


Searching in a global environment: Finding information from and on foreign countries, regions and markets

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Abstract

Global information is required to facilitate trade, international business expansion, research and for international comparisons. The amount of data available varies in what exists, its age and its accuracy. Information from one area may not be comparable with that from another. The global searcher needs to consider these points and why information may be findable, prior to searching. Anticipating such issues can aid the search approach – whether via a local search engine or by going directly to a range of websites holding relevant data. Global and national information can come from supranational bodies, governments, public and private sector organizations as well as specialist sites. Some information sources will require payment or a subscription to gain access.

Keywords

Demographic data, economic data, financial data, global information, international research, online sources, search, statistical data

Introduction

Over the last two decades, there has been a ‘sudden increase in the exchange of knowledge, trade and capital around the world’.¹ The Internet has been one of the driving forces behind this globalization – and the desire for information has increased as interconnections between nations have grown.

Global information is needed for a range of purposes, for example:

- to facilitate trade – where company and financial information may be needed on overseas customers, suppliers, competitors or markets;
- for business growth – with information required on foreign markets, potential alliance partners or acquisitions or business cultures, customs and more so that any new ventures take account of the local environment;
- for international comparisons and benchmarking in a wide range of areas – finance, education, medicine and law and order are just some areas where benchmark studies have been carried out;
- for academic, scientific and technical research – where new advances and developments may be patented in unfamiliar markets or published in foreign-language journals
- individual interests – including holiday/vacation research, hobby interests, cross-border purchasing for cheaper prices or items not available in home markets, genealogical research and family tracing and so on.
- governmental – including legislative comparisons, police and military intelligence and so on.

Most of these are not new. Cross-border trade, for example, has always required information on foreign markets. Companies, such as Dun & Bradstreet, founded in 1841,² and Reuters, founded in 1851,³ were established to facilitate the flow of information and both set-up a network of offices outside their home countries. Governments collected information (both legally and illicitly), whilst organizations such as the United Nations (UN; and before it, the League of Nations), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Economic Community (now the European Union) encouraged information exchanges between countries for a range of purposes.

Nevertheless the flow of information was limited by the speed of the available technology, and often the best way of

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collecting information on a foreign market was in person. A business looking for information would contact their embassy – and one role of the embassy was to provide information to businesses looking for intelligence on foreign markets using commercial department staff working within the embassy.

This situation continued until the early 1990s when the growth of the Internet and the widening availability of databases and information across the world changed the scene. Today, it is standard for people to search for overseas information that only a couple of decades ago would have been extremely hard and costly to find, even if it had been publicly available.

Key issues for global search

A number of considerations need to be taken into account when searching globally – depending on what information is wanted. First, not all material will be English and so searches may need to be made in non-English language (or Latin character) websites. This has implications on search tools and sometimes local-language search tools will be better for searches. As an example, Baidu.com is the dominant Web search engine in China and generally gives better search results for Chinese-language searches.

Another consideration is comparability. Data from one country may not be comparable with that from another – even though the data descriptions may appear to be the same. As an example, the US gallon is smaller than the UK (Imperial) gallon – the US gallon is 3.8 litres against the imperial gallon at 4.5 litres. Thus, a car with a 50 miles per gallon (mpg) fuel consumption would be more fuel efficient if reported from a US source compared to a UK one.

A famous example highlighting how data can differ across jurisdictions relates to the car manufacturer, Daimler Benz. In 1993, Daimler Benz became the first German company to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Under German accounting standards, Daimler Benz reported a profit of US\$733 million. To be listed in New York, the company was also required to use the US accounting rules. Under the US generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), the company reported a loss of \$589 million – a US\$1.3 billion discrepancy.⁴

Even if data are comparable, it may not be accurate. In some jurisdictions, even official statistics are manipulated. News sources may exhibit political, religious, racial, gender or promotional bias. It is important to be aware of sources for bias, especially when looking at data from unfamiliar localities. Data may also be old, so that what looks like relevant and applicable data may not be if regulations or circumstances have changed between the date the information became available and the current date. As a key example, company annual report information relates to the previous financial year and so can be several months out of date. The data may not reflect the current situation, which has to be

deduced from detailed financial analysis with assumptions that there has been no creative accounting or reporting errors that mask problems.

Finally, often data will be unavailable, limited or incomplete. This is likely to be the case if there is no reason for it to be made available online, or the costs of doing so outweigh any perceived or actual value in making it available.

Why is information online?

When searching for online information, a useful first step is to ask why the information would be available in an online format. Consider reasons why the information is likely to be available and focus on searching for the information source rather than the information itself. As an example, when searching for company information, potential sources likely to hold information include company directories, product directories, official company registrations, trade association memberships, news databases and many other similar sources as well as the company's own website. The exact source will depend on the information required. However, a search for the company name may not turn up anything from many of these sources as the data will be held in a database inaccessible to searches from external sites or will not be search engine optimized and so will not appear in the top search results. As an example, if the company website doesn't include financial data (as is the case for most private, non-quoted companies), company registration databases may do, especially if there is a legal requirement for such data to be made public. A simple search using Google is less likely to turn up anything.

Knowing what is or isn't likely to be available is a problem. This can work both ways. An assumption that information should be findable may lead to much angst, searching for information that is not publicly available. The opposite also occurs – where information may be missed in the belief that such information would never be made public. As examples, Europe is unusual in requiring private, non-quoted companies to publish detailed financials. Most countries have no such requirement and so you cannot expect to find such details. Conversely, taxes paid by individuals are normally viewed as secret. This isn't the case for four countries, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Pakistan, where this information is publicly available (Figure 1).⁶

Information will become available for a range of reasons, for example:

- Regulation – the information is made available to fulfil a regulatory obligation, for example, public company financials.
- 'Expectation' – where information is put online because there is an expectation that it will be available. A lot of public sector information falls into this category. Cultural expectations can also play a part.

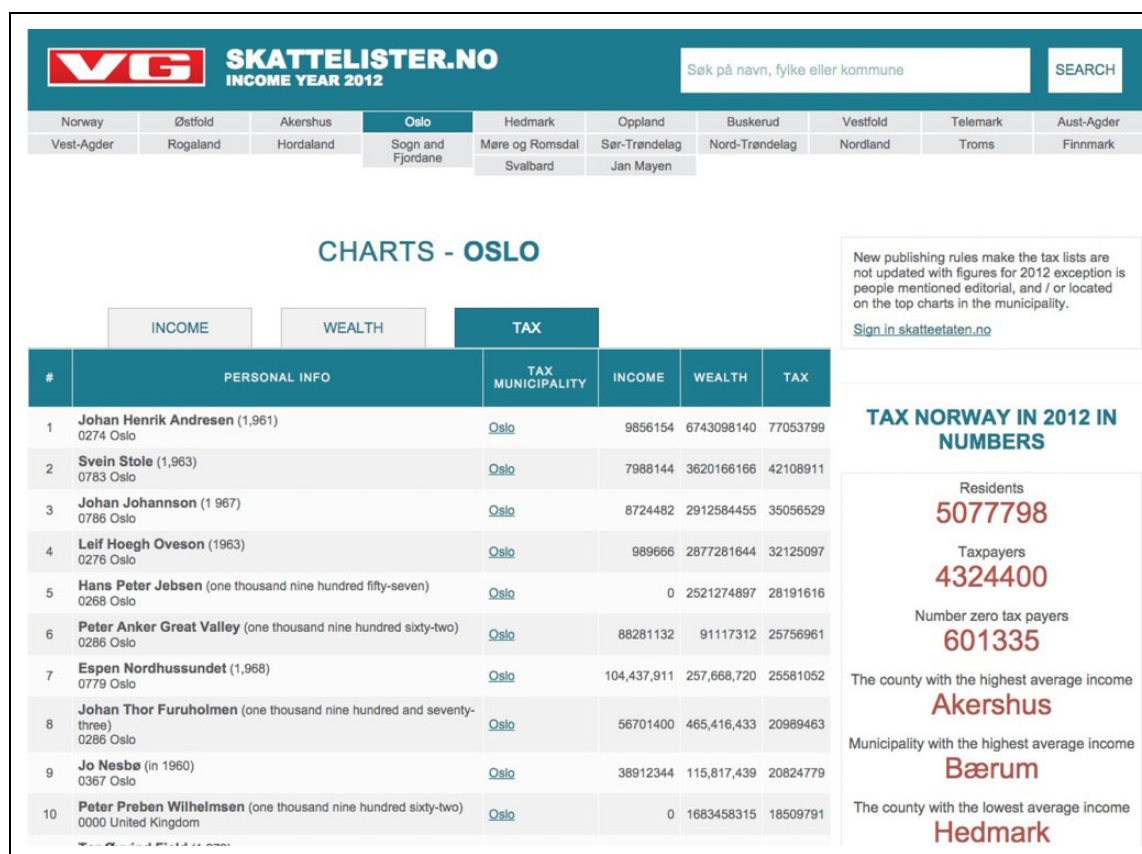


Figure 1. Norwegian Tax Record site⁶ showing top records for Oslo (English translation from Google Translate).

For example, a reason Scandinavian tax records are available is because of the general openness in those cultures. In contrast, Pakistan's recent decision to publish tax records came out of a need to highlight tax avoidance and corruption.⁷

- 'Marketing' – the information is made available to convey a message, sell something or make something public knowledge. This may include also news, propaganda or public information messages.
- In some cases, the audience for such messages will be the home market. Other cases may include foreign publics. The message may even be primarily for foreign markets. For example, the majority of the North Korean population currently has no access to the Internet, yet there are sites such as www.cooks.org.kp (Figure 2). This is described as the website of the Korean Association of Cooks and offers hundreds of recipes for 'housewives' convenience', plus details on North Korean restaurants, and the cooking association.⁸ A test of the North Korean domain (using Hola⁹) – a Google Chrome plug-in that allows for websites to be tested or accessed from different country top-level domains – gave a denial of service error, suggesting that the site may not be available

on the Internet within North Korea, although it may be available on North Korea's internal Kwang-myong intranet.

- Pakistani tax records fall into this marketing public information category – as does www.attendance.gov.in – highlighting the performance and attendance records of government employees in India. This site was also created to counter corruption and high levels of absenteeism among India's bureaucrats.¹⁰
- Community – social media, blogs, discussion forums and so on, where individuals share information about themselves or their interests

The relative importance of each of these will depend on a range of factors with the size and nature of the prospective audience being key.

Global Internet penetration

Internet usage varies across the world from Scandinavian countries, with around a 95 per cent penetration rate of Internet users as a percentage of the overall population to much lower penetration rates. For example, in 2013, only nine African countries had an Internet penetration of higher than



Figure 2. North Korean Association of Cooks.

25 per cent and over half the countries in Africa had under a 10 per cent penetration rate.¹¹ This will mean that the internal requirements for online information in such countries are more limited and, as a result, so will be the overall availability of information online. The number of devices connected to the Internet has recently been visualized on a world map by the search engine, Shodan (shodan.io; Figure 3).¹² This shows the disparities in the Internet access across the world and highlights how different Europe, the US, Japan and a few other developed areas are compared to most of Africa and much of Asia.

Another way of seeing differences is by comparing the number of domains a country has registered, with just over 50 having over 50,000 registered domains using the global top-level domain codes (.com, .org etc.). In contrast, the bottom 50 top-level domains have fewer than 2500 sites between them. These include nations such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Botswana, Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, Somalia, Mauritania and Djibouti in Africa and North Korea, Brunei and Myanmar in Asia.¹³ Looking at country-code top-level domains (ccTLDs; .uk, .fr, etc.), the top 20 largest ccTLDs represent roughly 82 per cent of all ccTLD registrations globally,¹⁴ whilst the majority of, for example, African nations had under 1000 domains registered in 2010 using their ccTLD.¹⁵

The Oxford Internet Institute¹⁶ has produced a number of charts showing global Internet usage – for example, a map showing the geography of TLDs (Figure 4)¹⁷ and another showing the number of results retrieved from Google for searches done on the country name (taking language into account).¹⁸ This latter chart gives a potential indication of the interest each country and region has for Web users. Figures range from almost a billion results for searches looking for the US, over 500 million for the UK, China and Japan, down to under 30 million for Mauritania, Malawi, Burkina Faso, Gabon, the Gambia, Niger, Rwanda, Djibouti, East Timor, Bhutan, Kosovo and a few other (mostly island) territories. Such statistics give an indication of the interest (and so likely availability) of information on different territories.

Searching for information

Sources for information can be categorized in a number of ways – such as by the type of information held by the source or by the type of source. For example, governments hold vast amounts of information of various types. There are also sources that focus on particular types of information – financial, statistical, scientific and so on. When searching for particular information, it is worth considering both the type of source and the type of information likely to be held.

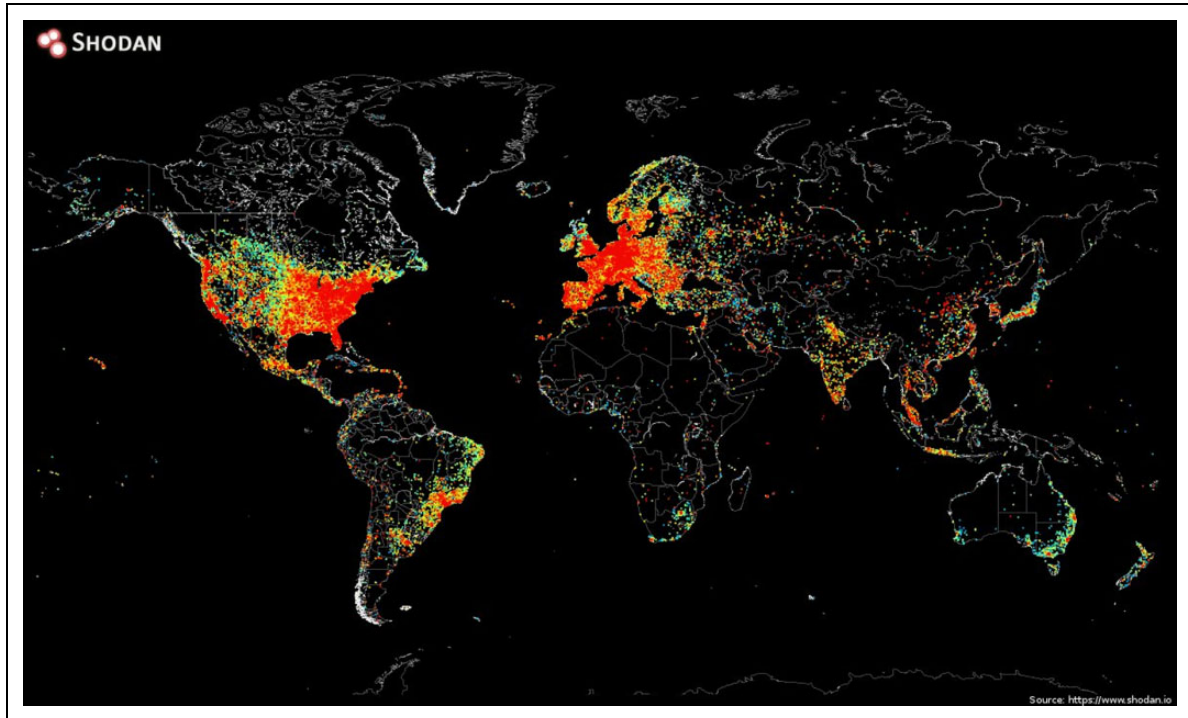


Figure 3. Heat map of Internet connected devices.

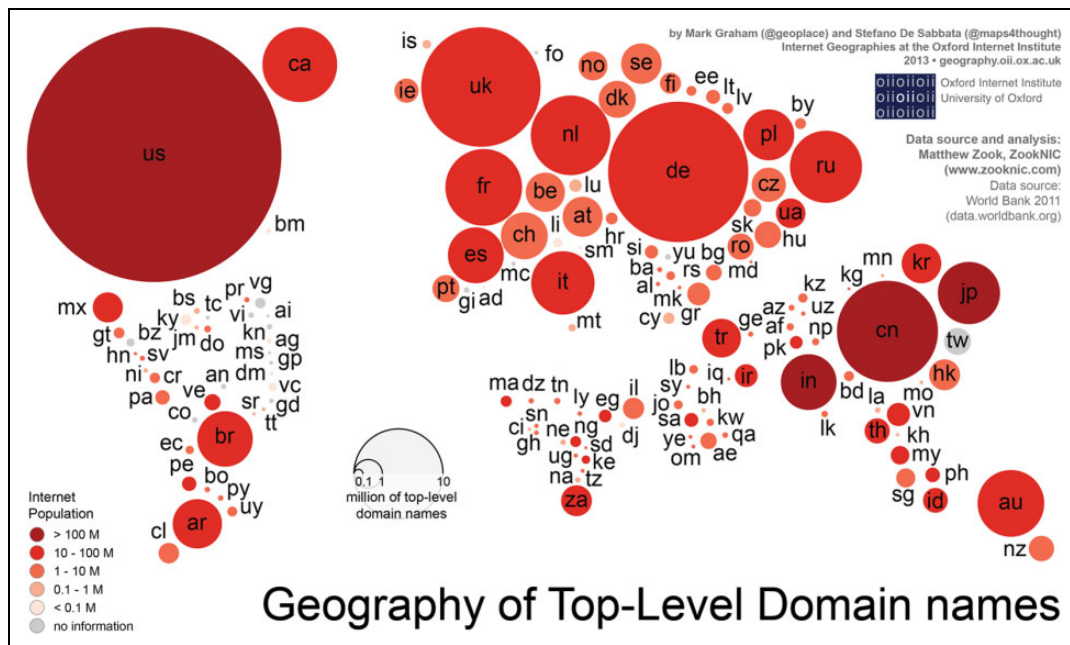


Figure 4. Geography of top level domain names.

Source types include:

- supranational bodies and organizations (e.g. the UN),
- governments and governmental-type organizations,
- public-sector organizations (e.g. many universities),
- private sector organizations (e.g. companies – some of which specialize in selling particular types of information. for instance, marketing research report suppliers), and
- individuals or groups of individuals (e.g. discussion forums).

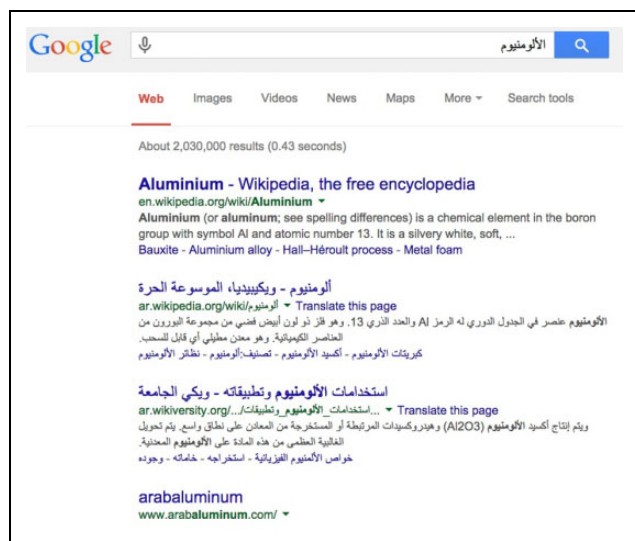


Figure 5. Search on Google for 'aluminium' in Arabic.

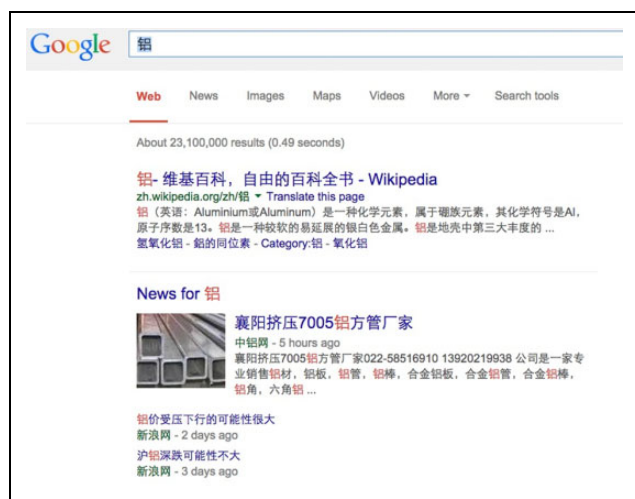


Figure 6. Search on Google for 'aluminium' in Chinese.

Sources can hold multiple information types or specialize, providing only one type or a narrow range of information types.

Sources, which may provide data for free or require payment and a subscription, can be searched directly by visiting the relevant sites (and using any available site search) or found by using a search engine or proprietary search service. (Within a library type environment there are also a number of services that enable finding particular information held in the library collection. These services usually have a more general focus and can be valuable. However, they are usually specific to the collection and library access and so are outside the scope of this article.)

Using search engines

The start point when searching for foreign information is to consider the country and language required. Can a search be

done in English or will it need to be in the local language? What keywords should be used, and if using automatic translation tools such as translate.com or Google Translate (translate.google.com), are these sufficiently accurate for technical terms or idioms?

Searches – even where spellings are the same – will give different results when using localized search engines (e.g. Baidu for China, Yandex for Russia, local country versions of Google etc.). The focus will be the local market, so a search for *aluminium* in Google.com will give different results to the same search on Google.com.au (Australia), which will give Australian sites first, or Google.de (Germany) where results will tend to be from German language sites.

It is generally worth searching in the local language rather than English. For example, a search for aluminium in Arabic (الألمنيوم) will mostly result in Arabic-language pages (Figure 5). Similar searches in Chinese (Figure 6) and other non-Latin character languages give pages in those languages. In this context, spelling matters. When spellings are different in different countries, even searches on Google.com will give different results as, for example, with searches for *aluminum* (the US spelling) versus *aluminium* (non-US spelling).

Although there are search directories that cover most countries (with lists at www.philb.com/countryse.htm and www.arnoldit.com/lists/intlsearch.asp), there are only a few genuinely local search engines. These include Baidu.com (China), Yandex.com (Slavic countries e.g. Russia), Naver.com (South Korea) and Seznam.cz (Czech Republic). Google currently has over 190 local versions,¹⁹ ranging from Google Andorra (google.ad) to Google Zimbabwe (google.co.zw) and including some regional versions (e.g. google.cat – for Catalonia). In 2013, Google was the dominant search engine in almost all countries, exceptions being China (Baidu, with 360-Search (so.com) as number 2), Japan (Yahoo Japan, with a 53 per cent share followed by Google Japan), Russian (Yandex, with a 62 per cent share, followed by Google) and South Korea (Naver, with 72 per cent share followed by Daum).²⁰

Source examples

There are a number of sources that are particularly useful when looking for global information. Mostly these specialize in particular types of information or contain links to national information sources. Some, especially supranational organizations, can provide global data – allowing for country comparisons to be made. These include the UN²¹ and its agencies such as the World Bank,²² the World Health Organization (WHO),²³ the International Monetary Fund (IMF),²⁴ the International Telecommunications Union,²⁵ the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)²⁶ and several others. For example, WIPO data include statistical profiles on each UN member country, covering patent

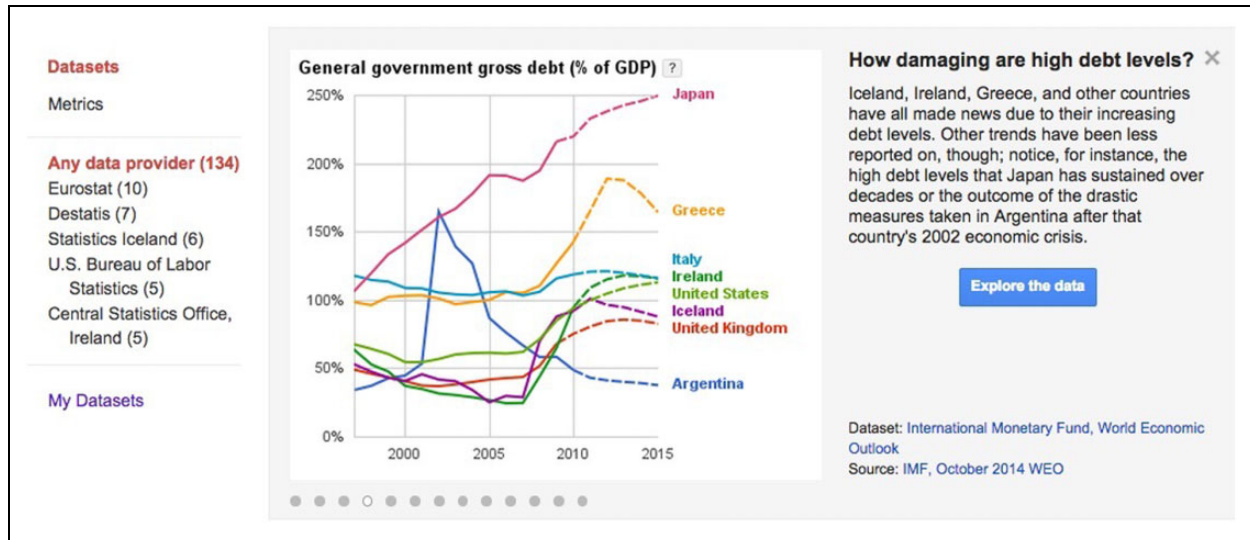


Figure 7. Google Public Data example.

filings, trademarks and the various dimensions of intellectual property activity.²⁷

Other supranational organizations include the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD),²⁸ NATO,²⁹ the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries³⁰ and the International Atomic Energy Agency.³¹

Regional information sources

There are also several regional organizations with information on both the region and countries making up the region (Figure 7).

The EU is the most developed, with an extensive infrastructure and a mass of information on member countries held on its websites³² and databases. These include:

- tenders made with member countries,³³
- the European Central Bank,³⁴
- Eurostat – the European Union statistical agency,³⁵
- the European Union's External Action agency, with information on EU delegations and activities globally,³⁶
- the EU Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market (OHIM), focusing on trademarks and designs³⁷ and including the European Trademark and Design database for searching both EU country trademarks and OHIM and WIPO data,³⁸
- Espacenet, holding European (and global) patent data,³⁹
- the Community Research & Development Information Service – the European Commission's primary public repository and portal to disseminate information on all EU-funded research projects and their results,⁴⁰

- The European Environment Agency holding data on climate change, carbon dioxide emissions, pollution control and other environmental topics,⁴¹
- the European Food Safety Authority,⁴²

and several others.

Other supranational organizations with data on their members include the African Union,⁴³ the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN),⁴⁴ the Arab League,⁴⁵ The (British) Commonwealth,⁴⁶ Mercosur (the Southern Common Market),⁴⁷ the Southern African Development Community⁴⁸ and a number of others. Some have extensive statistical data, whereas others only include brief information on member countries along with organizational data, policy decisions and similar details. A list of the main regional supranational organizations is held on Wikipedia.⁴⁹

General and official data sources

In line with the above global and regional organizations, there are many sources that hold statistical and other data on multiple countries and regions. These include the *CIA Factbook*, which provides information on the history, people, government, economy, geography, communications, transportation, military and transnational issues for 267 world entities⁵⁰ and Google's Public Data initiative.⁵¹ Google's Public Data uses data from the World Bank, Eurostat, the IMF and over a 100 other sources to display statistics on countries and regions. These can be displayed as line graphs, bar graphs, cross-sectional plots and maps (Figure 8).

An excellent website listing official statistics globally can be found on the website of University of Auckland, New Zealand. The Offstats database⁵² lists official statistical

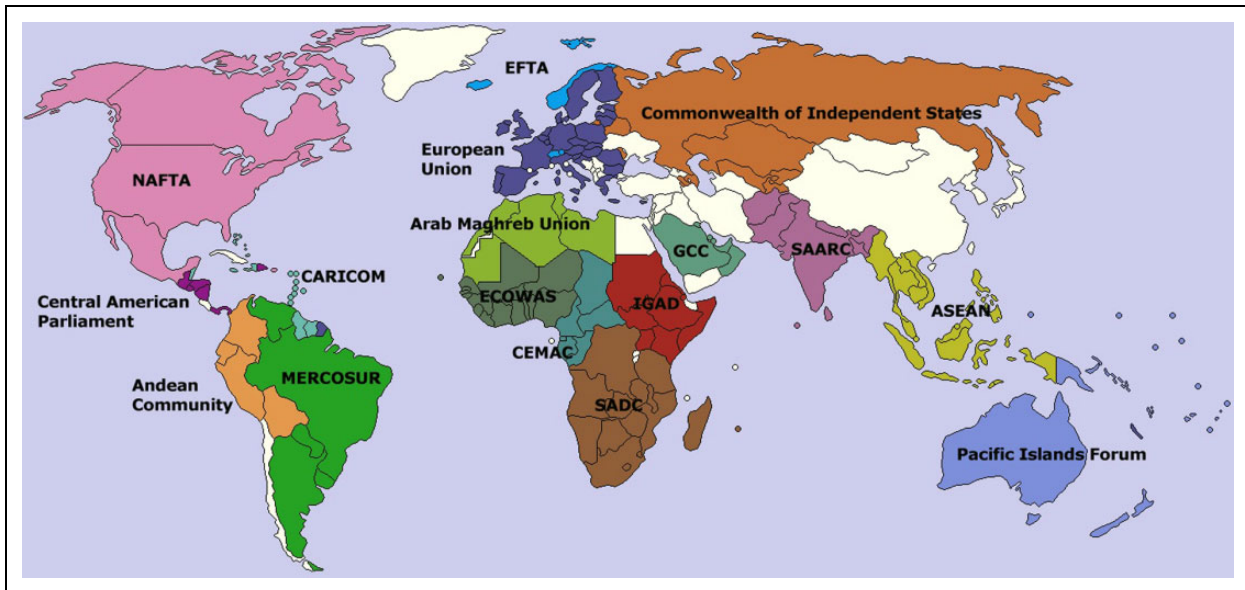


Figure 8. Regional supranational organizations (Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supranational_union#mediaviewer/File:Regional_Organizations_Map.png).

sources and databases by region, country, subject or a combination of these (e.g. country and subject). The numbers of sources provided depend on the country and topic. Some include multiple databases, whilst others only have a single data source (or redirect to a larger group source).

Subjects range from abortion (with information coming from the UN's Millennium Development Goals Indicators Database⁵³ holding data on 189 nations) to youth and youth suicide (with eight databases – including OECD databases, the UK National Health Service, a South Australian database on parenting and child health⁵⁴ and the US-based Child Trends Databank.⁵⁵

Regions covered are Africa, America (Caribbean), America (Central or Latin), America (North), America (South), Andean Community, Arab states, ASEAN, Asia, Asia (South East), Baltic Sea Region (Nordic Countries), Commonwealth of Independent States, EU, Europe, Islamic Countries (Organization of Islamic Cooperation), Middle East, OECD, Pacific, World, with numerous global and regional data sources including the World Bank, OECD, African Development Bank, Afristat, Caribbean Development Bank, WHO, North American Transportation Statistics Database, the IMF, European Automobile Manufacturers Association and others.

The countries option includes both countries and some self-governing territories such as Gibraltar, Guernsey, Greenland and the Isle of Man. Territories such as the Balearic Islands, Ceuta and Mellia are excluded, although the Canary Islands are included as are the French Overseas territories (Guadeloupe, Reunion, French Guiana, etc.). Also listed are some disputed and unrecognized territories such as Kosovo, South Ossetia, Somaliland, Transnistria and Western Sahara.

Sources can be categorized as:

- specifically national, including government departments, national statistics, national trade bodies, the national bank etc;
- regional (e.g. the EU data);
- global (e.g. data from supranational bodies such as the World Bank, WHO etc.) as well as the NationMaster database,⁵⁶ which combines statistics to profile countries globally. (Some NationMaster sources are more reliable than others. Sources include several of those mentioned, such as the CIA Factbook. They also include Wikipedia and some self-reported sources, for example, for adherents to some religions they will include church membership statistics.); and
- topic specific (e.g. a database from the University of Groningen Growth & Development Centre, which includes a data set on comparative historical national accounts from between 1870 and 1950⁵⁷ and databases from the Joint Oil Data Exercise, combining data from six international organizations and providing current data on oil produced in 63 countries and gas produced in 45 countries.⁵⁸

Financial and investigative resources

Whereas Offstats lists sources holding official statistics, the Investigative Dashboard⁵⁹ includes links to over 450 online databases across 120 jurisdictions providing information on the shareholders, directors and the financial reports of companies worldwide. The databases are organized by country, with many free of charge. The dashboard also includes a

crowdsourced database of information and documents on persons of interest and their business connections and as such is a unique resource for financial investigative research globally.

The Investigative Dashboard was developed by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project⁶⁰ along with the Google Ideas⁶¹ project, as a transnational collaborative effort aimed at helping researchers expose organized crime and corruption globally. It allows researchers to uncover financial details and the aim is to support investigative research.

There are also sources focusing on business aspects such as the ease of doing business, the openness of data and business/governmental corruption. Transparency International⁶² monitors countries for corruption, at all levels, and scores and ranks them. The Open Knowledge Foundation⁶³ is an advocate organization promoting data openness – and also scores countries on a number of aspects – to create a ranking of looking at the availability of information.⁶⁴ These sorts of measures can then be used to rank countries on their ease of doing business. The World Bank has done this, creating a ranking using measures such as the ease of starting a business, getting electricity, registering property, getting credit and other business aspects.⁶⁵

Subscription financial information services include D&B,⁶⁶ offering credit and company information services globally, and Skyfinder,⁶⁷ an aggregator of global credit information/financial information services. Bureau van Dijk⁶⁸ products include databases covering company information globally such as *Amadeus* covering financials across Europe, *bankscope* looking at global banks, *oriana* focusing on company information for the Asia Pacific region and *orbis* and *MintGlobal* giving global corporate data. Bureau van Dijk also offers data on most European countries, mergers and acquisitions databases and a number of databases from the Economist Intelligence Unit,⁶⁹ giving global information (e.g. EIU CountryData, EIU WorldInvestmentService).

News sources

News sources include subscription services from Factiva,⁷⁰ Proquest Dialog,⁷¹ Lexis-Nexis,⁷² Highbeam⁷³ and others. These offer aggregated information from the world's newspapers and journals, including archive data going back many years. As such, they can prove invaluable and cost-effective as a way of monitoring global news.

Free sources include the news search options from Google⁷⁴ and Yahoo!⁷⁵ both offering search facilities and the latest news globally, although neither offer the full range that the subscription services offer. Further some quality newspapers and journals are subscription only and as a result limit access to their sites, meaning that a subscription to the news source or one of the subscriptions services is needed if these sources are to be included in any search.

Global news is also obtainable on dedicated news services such as Newsnow⁷⁶ and Silobreaker.⁷⁷ Both these sites offer a free search option and a subscription search giving more features. Newsnow claims over 44,000 sources in 20 languages from 146 countries, covering national, regional and international press as well as TV news, online magazines, blogs and so on. Silobreaker offers analysis options where news stories can be cross-linked, enabling common threads to be monitored. The site also provides graphical options, allowing for key aspects to be highlighted and trends to be monitored.

Other more specialist aggregation and news services include sites such as the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI)⁷⁸ and Africacheck.⁷⁹ MEMRI looks at the Middle East and South Asia by reporting on media trends in this region, offering translations of Arabic, Farsi, Urdu-Pashtu and Dari media, alongside analysis of the political and societal trends in the region.

AfricaCheck focuses on fact-checking news stories and claims from Africa. It is a non-profit organization devised by the AFP Foundation,⁸⁰ the media development arm of the AFP News agency.⁸¹ Although the focus is currently Southern Africa, the aim is to expand with new operations covering East and West Africa. Africacheck works with both traditional and community-based media, providing reports on topics as aspects, such as health, electricity, road infrastructure and so on, in the region.

News wire services such as AFP and Reuters⁸² are also sources for global news. Local news wires such as the Qatar-funded, Al Jazeera⁸³ and the Chinese official Xinhua news service⁸⁴ are also useful for gaining information from a local or regional perspective (e.g. from an Arab/Middle East perspective for Al Jazeera). This can allow for the unique national perspective for particular countries, especially where censorship restricts information availability or adds a level of bias to what is available.

In case of the aggregation services, it can also be worth locating local newspapers. NewspaperMap⁸⁵ provides a mash-up adding local newspapers globally onto a world-map, with links to the relevant newspaper sites obtainable by clicking on markers (Figure 9(a)). (Note that although most are English language, a few are published in other languages as indicated by the non-yellow dots. National newspapers are indicated by the coloured pins and local/regional newspapers by the smaller dots; Figure 9(b).)

Other sources

The sources listed above are a small selection of those available for searching global information. There are sources for marketing, scientific and genealogical research; economic, statistical and trade data and other areas.

Product information is available from the Kompas databases,⁸⁶ covering goods and services available in 70 markets globally (with both free and subscription services). Panjiva⁸⁷

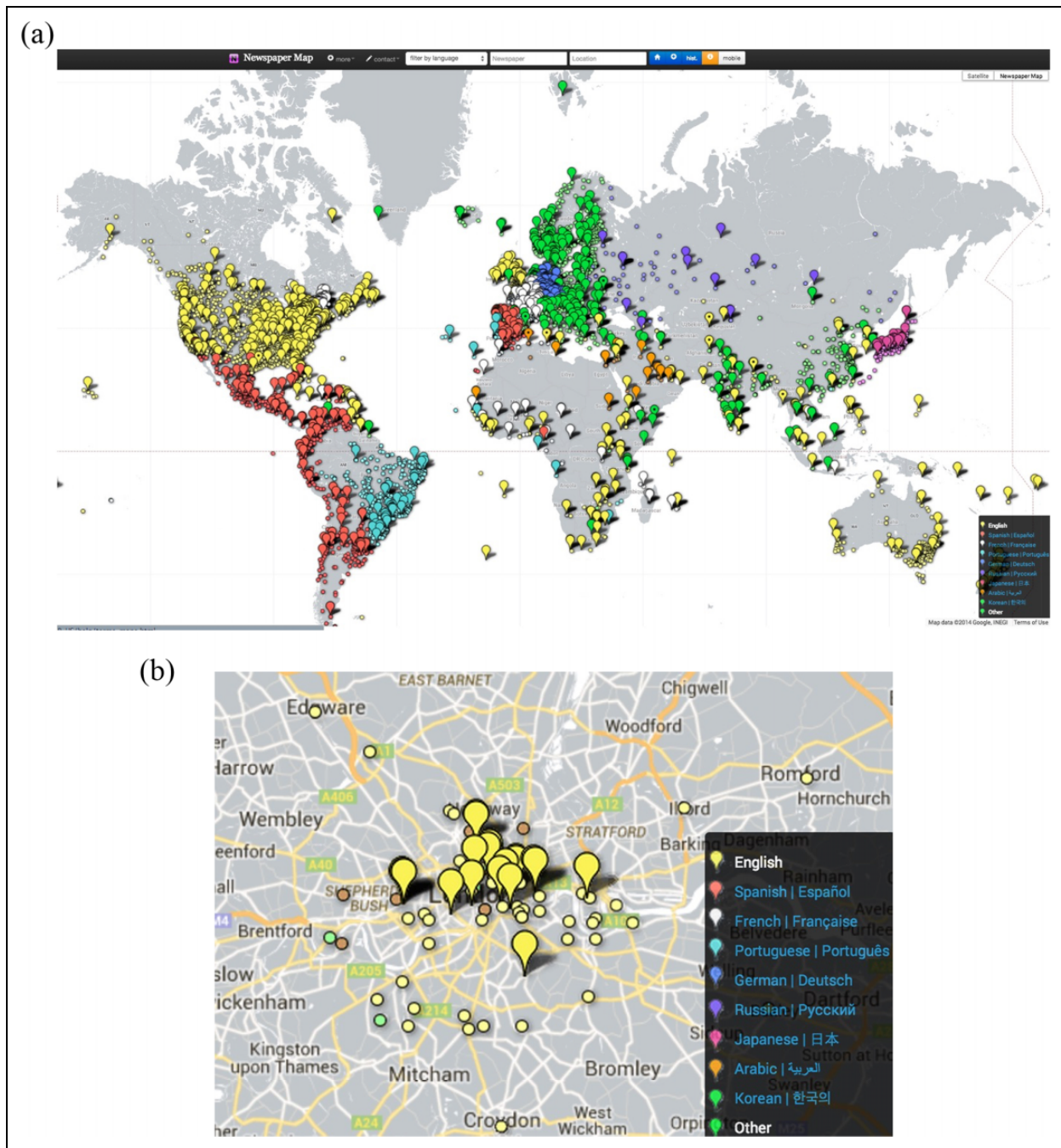


Figure 9. (a) Newspapermap.com, showing global newspapers. (b) Newspapermap.com – showing London area newspapers.

offers information on what companies are importing and exporting globally using data from US Customs, ETCN (Export to China) (Chinese import/export data) and Latin American import/export shipment data. Panjiva does not currently hold data on shipments outside these markets, for example, trade between EU countries, between the UK and India or Japan and so on. It also focuses on product shipments and so does not include services or electronic products not subject to customs duties.

Market Research suppliers provide reports on a range of topics and industries – by country and region – showing trends and changes. Market research aggregators such as MarketResearch.com⁸⁸ and companies and markets⁸⁹ provide search and purchase facilities for reports from a large number of commercial suppliers.

Free services such as Indexmundi,⁹⁰ Knoema⁹¹ and Trading Economics⁹² provide a range of economic statistics. These services use data from some of the official

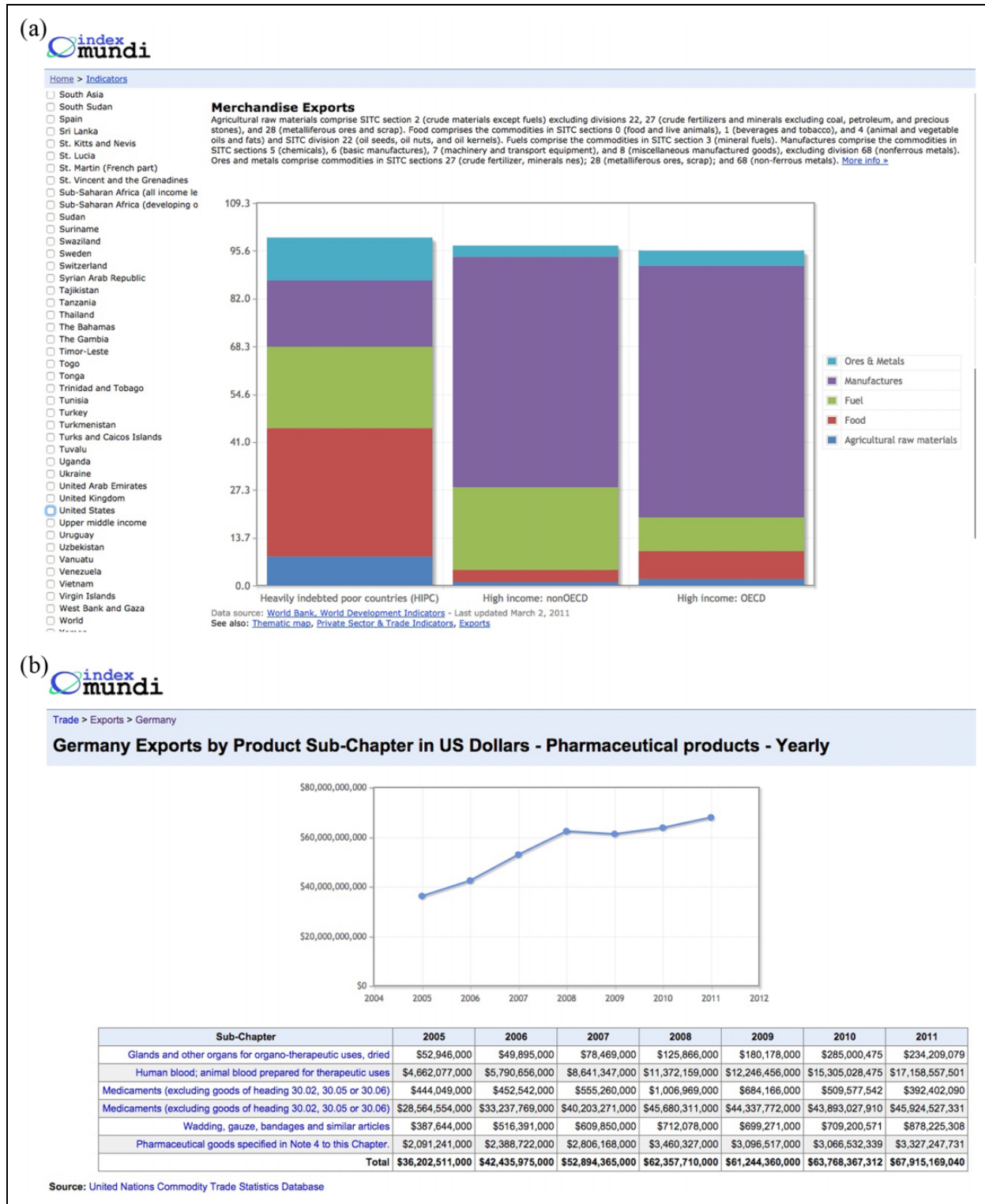


Figure 10. (a) IndexMundi bar chart showing breakdown of exports comparing high income and indebted countries. (b) IndexMundi graph showing growth of pharmaceutical product exports in Germany between 2005 and 2011.

sources already mentioned, but as they focus on specific areas simplify finding the information and, like Google Publicdata, allow for data to be shown in visual formats.

IndexMundi includes country facts using data from the World Bank, allowing comparisons on over 1200 indicators grouped into the following sections: Economic Policy &

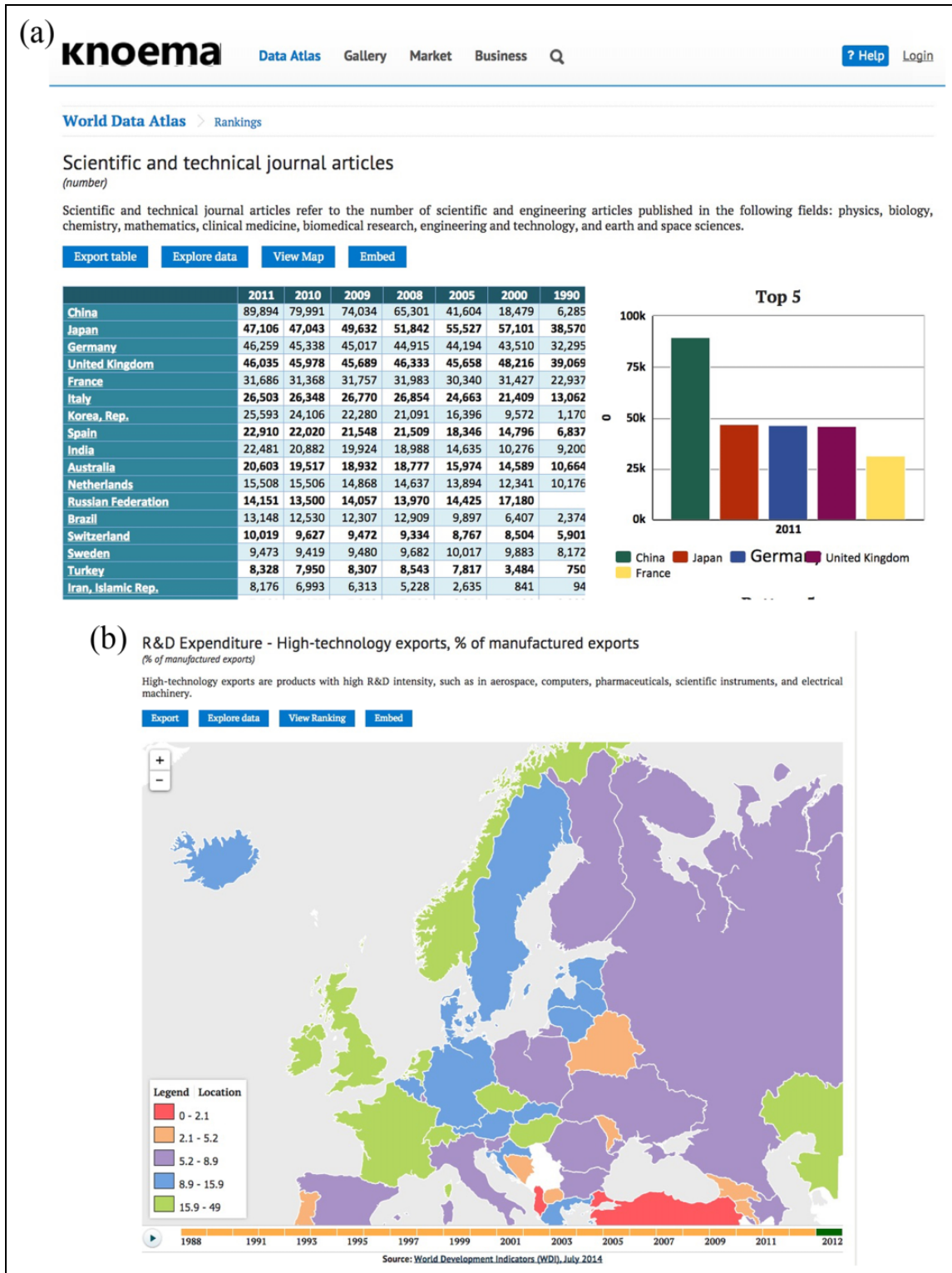


Figure 11. (a) Knoema country ranking showing numbers of scientific and technical journal articles published as of July 2014. (b) Knoema map showing high-technology exports as a percentage of manufactured exports. Source: <http://knoema.com/sys/browse/WBWDIGDF2014Sep>

Debt, Education, Finance, Health, Infrastructure, Labour & Social Protection, Poverty, Private Sector & Trade, Public Sector. Indicators in the Education section look at the

percentage of children (by gender), reaching specific educational levels, expenditures, teacher numbers, pupil-teacher ratios, tertiary education, literacy and other measures.

The site also facilitates the production of graphs and maps comparing different countries on their demographic, economic, infrastructure and import/export measures. These include detailed breakdowns of product import and export classes (Figure 10(a) and (b)).

Knoema takes data from over 500 sources, comprising over 6300 databases. Databases range from the *Academic Ranking of World Universities* to the *World Trade Organization* and include sources such as the *World Chess Federation* (two databases), the *World Gold Council* giving gold prices over time, an *Angus Maddison database* from the University of Groningen giving historical economic statistics and statistics from the *Bangalore City Traffic Police* from India. Data are presented in a range of formats, depending on the nature of the information. This can be as tables, graphs or interactive maps, giving country and regional breakdowns (Figure 11(a) and (b)).

The primary focus of trading economics is economic data, and the site gives a large range of economic statistical data of all types – from domestic car sales by country, tax rates, inflation rates and many more. Data include tabular, bar chart and textual analysis of the various statistics included on the site.

Summary

Searching globally is never easy. Not all data are available to the same levels in different markets and often data, where it is available, aren't comparable. Finding information on foreign markets will often require out-of-the-box thinking on whether it will be available and why. Information can be found using search engines and directories, preferably using local language rather than generic google.com. Information can also be found from numerous specialist sites, focusing on countries, regions and data types. These include national statistical databases, data from supranational organizations including the EU and other bodies, specialist databases such as the University of Auckland, New Zealand's Offstats database or the Knoema website, which provides access to several thousand international databases plus a range of news, subscription and pay-to-use sources. This article distils the author's experience for building on by others working in global information.

Notes

All weblinks were accessed between 19 September 2014 and 31 October 2014.

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