (alas, did not work for me). The *Bigfoot* directory promises to follow you wherever you go (for life) and will deliver e-mail to you no matter how often you change your e-mail address or service provider. *Bigfoot* was created in 1995 to provide value-added services to users of Internet e-mail accounts.

Another service like *Bigfoot* is *Four 11*, (<http://www.four11.com>) which allows you to register using personal parameters that are searchable by other users. Among the parameters you can specify are high school, college, fraternity, and military unit.

Another directory service is *Switchboard*, (<http://www.switchboard.com>) which has become the official directory of America OnLine and has received its AOL Members Choice moniker. *Switchboard* offers two search options: Find People and Find Business. Like the other services, you must register your listing. *Switchboard* does have

an interesting sidebar called "Switchboard Stories." Here you can find stories about people trying to find girls they dated in 1977, lost business associates, relatives, etc., and includes this month the story of a woman in Charlotte, N.C. who located her long lost half brother through a listing in *Switchboard*. This might be an interesting site to watch to find new uses for directory listings.

A Yellow Pages type of directory can be found at *BigBook*, (that's "book" not "foot") (<http://www.bigbook.com>). Here you can search yellow page telephone and Internet directories by category (restaurants, florists, taxis, roofers, etc.) and specify a location by city and state. *BigBook* also provides "complete" commercial Internet Web home pages starting at \$50 a month nationwide. On the day I checked their listing, new commercial accounts included: Park Avenue Motors, New Wave Rafting Co., Blue Chalk Cafe, Richard S. Durando DDS, Walnut Creek Cutlery & Shavers, Stanford Bookstores, Duplication Plus, Business Environment Cleaners, and Kathryn Dickson Fontaine, Esq. (lawyer listing?).

Some directory sites specialize in multiple directories. For example *555-1212.com* (<http://www.555-1212.com>) is a site that provides white, yellow, and blue (government) pages that are searchable for the United States, Canada, and "all countries," which searches both. *555-1212.com* also has a Canadian and United States Fax Directory and a Toll-Free Directory (800 & 888 numbers). *555-1212.com* has an interesting bar that I did not check out called ".com yourself - click here," which sounded rather inviting.

In addition to the listing, a number of these Internet directories have clickable map directions to the location of the address. These maps can be very detailed down to the individual streets, and are an excellent source of directions for patrons wanting to visit the address in person. Some sites also have links to reviews of restaurants, etc.

Some specialized directories provide searching/information services that go beyond the basic listing. For example *KnowX* (<http://www.knowx.com>) has a free listing by name and state of bankruptcies, liens, judgements, and UCCs (Uniform Commercial Code rulings), so if you skipped town in 1987 without paying for your banjo or owe money on your student telephone account, you will turn up here. This service has many uses, such as landlords checking the credit history of tenants, people wanting background information on individuals they are dating, nosy neighbors, etc. Detailed reports are available (for a fee of course) from *KnowX* and can be ordered online.

Directory services are being added to the Internet on an almost daily basis. Additional directory sites that you might want to search are *Database America* (<http://www.databaseamerica.com>) and *Infospace* (<http://www.infospace.com>).