This is one of the most important resources that anyone who reports on the corporate world should be familiar with. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs provides an administrative and regulatory framework to the corporate sector in accordance with the law. Companies are required to submit their accounts and other details to the MCA to maintain public accountability. The MCA website is full of important information on companies. These include:

- All financial statements like balance sheets, profit and loss accounts, and cash flow statements.
- Schedules to the balance sheets and profit and loss accounts - one can notice any change during the year.
- Related party transactions.
- Auditor’s qualification, if any.

**Company or LLP Master data**

**How-to Guide**

- Go to mca.gov.in
- Select the tab ‘MCA Services’ from the navigation bar above
- A new page appears.
- In the column on the left, select “View company or LLP Master data” from the section Master Data.
- A short form appears. Click on the search icon, right next to the field. Enter the name of the company you are interested in. Ensure you type the correct spelling and name. Select the name of the company in the search results. And you will get the basic information about the company like CIN, paid up capital, date of last AGM, assets under charge and amount and director/signatory details.

These are some of the basics. Detailed information is available as well, but the MCA website charges a small fee per document. There are also some companies that aggregate such data and make it available in a clean format for a fee.
You can register on the portal. Once you log in:

➢ Go to “view public documents”.
➢ Search for the company. Select the company you are interested in.
➢ Make the payment to access the documents. Once done, come back to the home page.
➢ Go to the “My documents” tab, and select the documents you are interested in.

💡 Pro Tip: Files are available for one week after payment is made.

These steps will get you started. Once you have familiarised yourself, we recommend you spend some time and explore more. There are some important data points available here, which can be further explored in other sections of this chapter.

💡 Pro tip: Companies may sometimes change their names, and it becomes difficult to look them up because the MCA Portal searches only for the current name of a company.

In such a case:

➢ Go to the MCA21 website (http://www.mca.gov.in/DCAPortalWeb/).
➢ Go to “Quick Links” on the home page.
➢ Click on “Find Corporate Identity Number (CIN)”.
➢ Google the CIN of the company, and enter here.
➢ You will find the current name of the company in the results.

How can one use this information in journalistic work?

John Samuel Raja, co-founder, How India Lives who used to work as a financial journalist using public data for storytelling explains the scale and scope of information available for journalists. “There are 1.2 million active companies as of March 2020, just before the pandemic hit India. This is out of 2 million companies which are registered. It covers both private and public. You also have limited liability partnership firms who are required to file information financial statements and other details with the MCA 21. All of these 1.2 million companies have to at least file annual financial statements and ownership structure at least once a year. On top of this, when companies bring in a new shareholder, additional information has to be filed. They have to disclose who this new shareholder is, how many shares are allotted to them, at what price, if there is a director who's being removed or a new director being appointed, the company has to disclose that information also in the MCA 21, so the potential for stories is immense.”

Another good data point to look out for is information about company directors. This information can tell us a lot about specific individuals, and also give an overview of a sector
or the business landscape. From finding links about violations of laws, to understanding conflicts of interest, familial ties, or representation, this one indicator can lead to some interesting and important storytelling.

Consider two examples here:

In this story for Scroll.in, journalist M.Rajshekhar tracks all companies on which an MP is listed as a director, and shows how a legal loophole has allowed him to hide his full wealth from the election panel.

Another, and a very different example, is of a series published in The Indian Express where company data of the NIFTY 500 companies was analysed to evaluate gender representation at the top. (All parts of the series can be found here: Part I, Part II, Part III, Part IV, Part V). (Disclaimer: Team Newsworthy was involved in the production of this series).

Then there are other resources such as annual returns and balance sheets. Click here to learn more about how you can use these resources.

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PEOPLE TO FOLLOW

John Samuel Raja
M Rajshekher
Rohini Singh
Sayantan Bera
Sucheta Dalal

How India Lives