



Searching Tobacco Industry Documents: Basic Information, Steps and Hints

As part of its settlement agreements with a number of U.S. states, the tobacco industry was forced to disclose millions of pages of internal documents, a large percentage of which are now publicly available on the World Wide Web. These documents have provided important revelations – from the tobacco industry's role in facilitating cigarette smuggling to industry efforts to enhance the addictiveness of cigarettes – which have helped spur legislative and regulatory action. The continuing challenge for tobacco control advocates is how to search through these documents, find the most relevant documents for legislative and regulatory efforts and then use them to good effect.

Document Web Sites for U.S.-based Tobacco Companies

There is a plethora of document web sites, some more user-friendly than others. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has compiled links to all of the major document sites at: <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/industry-docs/docsites.htm>. On this page one can find direct links to a number of documents sites, including:

Brown & Williamson (the U.S. subsidiary of British American Tobacco)
<http://www.bw.aalatg.com/>

Council for Tobacco Research
<http://www.ctr-usa.org/ctr/>

Lorillard Tobacco Company
<http://www.lorillarddocs.com/>

Minnesota Blue Cross/Blue Shield Tobacco Litigation
<http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/industry-docs/mnbluecross.htm>

R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company
<http://www.rjrtdocs.com/rjrtdocs.com/frames.jsc>

Philip Morris
<http://www.pmdocs.com>

The Tobacco Institute
<http://www.tobaccoinstitute.com/>

University of California at San Francisco's Brown & Williamson Collection
<http://galen.library.ucsf.edu/tobacco/bw.html>

U.S. Committee on Commerce Document Website
<http://www.house.gov/commerce/TobaccoDocs/documents.html>

Other Important Sites

<http://www.tobaccodocuments.org>
A meta-site which allows you to search multiple websites at once as well as look at various collections that researchers have compiled.

<http://www.ash.org.uk/links/industry.html>
Links to document sites and compilations of quotes from industry documents.

British American Tobacco Documents:

British American Tobacco (BAT) was allowed to place its documents in a separate repository in Guildford, England rather than placing them online.¹ A limited subset of these documents can be found online at: <http://www.cctc.ca/ncth/guildford/> and <http://outside.cdc.gov:8080/BASIS/ncc/tld/web/guildford/sf>

Getting Started

For beginners, the Philip Morris site is one of the easiest to use and contains a large number of useful documents. Becoming proficient with this site first will help advocates better understand the more difficult sites.

How to Begin:

The best way to explain how to use the document sites is to start with an example. Let's say you want to know about Philip Morris's marketing plans in China. If you go to the Philip Morris document site, <http://www.pmdocs.com/> and type the word "China" as your search criteria, you will find this search returns 2,231 documents – clearly too many to look through. To narrow your search further, add the phrase "and marketing" to the search criteria. A search of "China and marketing" returns 108 documents. This is much better, but still an unwieldy number. Let's say you first want to look at sports sponsorships. Add the word "sports" to the search criteria, so it reads "China and marketing and sports." This search

will return 11 documents, including a 1991 marketing plan for Asia (<http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2504051532/1658>), a 1994 plan to boost sponsorship of national and regional football in Asia (<http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2504051355A/1404>) and a 1990 speech detailing Philip Morris's promotional activities in Asia, including sponsorships and point of sale promotions (<http://www.pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2504034844/4875>).

Bear in mind that the search engines on the sites are only able to search the indices of the documents, rather than entire text of the document. Thus, those documents which contain the term "China" in the text, but not in the index, will not appear in a search for that term.

Search Tips and Tactics

When searching, keep a pad of paper handy to record code names of special projects, interesting terms, employee names and titles and other words of interest that could aid in later searches.

Keywords:

Aside from specific search terms, there are some more generic keywords to keep in mind:

"Memo" (written correspondence between company employees)

"Plan" (can help you find country-wide marketing plans)

"Letter" (written correspondence, usually with people outside the company)

"Publication" (articles published in journals or other periodicals)

"Article" (usually a newspaper or magazine article)

"Telex" (the industry's word for e-mail as well as overseas telexes)

"Confidential" – To help find the most confidential information, you can also try adding the terms "attorney work product" or just "work product" to your search criteria. Some of the most sensitive documents were given this designation in an attempt to shield them from the public.

- As you will find out when you start searching, the companies use code names and acronyms for many of their campaigns, internal studies, and research projects. Examples include "Project 16," "Operation Downunder" and "FUBYAS" (an R.J. Reynolds acronym for "First Unbranded Young Adult Smokers"). These code names and acronyms can help you zero in on a particular project while excluding many extraneous documents.
- The courts have placed a unique "Bates Number" on each page of every document. These identifying numbers are stamped on the page, usually vertically, on the lower left corner of each document. Record the Bates numbers of important documents to use as references and make them easier to find again.
- Note the names and titles of the employees on the documents that you find. Often, one executive is put in charge of a company's political and/or marketing activities in a certain part of the world. Searching for documents authored by this person can reveal a cache of information about how the industry acted in certain countries. Also, these executives usually turned in regular reports to their headquarters about their division's activities. These reports can be a tremendous source of information.

Storing Documents for Later Use:

The Philip Morris, Lorillard and Tobacco Institute sites all allow you to "bookmark" documents. Any docu-

ments that you think are particularly important or that you might need in the future should be bookmarked. To do this, hit the "view all pages" button, and then in your browser hit the "add bookmarks" button. If you are using Internet Explorer it will prompt you to type in an identifying phrase into the "bookmark properties" while with Netscape you will have to go into the "edit bookmarks" section to type in the phrase. If you do not add these annotations, your bookmarks will just say "image viewer" and will not reflect the contents of the document itself, or even the title.

Where to Go for Further Help

- The search instructions posted at each site contain basic information that every document researcher should read before searching. These contain vital instructions such as how to properly format search terms. Always read these instructions before proceeding! Consult the examples offered within them as your first step in addressing problems.
- You may also be able to get assistance from other experienced researchers by joining the tobacco industry document discussion list "doc-talk" and "intl doc-talk" on the web. To sign up for these lists, go to: <http://www.smokescreen.org>

Technical Requirements

Internet Connection Speed: A modem and phone line which support a 28.8 kbps (baud rate) should be adequate for viewing documents without being so slow as to be completely frustrating. At this speed, an average page of text should take between 5-7 seconds to load, while a 50-page document could take six to eight minutes to load. Higher-speed internet connections (such as DSL, ISDN, satellite or wire-



less services) offer faster download times but cost more and generally are only available in major urban centers.

Processing Speed: To view the documents it is recommended to have a minimum of 32 MB of RAM – upgrading the amount of RAM is relatively simple on most computers.

Software: In order to view the documents, you will need a recent version of a web browser such as Internet Explorer (<http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/search.asp?>) or Netscape Navigator (<http://home.netscape.com/computing/download/>) which can be downloaded for free. You will also want a copy of Adobe Acrobat, a file-viewing program which can also be downloaded for free at (<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html>) The Brown & Williamson website requires its own unique viewer which you can download free at their site.

Other Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How do I find a document if I only have the Bates number?

A. If, after typing in the Bates number on the appropriate site, you get the response “no records match your search”, you’ll need to try substituting a wildcard symbol (*) for the last digit in the Bates number. If that doesn’t work, try substituting two wildcards for the last two digits of the number. The idea is to find numbers that are very close to the one you’re looking for. Also, some sites respond to entering the Bates number of the starting page instead of the number for the entire document.

Q. Do all the sites respond to narrowing searches by using the word “and”?

A. No, on some sites you have to use a symbol (such as the “+” sign) to indicate the search term “and.” Read the search directions on each site to find out whether words or symbols are used on each site for terms like “and” or “or.”

Q. How should I search for phrases, like Philip Morris? Do I type in Philip Morris or Philip and Morris?

A. To find every occurrence of the company name *Philip Morris* you would type it exactly the way the name of the company appears. Likewise, if you want to find every occurrence of the two-word phrase *political strategy*, type the two words together just like that. However, if you want to find every document with both the words *political* and *strategy* contained somewhere in the description but not necessarily together, enter as the search criteria *political and strategy*.

Q. What about my privacy? Will the tobacco companies know it's me searching?

A. Visiting some of the sites will result in markers (or “cookies”) being imbedded into your browser, which tells the companies where people go on the site and what they view. Currently there is no way of linking this information back to an individual, but cookies can be set up to identify the internet service provider you are using. All browsers allow you to either block cookies or delete them after each session.

Q. Is there any way to copy the text of a document into my word processor?

A. No, outside of re-typing it verbatim. You should print documents out directly from the site while you are online. For those sites that allow you to view and print documents in PDF format, you can save the document to your computer by clicking the “save” icon. It is possible to use a scanner to scan in the text from a printout, although the character recognition software is still somewhat crude.

Q. I've tried searching for a particular word or phrase but get nothing. How can I have a more productive search?

A. Be creative. Think of every other possible phrase that could possibly turn up something on the subject for which you are searching. If you’re looking for information about China, also try phrases like “far east,” or “Asia”. Most importantly, read carefully what you do find. The more you read, the more terms you will discover that will return a productive search. Take note of the authors’ names, the jargon and acronyms that the companies use to refer to particular regions, projects, marketing techniques, etc. and then start searching for documents with those words and names.

¹ Researchers wishing to view these documents must contact Marilyn Gilbey at BAT to set up an appointment (tel. 44-171-845-1466; fax. 44-171-845-2783).