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Apps We Love: June 2021 – Reference Apps

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Gail Perry, CPA • Jun. 16, 2021



We're all pretty accustomed to Googling when we need answers. But is that the best source of information? Where do you go when you have questions? This month we

are sharing our favorite reference apps with the *CPA Practice Advisor* readers. Some members of our community weighed in with some of their favorite reference apps, and I've added several of my own (and, alas, Google helped me round out the list).

Dawn Brolin, CPA, CFE, Powerful Accounting, told us, "I love using the **Tax Book Web Library** for tax questions. It has an easy to use research tool and is at a reasonable cost."

Garrett Wagner, CPA.CITP, founder/CEO of C3 Evolution Group, said, "While this app isn't new **Wikipedia** is still the spot I go to anytime I'm on my device looking for answers. If I'm doing a voice search then it is **Alexa** all the way. If I'm looking to get fancy with my words, I turn to **Power Thesaurus**, for a simple and clean tool for looking things up on the fly."

Chris Frederiksen, CPA, co-founder of Frederiksen-Crawford CPAs, is on board with **Google**: "I find the FAQ for most apps is completely inadequate and usually written from the point of view of the developer rather than the customer. So I use Google all the time when I am stuck; Google seldom fails."

Rick Richardson, CPA.CITP, CGMA, managing partner at Richardson Media & Technologies, said, "Here's the one I go to most often: **ProWritingAid**." This app provides grammar checking, style editing, and writing mentoring. A free trial is available for this fee-based app.

Caleb Jenkins, EA, CQP, business and accounting leader at RLJ Financial Services, replied to our inquiry with, "I know this isn't necessarily a 'reference app' but I utilize **Twitter** quite a bit to begin my research on something. I love the search capabilities and the opportunity to start a conversation on any topic with lots of people at any time."

Leslie Shiner, owner of The ShinerGroup, is another Twitter fan: "I know Twitter has its down side, but I get a lot of really good info from #taxtwitter on Twitter. Especially with all the law changes and rule changes and information around the PPP, ERTC, etc – it's been a crazy year."

My personal favorites are the apps that focus on specific types of information. For example, **Night Sky** tells me about the constellations and planets I'm seeing when I point my phone in a certain direction. It also identifies galaxies, satellites, and the International Space Station.

Garden Answers helps me identify flowers and plants that I see when I'm walking or exploring. The **IMDB** app lets me explore background information on movies, actors, directors, and other film crew members. I'm a fan of **WebMD** for research about health issues.

When it comes to genealogy reference apps, I recommend **Ancestry**, **LDS Family History**, **Find A Grave**, and **Ellis Island Search**.

I turn to Wikipedia frequently, but there are also apps for **Encyclopedia Britannica**, **Encyclopedia Farlex** (includes science, technology, history, and more, and is updated regularly), and **WikiArt** is dedicated to art reference, as is **Art Authority**. **Geography of the World** provides maps along with detailed information on all countries. For How-To apps, there is **WikiHow** where you can read about how to do just about anything, and of course **YouTube**, where you can watch how to do just about anything.

Popular dictionary apps include **Merriam-Webster Dictionaries**, **Oxford Dictionary of English**, and **Dictionary.com**. And you can use **Pocket Thesaurus** and **Power Thesaurus** to find just the right synonym or antonym. And don't forget **Grammarly** if you are struggling with sentence construction.

If you need help with computations, check out **WolframAlpha** or **MathRef**, and if it's science you need to know about, consider **Wolfram General Chemistry**, **iSearch Science**, and **BioDigital Human – 3D Body**. Side note – I live in Cicada Brood X territory, so I've been using **Cicada Safari** app this year to track the emersion of the bugs!

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