

Public Libraries Briefcase

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Trade Associations for Industry Research
Teresa Williams, Business Librarian
Butler University Libraries
Indianapolis, IN

Some of the most challenging questions asked by business researchers involve specialized industries. An entrepreneur may want to know about regulations impacting pawn shop owners, while someone else is seeking your help to identify major trends in the wind turbine industry. Or perhaps a student is looking for the market size for pet products with a breakdown for food and treats. An expensive market research report likely has that type of information, but for an answer that may not cost anything, try a trade association.

What are trade associations and how do you find them?

Trade associations are organizations with members that have a special interest in a particular industry or trade. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) classifies trade associations as “business leagues” that are tax-exempt organizations under IRS Code Section 501(c)(3), and according to the [2018 IRS Data Book](#), there are over 62,000 in

[Encyclopedia of Associations](#), available through Gale’s collection of directories or the database [Associations Unlimited](#). Another useful resource, which is helpful for finding listings of trade publications, is ProQuest’s [Ulrich’s Periodicals Directory](#), also available through the [Ulrichsweb](#) database. Other for-fee sources that provide leads to trade information are subscription databases for industry research, such as [IBISWorld](#) or [First Research](#).

Because business reporters often turn to the trades for information, another way to identify trade associations is to look for them as cited sources in news articles. A Wall Street Journal reporter writing an article on the fast food industry may quote a representative from the [National Restaurant Association](#) or interview someone from a foodservice association at the state level, depending on the focus of the piece. Find those quotes in the article and you have a lead for your research. Also look for trade

