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Market Research @ Your Public Library

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- Discuss the products/services offered.
- Identify the customer demand for your product/service.
- Identify your market, its size and locations.
- Explain how your product/service will be advertised and marketed.
- Explain the pricing strategy.

Once the product/service is explained, an ideal customer must be envisioned. Maybe that customer is a female between the ages of 18-34; maybe he is a retired man living on the west coast; maybe they are school-aged children. Entrepreneurs must have an idea of who they want to target. Then they must work on finding out where the ideal customers lives, some of their preferences, and how to reach them. That's where we come in.

Demographics are population characteristics. Marketers use them to lump people into groups and - they hope - to predict spending behavior. There are many sources for demographic information to be found in public libraries and on the Internet. (The Public Libraries Briefcase, No. 6, 4th Quarter, 2003 titled **US Demographics** is a fantastic list to keep handy.) The Statistical Abstract of the United States is probably the best starting point, as it allows the researcher to browse the kinds of available data and may lead him or her to other important sources of information through the table footnotes. The American FactFinder page of the US Census Bureau is another indispensable source. In fact, the Census is the basis for many other demographic reports, including the Economic Census. Many state and local economic development offices and chambers of commerce will have fact sheets and other information about the regions they serve.

There are some online proprietary products in the library marketplace now that do a great job of localizing demographics. At the Southfield Public Library, we subscribe to Civic Technologies, and Gale Cengage has a similar product called **DemographicsNow**. Yet another similar product is **Simply Map**. The attractive thing about these proprietary databases is being able to customize searches down to a very specific level of

geography. The reports are professional-looking, include maps and graphs, and really take a lot of the legwork out of demographic research.

Once your entrepreneurial patrons have examined their potential customers, they need to examine their