



Data-Planet Opens Up a Universe of Statistics to SAGE

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Beginning in 1878, the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* was the go-to title for information about all aspects of demographics in the country. In 2012, it ceased publication, and various private publishing agencies were left to fill in the gap. According to Richard Landry, founder and CEO of Conquest Systems, Inc., his company's **Data-Planet** repository already had 70% of the material in the *Statistical Abstract*, so it was well-positioned to carry that torch.

How It Started

Early in the 21st century, Conquest Systems was a government contractor, and the Data-Planet statistical database grew at a healthy rate. Then it was carried by LexisNexis, and with that association came its first experience with academic librarians. It was a happy convergence, as the librarians had lots of suggestions, and the company developed a reputation for a being good listener. Soon it had added citations and export options to Data-Planet.

From 2010 to 2012, Data-Planet was distributed by ProQuest and then became a standalone operation for 5 years. In January 2018, it joined with **SAGE**, which Landry described as a marriage made in heaven.

What's Inside

When using Data-Planet, you may search for data from any one of the affiliated providers. These include several of the core departments of the U.S. Government—such as Agriculture, Labor, Treasury, and Veterans Affairs—as well as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Office of Management and Budget, the Federal Reserve Board, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Federal Election Commission, among many other agencies. Commercial providers include Dow Jones, Standard & Poor's, and Zillow. International organizations include the China Data Center, the United Nations, the World Bank Group, and the European Commission. Major nonprofit entries are the National Cancer Institute and the National Science Foundation. Landry says that Data-Planet is maintaining a steady controlled growth, adding new sources each month.

The capabilities of containing all of this data in one standardized playing field lead to some impressive numbers. Data-Planet estimates that in the nearly 500 databases covered, there are more than 50 billion datapoints.

If a library subscribes to statistical services not covered by Data-Planet, the company's **Data Hosting Services** option allows it to work with the provider to create a custom inclusion. Data-Planet also offers a streamlined interface to all subscribers, **Data Planet Statistical Ready Reference**. Another strategy for making this huge program manageable is the large selection of **LibGuides** available on its website that give specific information about the major categories, such as Education, International Relations and Trade, and Population and Income.

Trying Out the Program

Taking advantage of a free preview, I was struck immediately by the clean look of the Data-Planet interface. On the left side of the screen, there are facets allowing you to pick datasets from sources or subjects.

The preponderance of the information is U.S. data, but unlike the *Statistical Abstract*, there is substantial coverage for the entire world. First, I chose the simple topic Bankruptcies. Data-Planet serves the datasets up in terms such as All Bankruptcies, Chapter Seven Bankruptcies, and Chapter 11 Bankruptcies. I consider myself a fairly aware observer of current events, so I expected to see a big spike in late 2008. The first chart showed a big spike, all right, but it was in 2005. As I passed through the personal and business bankruptcies, this spike was always there. (Some research showed that the spike was due to people rushing to file before a tougher bankruptcy law went into effect later in the year.)

Then, following advice from Landry, as seen on a **YouTube video**, I took advantage of a powerful Data-Planet feature: You can add a second line chart from any other datapoint in its library, even if you are looking at numbers provided by entirely different publishers. For my first chart, I looked at library attendance. This time, I was not surprised to see that attendance peaked in 2009. In library school (University of Arizona, class of 1989), I learned that the tougher the times, the more people need their libraries. Then I invoked a second dataset called the Misery Index. Sure enough, the lines over the last 8 years exactly followed those of the original chart.

The actual numbers for both sets were displayed in a box on the right side of the screen, with color coding to match the lines in the graph. I checked out the options to export this data and found a rich supply, including PDF, XML, specially created URLs, RefWorks, and EndNote.

Data-Planet's Audience

A Google search quickly confirms that the main audience for this service is academic libraries. I found references to the libraries at the University of Washington, the University of Missouri, New York University, and many others.

Landry told me that, similar to most such databases, pricing is based on institutional FTE (full-time equivalency) enrollment counts. There are several payment options. One is to buy the data as it exists at the time of purchase and then pay an annual fee for later updates.

Landry said that subscribers like the power of knowing every year exactly what new data they are paying for. The other option is a straight annual subscription fee.

What's Coming

In the future, I would expect Data-Planet to increase its presence in public libraries. Now that it is 6 months into its acquisition by SAGE, Landry reports that being part of this enterprise has made data providers more receptive to partnering with the company. Also, he sees a lot of possibility in establishing links to data that is already found in the SAGE holdings.

<http://newsbreaks.infotoday.com/NewsBreaks/DataPlanet-Opens-Up-a-Universe-of-Statistics-to-SAGE-126721.asp>