# **Connect with Open Data**

# **Handout 7: Proprietary or Paid Data**

**WHAT TO DO WHEN THE DATA YOU NEED ARE NOT OPENLY AVAILABLE:** Sometimes you may need data that are not available for free. In those cases:

* **First**, ASK A LIBRARIAN! They are great searchers, and since they get a wide range of questions about data sources, are familiar with many obscure ones.
* **Second**—consider using your library card! Many libraries have databases that the library pays for but the library user gets for free when they have a card. Two good examples are ReferenceUSA and DemographicsNow.
* **Third**—If your library doesn’t have the databases you want, do they have a reciprocal agreement with another library system that does? Or, could you buy a non-resident library card that gives you privileges at a library that has the data you want? They are often quite reasonably priced.
* **Fourth**—If you live near a university library, you can often use their resources for free if you go in person. Download information to a thumb drive or email results to yourself. Universities usually have more in-depth resources than public libraries. You may also be able to get access to a university’s databases remotely if you are an alumnus/alumna of that university (usually for a fee).
* **Fifth**—many governmental agencies have data request services, and will do customized analyses for you, using data they have but which has not been put online. Often this is done as a courtesy, but there is usually a charge if it is a large or complex request.
* **Sixth**—If you find an article that is interesting and want to track down the data sources and/or obtain the data, don’t hesitate to contact the author and ask.
* **Seventh**—If the data you are looking for are related to a particular professional group, be sure to contact the related professional association.

## **WHEN SHOULD YOU JUST PAY FOR DATA?**

You will probably have to pay if the only source of that data (governmental, private, professional) charges for it. Then you have to decide whether you are willing to pay the amount they are asking. Specifically, you will probably have to pay for data when:

* The data refers to a specialized subject or niche or group of people
* The data are proprietary (they have been gathered by a for-profit for their business operations)
* The data are sensitive (in which case, you may have to go through various hoops as well as payment)
* The data are extremely recent (it is expensive to collect data, and so the entity collecting it will want to recoup costs)
* The data take intensive manipulation to extract in a format you can use (the entity giving it to you will want to recoup costs for staff time)