Using SIC and NAICS Codes to Locate Companies

What are SIC and NAICS codes?

The **Standard Industrial Classification** (abbreviated 'SIC') is a United States government system for classifying industries by a four-digit code. Established in the 1930s, it is being supplanted by the six-digit North American Industry Classification System, which was released in 1997; however certain government departments and agencies, such as the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), still use the SIC codes. Many databases allow you to search by SIC or NAICS code.

How do I determine what SIC or NAICS codes to use?

One easy way to find a code is to use the Business and Company Resource Center database. Choose the Industry button from the opening page. Put in a keyword describing your industry. This can take some time. For instance, if you are looking for biotechnology companies, you won't find any results under 'biotechnology' but you will find something under 'research':
SIC: 8731 - Commercial Physical and Biological Research
NAICS: 54171 - Research and Development in the Physical, Engineering, and Life Sciences

If you're having difficulty identifying the right keywords, another way to find an SIC or NAICS code to use is to look up a company who is a leader in the field. Both Business and Company Resource Center and Hoover's Online Business Network are good sources for company searches, because they automatically list the primary SIC and NAICS codes for the firm.

What are the best databases to search using SIC and NAICS codes?

To find lists of companies, you can start your search in:

- LexisNexis Academic   Choose 'Business' from the red bar at the top of
- the page, then look on the right column and choose' Dossier Create a Company List'
- Sorkins   To use SIC or NAICS codes, choose Combo or Industry searches, rather than Company.