



# STAT-USA® Commemorative Newsletter

Celebrating 20 years of delivering timely business, trade, and economic information  
1985-2005

## Congratulations to STAT-USA, From the Secretary of Commerce...

I am continually amazed at the commitment of the Commerce Department's 38,000 workers to supporting and promoting American business at home and abroad. I want to take a moment to talk about one organization, STAT-USA, and the excellent work they are doing to help American companies compete in the global economy.

For the past 20 years, this financially self-supporting office in the Economics and Statistics Administration has been providing electronic access to world-class business, trade, and economic information. They have evolved with the times – initially launching the government into an era of electronic reporting with the Economic Bulletin Board in 1985 and the National Trade Data Bank in 1990 before leading the initial wave of government agencies moving online with the introduction of STAT-USA/Internet in 1994. More recently, STAT-USA has brought state-of-the-art tools for analyzing massive databases of trade statistics to both the business and academic communities through their USA Trade *Online* and EuroTrade *Online* web products. Today, over 25 federal agencies use STAT-USA's expertise to get their valuable information to the American public. STAT-USA has nearly 2,000 paid subscribers providing over 500,000 Americans with access to important economic information and other trade-related resources from across the federal government.



STAT-USA's pioneering use of technology and their innovative spirit have been a vital part of the Commerce Department's mission to provide the private sector with the tools and information they need to drive economic growth. As a former businessman, I understand the magnitude of getting the right information into the hands of decision makers in a succinct and timely manner. If you can't do this, the information is useless regardless of its value. STAT-USA has long understood this concept. Their business model is straightforward: gather the best business information from federal and key nonfederal sources, assemble it online, update it regularly, assign a fair price, and provide live customer service. All this is done without taxpayer support. That's right; STAT-USA operates like any small business in the private sector.

Don't get the wrong impression. STAT-USA isn't just about the bottom line or profit loss. They understand their obligation to businesses, educational institutions, and members of our society who aren't in a position to purchase a subscription. That's why they have maintained a long-standing partnership with the Federal Depository Library Program. Today, almost 1,300 federal libraries have free access to STAT-USA's most popular websites, STAT-USA/Internet and USA Trade *Online*.

Congratulations STAT-USA. Keep up the great work.

Carlos M. Gutierrez  
Secretary of Commerce

### Learn more about our products and services online!

#### **STAT-USA/Internet @ [www.stat-usa.gov](http://www.stat-usa.gov)**

Our flagship service, STAT-USA/Internet contains domestic economic releases and comprehensive market and country research from the National Trade Data Bank.

#### **USA Trade Online @ [www.usatradeonline.gov](http://www.usatradeonline.gov)**

Provided in partnership with the Foreign Trade Division and Beyond 20/20, USA Trade *Online* is the official source for U.S. merchandise trade data.

#### **EuroTrade Online @ [www.eurotradeonline.gov](http://www.eurotradeonline.gov)**

A complementary database to USA Trade *Online*, EuroTrade *Online* offers intra- and extra- trade data from Eurostat, the official European statistical agency.

#### **Syndicate USA @ [www.stat-usa.gov/syndicateusa](http://www.stat-usa.gov/syndicateusa)**

Similar to Really Simple Syndication (RSS), this service uses push technologies to bring you information from STAT-USA's vast repository within minutes of the actual release.

Interested in on-site training from STAT-USA?  
Check out <http://home.stat-usa.gov/training>!

## A Message to Our Customers

**Dear Friends,** On behalf of STAT-USA and the Department, I want to thank you for supporting us over the past 20 years. Your constant feedback and encouragement have been invaluable as we continue to reinvent ourselves in keeping with the times.

Few people realize the wide-range of establishments that subscribe to STAT-USA's web products. We serve thousands of direct customers ranging from the largest Fortune 500 companies and government agencies to small and medium sized businesses, libraries, universities, media groups, state and local agencies, and individuals. In order to better serve this diverse customer base, we offer both single-designated and multi-user accounts. This allows us to serve individual members of the public as well as businesses and educational institutions of all sizes. Our multi-user accounts generally fall in two categories: site licenses and consortia. A site license account is typically sold to a single institution that wants several employees and or students to be able to access our services simultaneously, while a consortium account is sold to a group of educational intuitions for the same reason.

The managers of these multi-user accounts and leaders in their organizations are frequently STAT-USA's greatest advocates. Butch Sarma of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and Barbie Selby of the University of Virginia are long time users through the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA), our first educational consortium. They have been very supportive over the years and we continue to have frequent interaction with them. Lisa Moske at the California State University Consortium has also been very helpful in providing advice and support to STAT-USA. Many corporations are long-time STAT-USA users, such as Laurie Leichman at McKinsey and Associates who has been in frequent contact over the years. Likewise we have frequent contact with Madeleine Cohen, John Galy, and Peter Bengston at the New York Public Library and many others too numerous to mention in this short space.

STAT-USA simply could not exist without your support. It's been a great ride this far; I look forward to working with you in the future.



Forrest Williams  
Director, STAT-USA

## A Special Thank You to Our Suppliers

STAT-USA relies on some 25 offices and agencies at all levels of government to carry out our mission. Our long-standing relationships with these organizations and the individuals in them have been the key to our success over the past 20 years. This commemorative issue would not be complete without a hearty "thanks" to these groups and recognition of the interagency efforts that have delivered two decades of timely and reliable electronic information from across the federal government to the nation's economists, businesses, libraries, educational institutions, and trade organizations.

Why is interagency cooperation so important? In short, it helps the federal government better serve the public by combining and targeting information resources. For example, the creation of the National Trade Data Bank (NTDB) in the late 1980s was a very ambitious project. Pundits at the time deemed it impossible, pointing to the project's magnitude, necessary resources, lack of available technology, and above all, the difficulty of getting individual agencies to cooperate. The successful launch of the NTDB, on time and on budget, proved them wrong. To this day, the NTDB remains a significant information program that is larger than any one government Department and widely recognized in the user community.

We take our role in effectively bringing all this information together very seriously.

There is a considerable amount of work to retrieving and preparing this information. More than a simple collection of "links" (*Who needs another collection of random web search results?!),* at STAT-USA we also strategically organize the information on our various sites, write user documentation, make meta data available, operate a Customer Support Center, and even provide in-person training.

In the same way we depend on the collective knowledge of our network of partner agencies, they look to us to broaden the reach of their information. We provide a form of support to their outreach efforts, enabling them to reach important constituents who might be missed in their own dissemination programs. STAT-USA is especially visible and active with libraries and academics – two user communities inadvertently ignored by many federal agencies.

To our supplier agencies: thank you for your persistent dedication, hard work, and ingenuity. It is our sincere hope that we will continue to enhance your public outreach effort. Please let us know how we can better work together in the future.

### A special thank you to STAT-USA's "oldest" customers:

- Donis Petersan, STAT-USA/Internet customer since 1993
- Morgan Stanley, STAT-USA/Internet site license holder since 1995
- VIVA, STAT-USA consortia since 1998

### We would like to take this opportunity to publicly recognize the suppliers with whom we have the most interaction over the years:

- The **International Trade Administration**, especially the **U.S. Foreign & Commercial Service**, for their comprehensive supply of foreign market and country information,
- The **Census Bureau** for their Current Industrial Reports, many housing- and manufacturing-related economic indicators, and a number of data series including export/import data from the Foreign Trade Division,
- The **Bureau of Economic Analysis** for their reliable estimates of key economic indicators, such as Gross Domestic Product and Personal Income and Outlays,
- The **Federal Reserve Board** for providing information on the money supply, as well as the Federal Reserve Bank of New York for regular exchange rate updates, and
- The **Treasury Department** for their information about federal government spending and the sale of government bonds.

## STAT-USA Through the Ages

This special 20th Anniversary edition of the Newsletter is a tribute to everyone – our customers, suppliers, and staff members past and present – who has been a part of STAT-USA's growth and development. We would like to take the opportunity to reflect on our unique history so that all might better understand who we are today.

### It All Starts with the Economic Bulletin Board

The Office of Business Analysis (OBA), STAT-USA's predecessor, was created in 1985 to meet the growing demand for electronic dissemination of U.S. economic information to the general public. OBA launched the Economic Bulletin Board (EBB) using cutting-edge (for the time) dial-up technology, allowing the public to download economic releases by modem on the day of release, from anywhere in the world. The EBB contained virtually all of the major economic releases of the federal government on topics such as employment, wholesale and retail prices, international trade, monetary and housing trends, and gross domestic product, among others.

**"We could have 32 users online simultaneously, unheard of at the time, and the lines would light up whenever a major release came out." ~ Bruce Guthrie, Programmer**

In those days, every byte transferred was dear to customers who were connecting at speeds as low as 30 characters per second (300bps). At that speed, a 100,000-character file, such as Gross Domestic Product or Producer Price Index releases, could take as long as 55 minutes to download. As the EBB, and the desire for easy, public access to federal data grew, OBA continually updated their modems and introduced new systems. By the final period of the EBB, that same file took just over a minute to transfer. Now, of course, the Internet offers faster access to files, modems have sped up, and broadband access is widespread. That same file can be downloaded in less than ten seconds.

### National Trade Data Bank Brings Agencies Together

The Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988 called for the establishment of the National Trade Data Bank (NTDB), which would collect trade-related data from various federal agencies and make it available through one easily retrievable location in the Commerce Department. The Department had two years to establish the NTDB, yet by the time attention was given to the task, only one year remained to meet the legislative requirement. OBA was charged with the task, successfully producing the NTDB on CD-ROM, the latest technology at the time. OBA received numerous awards for its leadership in the use of this new technology. Two staff members in particular (Joe Correia and Lorraine Pitts) labored month after month, year after year, to produce and distribute the popular NTDB CD-ROMs every month. The NTDB has since moved online and now contains over 200,000 documents on export opportunities by industry, country, and product; political, and socio-economic conditions in hundreds of countries; and much more.

**"There was an air of excitement around the NTDB. We were all grateful for the opportunity to be part of creating something new and inventive." ~ Armondo Lopez, Economist**

### STAT-USA Lives Up to the Public-Private Challenge

The Office of Business Analysis formally changed its name to STAT-USA in 1994. At this time STAT-USA was also removed from the federally-appropriated budget, and was required to operate solely on the revenues it would generate from user fees. Additionally, we placed the entire contents of the NTDB CD-ROM and more on the Internet and launched STAT-USA/Internet, an online subscription service that has become our cornerstone data product. Today, we operate three main informational products: STAT-USA/Internet ([www.stat-usa.gov](http://www.stat-usa.gov)), USA Trade *Online* ([www.usatradeonline.gov](http://www.usatradeonline.gov)), and EuroTrade *Online* ([www.eurotradeonline.gov](http://www.eurotradeonline.gov)).

In response to customer feedback, we have recently expanded our offerings to include low-cost trainings (<http://home.stat-usa.gov/training>) that help individual users and organizations better understand how to integrate federal statistics and information into their research and ultimately get the most out of their STAT-USA products and services.

**"STAT-USA's in-person training really demystified the databases for me." ~ Librarian, Greenwich, CT**

### ***Thank you STAT-USA staff for your unyielding dedication, hard work, and creativity over the years!***

**Current Staff pictured on back page from left to right:** Forrest Williams, Gerry Brown, Sarita Moore, Terri Long, Tanya Chen, Dee Atwell, Tahira Murphy, Randy Blumenschein, Donna Moore, and Bruce Guthrie

**Current Staff not pictured:** Brent Hendershot and Shannon Smythe

**Current OCIO Staff:** Ileana Gabriel-Martinez, John Mukai, Ken Taylor, Linel Soto, Mike Nimmons, and Rick Anderson

**Former Staff:** Adrien Young, Amy Stevenson (Williams), Bob Wendling, Cheryl Brumm, Catherine Tynan, Claude Showalter, Eunice Talbot, Fred Gatlin, Francine McCullough, Gary Newcomb, Helen Simpson, Ivan Tookes, Jack Cremeans, James Alder, JD Edwards, Joe Correia, Judy Dobry, Katrina Hill, Kay Melvin, Kelly O'Brien, Ken Rogers (deceased), Kimberly Bynum, LaSerne Davis, Laura Merchant, Linda LaValle, Lisa Wax, Lorraine Pitts, Melissa Malhame, Armondo Lopez, Nancy Beltz, Octavia Wilson, Paul Christy, Paula Abney, Peter Both, Rich Stevenson, Richard Brace, Sarah Warren, Saundra Pitts, Scott Meyerle, Scott Prindle, Shirley Chen, Travis Mayo, and Valerie Bullerdick (Barth)

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### Gulf Coast Relief Efforts

The Commerce Department is helping U.S. businesses, especially minority, women, and small businesses, participate in the Gulf Coast rebuilding efforts through the **Hurricane Contracting Information Center (HCIC)**. Businesses interested in better understanding federal contract opportunities and/or receiving notices about opportunities in these areas should contact the HCIC for more information: [www.rebuildingthegulfcoast.gov](http://www.rebuildingthegulfcoast.gov) or toll free on **888-4USADOC**.



### STAT-USA Commemorative Newsletter

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