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ABOUT FREE PINT

FreePint is an online network of information searchers. Members receive this free newsletter twice a month: it is packed with tips on finding quality and reliable business information on the Internet.

Joining is free at <<http://www.freepint.com/>> and provides access to a substantial archive of articles, reviews, jobs & events, with answers to research questions and networking at the FreePint Bar.

Please circulate this newsletter which is best read when printed out. To receive a fully formatted version as an attachment or a brief notification when it's online, visit <<http://web.freepint.com/>>.



FreePint has always prided itself on carrying straightforward, helpful articles listing quality online resources in a wide range of subject areas. Our index of previous articles is updated every six months and the latest is published this week :
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/04indexa.htm>>

Alongside these practical tips-based articles, we also try to publish features that really give an insight into the latest information industry trends, and new online research techniques. Ask any company director to list a critical success factor in staying ahead of competition and many will say "innovation". Perhaps this may simply be a response to market changes, or trend-spotting before everyone else. Maybe it indicates the courage to take risks with cutting-edge technology. After all, today's innovation is tomorrow's mainstream product or service. In Pam Foster's article on business information trends today we are privileged to get a taste of the sort of insight that you often only get from expensive market research reports.

Pam identifies the growing importance and impact of weblogs for business intelligence; 'social networking' changing from just theory into a commercial concept; and the move of many major publishers to wholly electronic models. What makes her article good reading is that she is not only citing general trends but backing it up with her up-to-the-minute knowledge of the specific information industry products and services that illustrate the trends. I am delighted that Pam has agreed to give FreePint readers some regular updates of the sort of business critical content that is available from VIP, available by full subscription <<http://www.vivavip.com>>.

As Pam acknowledges, Google continues to influence search interfaces. Google has recently added a geographic searching facility (currently in beta), which allows you to refine searches with place names or postcodes <<http://local.google.com/lochp>>. However, FreePint is being more cutting-edge today and going a step further with Chris Kutler's article "GIS enabling the Internet". Chris is advocating more sophisticated geographic searching with the use of map references to refine searches.

This is innovative stuff, and I invite people to respond on the FreePint Bar <<http://www.freepint.com/bar>> or directly to the author, who is clearly an early advocate in this field. He is not alone though: Dlib magazine dedicated its whole May issue to georeferencing applications in digital libraries and natural history museums <<http://www.dlib.org/dlib/may04/hill/05hill.html>>. As Chris concludes, "Adding geographical relevance to a search on the Web can significantly improve search results especially in the fields of genealogy, local history and archaeology but potentially in other fields too".

I hope you find this issue informative. Remember, we always welcome feedback (anonymous or otherwise) and so why not fill in the new FreePint suggestion box at <<http://www.freepint.com/contact.htm>>.

All the best

Annabel Colley
Editor, FreePint <annabel.colley@freepint.com>

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To see the Jobs Update No.75 and read the new 'Jobs Advice' section, visit <http://www.freepint.com/go/b28999>. To subscribe, modify your account at <http://web.freepint.com>.

Here are some of the latest featured jobs:

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Recruiter: Glen Recruitment

Records Management Analyst

<http://www.freepint.com/go/j3324>
We have an urgent requirement for an experienced Records Management professional to cover maternity leave.
Recruiter: GlaxoSmithKline, Global HQ Brentford, West London

Information Officer

<http://www.freepint.com/go/j3325>
Two roles suitable for recent information graduates keen to develop careers in financial information research. Good salaries.
Recruiter: Sue Hill Recruitment

NB: There are 42 other jobs in the current edition of the Jobs Update
<http://www.freepint.com/go/b28999>.

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NEW: VIP No.7 Now Available

- VIP, the monthly business information publication, has an in-depth review of Thomson ONE Banker and the Times Digital Archive.
- VIP Eye, the timely twice-monthly analysis of news, announces various new company-information products.

<http://www.vivavip.com>

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MY FAVOURITE TIPPLES

by David Renfree



David Renfree is the subject librarian for the School of Childhood & Education at the Birmingham College Of Food, Tourism & Creative Studies.

Submit your top five favourite Web sites. See the guidelines at <http://www.freepint.com/author.htm>.

- <http://www.childcarelink.gov.uk> - find detailed information about childcare and early years provision in your area, using the interactive map or a choice of search options.
- <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/childrenandfamilies> - 'one-stop shop' of links to various websites and documents outlining the law and government policy concerning childcare and family services.
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/parenting> - collection of articles containing parenting advice on topics such as pregnancy, children's ailments, financial considerations and support services.
- <http://www.unicef.org> - this UN mandated organisation offers information, news, statistics, campaigns and much more relating to children's welfare around the globe.
- <http://www.yahooligans.com> - one for the kids! A directory of internet sites that can be safely used by children, plus a selection of interactive resources.

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FREE PINT BAR

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With FreePint feeling proud of its new permanent premises, we've had some of the busiest days ever at the Bar. Questions are being answered within minutes, with whole discussion threads being done-and-dusted within a morning (e.g. see <http://www.freepint.com/go/b29122>).

It's the sharing of experience by seasoned information professionals which I find the most exciting thing about the Bar. Some of the topics have cropped up many times before, but I think it's good when there are fundamental questions about the definitions of information, knowledge, data and intelligence. One enquirer is evaluating the perceived merits of each term as they create a new 'Knowledge Store' <http://www.freepint.com/go/b29051>. Someone else is considering a career in competitive intelligence (CI) and has already received valuable advice <http://www.freepint.com/go/b29106>. Perhaps those in the know can help find papers and anecdotes about CI in financial services <http://www.freepint.com/go/b29047>?

UK media information professionals are under the spotlight for an MA dissertation; please help if you meet these criteria <http://www.freepint.com/go/b29112>. If you're a general information researcher, wherever you're based, then you'll find the latest FreePint Index useful. It lists all the articles that have appeared in the FreePint Newsletter since it was first published in 1997 <http://www.freepint.com/go/b29111>.

Business information professionals are concerned about the changes at OneSource <http://www.freepint.com/go/b29121>, but VIP's Editor, Pam Foster, soon fills in the full picture. VIP No.7 has also just been published and contains an in-depth review of Thomson ONE Banker, which provides integrated access to well known Thomson Financial sources (including Datastream, Worldscope, Compustat, First Call, IDC, Extel and more) <http://www.freepint.com/go/b29105>. VIP Eye No.12 looks at two surveys about the shortfalls in corporate retrieval environments and the lack of information on companies in the new EU states <http://www.freepint.com/go/b29130>.

There are various unanswered statistics questions. These range from requests for stats on the NHS (e.g. waiting times for specific operations) <http://www.freepint.com/go/b29162> or putting CIA World Factbook figures into perspective <http://www.freepint.com/go/b29101>. Maybe you know where to find B2B market research on electrical goods in the UK <http://www.freepint.com/go/b29096> or can point to current-awareness suppliers in environmental legislation/issues relevant to construction <http://www.freepint.com/go/b29091>?

Don't forget that you can now get a content feed from the Bar (in RSS/XML format). Find out more at <http://www.freepint.com/feed/>.

Thank you all for your invaluable input to the FreePint Bar.

William Hann william.hann@freepint.com
Managing Editor, FreePint

- The FreePint Bar is where you can get help with your tricky research questions, for free! <http://www.freepint.com/bar>
- Help with study for information-related courses is available at the FreePint Student Bar <http://www.freepint.com/student>.
- Twice-weekly email digests of the latest postings can be requested at <http://web.freepint.com/>.

TIPS ARTICLE

"Trends in Business Information Provision and Use"

By Pam Foster



Pam Foster is a freelance information professional and has been actively involved in the business information industry as a writer and reviewer for nearly 20 years. She previously played a major role in Headland Business Information since its inception, as editor of its newsletters and directories. More recently, she has acted as a consultant to several large information companies. In December 2003, she became editor of FreePint's subscription-based products, VIP and VIP Eye.

VIP and VIP Eye were launched just over six months ago at <<http://www.vivavip.com>>. Aimed at business information researchers, the monthly VIP provides in-depth reviews of major products, while the fortnightly VIP Eye provides news and analysis of products, publishers and vendors. An analysis of their content so far reveals the emergence of some interesting trends.

Blogs are being recognised as important sources of information

Although highly personalized, the best blogs offer valuable opinion, comment and news, and companies are becoming aware that they often contain important and usable intelligence. Items under discussion on a blog or chatroom can impact on corporate reputation - what are people saying about them and their products? What are their competitors doing? Some of the major vendors are looking at ways to harness this unstructured data and integrate it into the content they offer to their users. Factiva has teamed up with IBM to co-develop text analytics solutions built on the IBM WebFountain platform. IBM's WebFountain is a Web-scale mining and discovery platform that extracts trends, patterns and relationships from unstructured and semi-structured text, including internet data, blogs, bulletin boards, licensed content, newspapers and trade journals. Factiva's first application on the WebFountain platform tracks corporate reputation, by analyzing information from a collection of Factiva sources, web pages, blogs, newsgroups and special interest web sites. The resulting customized analysis displays emerging trends and patterns, competitor activity, 'buzz' about products, relationships with customers and much more. A review of Factiva and its new corporate reputation tool will be published in VIP later this year.

New interfaces are being influenced by Google

The 'Google factor' is never far away and it is influencing product development, as users demand simple interfaces that allow them to search in a familiar way. Factiva's latest interface, iWorker Search Technology, offers novice and occasional searchers simple text-based searching, and has the look and feel of a traditional search engine. Key word searches are matched to the filtering capability embedded within Factiva's proprietary taxonomy, to retrieve relevant results. The new platform will form part of the September issue of VIP, which will include a comparative review of Factiva and LexisNexis, followed in October by a review of Dialog NewsRoom. The October issue will also chart the content and functionality of all three products, enabling readers to make instant comparisons.

Dialog has also been busy developing a new interface, in response to demands from its users. Its new integrated platform for Profound and NewsRoom caters for occasional users, as well as professional searchers. It provides access to related content sets, via a single password and a

What is the ResourceShelf?

<<http://www.resourceshelf.com>>

ResourceShelf is a free daily update containing news of interest to information professionals around the world.

Topics include the latest news with web search engines, research tips, new web resources, and much more.

single search. It also utilises SmartTerms, Dialog's new proprietary taxonomy. We gave the new interface an in-depth review in the March issue of VIP. In the same issue, we also investigated the indexing strategies of Dialog, Factiva and LexisNexis, by comparing Dialog SmartTerms, Factiva Indexing and LexisNexis SmartIndexing. We looked at the features of each and how the three services indexed a given subject.

Adding value and responding to market changes

Information providers can be quick to respond to changes in the market that affect their clients. New money laundering regulations came into effect in the UK in March this year, whereby all legal, financial and other businesses need to implement a 'Know Your Client' check for every customer. In response to client demand, OneSource has created the OneSource Synergy Solution for Anti Money Laundering, an automated product that offers the required Know Your Client content to the legal and financial sectors. It is this adaptability and willingness to provide added value that ensures companies like OneSource will survive. Further details of the OneSource Synergy Solution for Anti Money Laundering are available in VIP Eye. Additionally, an in-depth item on money laundering, authored by OneSource, will be published in the August issue of VIP. Other OneSource items published in VIP so far include, 'Addressing the problems of data quality issues', by Andrew Hughes, OneSource's VP of Content for Europe (VIP May 2004), and 'CEO Insight', an article by Marty Kahn, interim CEO, OneSource, who shares his insights on issues facing the business information sector. (VIP March 2004).

Social networking theory is being transformed into a commercial concept

Social networking applications are turning who you know into a commercial concept. Social network analysis creates social maps that show how people are connected and assesses the strengths of social connections. Information companies are beginning to integrate 'people data' into their product development. Alacra is developing Alacra Corporate Connections which is aimed at helping sales and marketing people develop useful relationships with individuals at other companies. Another new product, HighBeam Executives, provides access to information on more than 20 million business executives, managers and employees from more than one million organizations (public and private companies and non-profit organizations). The database of profiles of business executives

Related FreePint links:

- 'Information and Libraries' articles and resources in the FreePint Portal <<http://www.freepint.com/go/p69>>
- Post a message to the author, Pam Foster, or suggest further resources at the FreePint Bar <<http://www.freepint.com/bar>>
- Read this article online, with activated hyperlinks <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/010704.htm#feature>>
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was created by Eliyon, one of the best known of the social networking companies. Eliyon's technology continuously crawls millions of web sites, press releases, electronic news sources, SEC filings and other online sources, and uses natural- language processing to create individual profiles. An in-depth look at social networking theory and applications, together with detailed profiles of the major players, is available in the item 'Social networks - mining the web for competitive advantage' in VIP, January 2004.

Large vendors are transforming themselves into wholly electronic publishers

Many of the large vendors are either selling or outsourcing their remaining print businesses and transforming themselves into wholly electronic publishers. D&B has entered into an agreement with AP Information Services to print and distribute its hard copy directories, such as Who Owns Whom, Key British Enterprises and D&B Business Registers. The move is part of D&B's Blueprint for Growth strategy which aims to generate more revenue from the Web. In line with its strategy of providing web access to its reference databases, D&B has so far launched e-KBE, e-WOW, MarketEurope, D&B Market Insight and MarketDirect on the web. D&B is also just about to launch its Global Reference Service, which provides data on 85 million companies, including corporate linkage information. Reviews of MarketDirect and the Global Reference Service will be published in the August issue of VIP.

Thomson has also taken another step in transforming itself into a wholly electronic publisher by putting its Media group up for sale. The group publishes 54 titles that focus on the banking, financial services and related technology markets. They include familiar titles such as American Banker and Bond Buyer. Both the Thomson and D&B news is covered in more depth in VIP Eye.

Not much consolidation but still some surprises

The period of large scale consolidation in the sector is over but there is still some activity. One of the more surprising moves was the purchase of Mergent, one of the US's oldest information companies, to Xinhau Finance, a Chinese media company. Mergent's history dates back to 1900 when it was part of Moody's. Over the years it has become a major provider of business and financial data on publicly traded equity and debt. Xinhau is rapidly increasing in size, having acquired Market News International and AFX Asia earlier in the year.

OneSource also surprised the market by rejecting a merger agreement with ValueAct and agreeing, instead, to be acquired by a wholly owned subsidiary of infoUSA. The latter is a better strategic fit for OneSource. More information on these acquisitions is available in VIP Eye.

New products and product enhancements

Plenty of new products still continue to be launched, proving that the sector hasn't reached saturation point just yet. Some have already been mentioned in the context of other industry activity. One of the more important of the

recently-launched new products is WorldData, from the Economist Intelligence Unit: it provides near-time economic, market data and forecasts on 150 countries, 45 regions and more than 120,000 series. A review of WorldData is published in the April 2004 issue of VIP. Economic database products is an area that VIP subscribers told us they'd like to see investigated, so as well as looking at WorldData, we obliged by also reviewing Advanced Country Analysis and Forecast (VIP April 2004), and Global Insight and Datastream (VIP May 2004).

VIP and VIP Eye also cover products which have undergone major enhancements. One product that has recently added a large amount of new content is Hemscoff Company Guru, which is an online company and director research tool for business professionals. At the end of 2002, Hemscoff purchased the Directory of Directors from Reed Business information which lists details of directors of both public and private companies in the UK. Hemscoff has subsequently launched a new electronic Directory of Directors module within Company Guru. The January 2004 issue of VIP includes a detailed review of Hemscoff Company Guru.

Further information on VIP and VIP Eye is available at <<http://www.vivavip.com>>. The site also provides free samples of both products. For further information please contact the editor Pam Foster at <pam.foster@vivavip.com>.

EVENTS**United Kingdom:**

- Knowledge Sharing, Creativity & Innovation, 6th July <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e331>>
- Communities of Practice in Action III, 7th July <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e332>>
- Annual General Meeting and Summer Soiree, 7th July <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e335>>
- Manage the Knowledge, Manage the Process, 8th July <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e333>>
- CiG Summer Party & 15th Birthday, 14th July <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e334>>
- Annual General Meeting and Summer Soiree, 7th July <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e335>>

Canada:

- e-Entertainment WorldExpo Hosted by WowGao, 21st - 22nd July <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e279>>
- Wireless & Mobile WorldExpo, 21st - 22nd July <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e287>>

South Africa:

- Gartner Symposium/ITxpo Africa 2004, 2nd - 4th August <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e269>>

This is just a selection from the 20 listings in FreePint Events. For a free listing, complete the form at <<http://www.freepint.com/events>>. Penny <penny@freepint.com>

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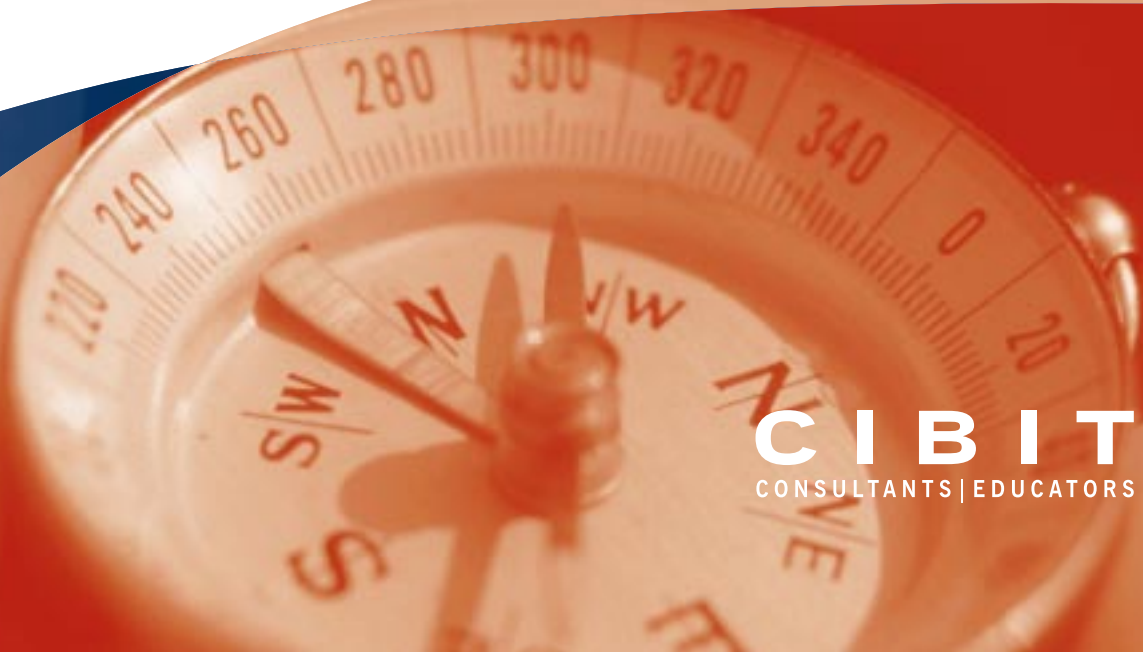
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Susan Bradley gained experience in a variety of information/database related roles with Rapra Technology Ltd before moving to the world of management consulting with A.T. Kearney, where the world of knowledge management became the focus of her role.

Now Information Officer of Universities UK (the umbrella group for the executive heads of all the UK universities), her responsibilities include developing an Information Centre, developing a records management policy and system, redeveloping an Intranet and integrating a myriad of information resources, developing a taxonomy and maintaining specialised in-house databases such as an expertise database.

Susan can be contacted via the FreePint Bar <<http://www.freepint.com/bar>>.

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- "Information Architecture: Designing Information Environments for Purpose" ISBN 1856044874, published by Facet Publishing

FREE PINT BOOKSHELF

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"Information Architecture: Designing Information Environments for Purpose" Written by Alan Gilchrist and Barry Mahon Reviewed by Susan Bradley

This book boasts an impressive list of editors and contributors with the likes of Peter Morville, who was possibly one of the earliest advocates of the concept of "information architecture", Alan Gilchrist and Barry Mahon, both associate consultants with TFPL Ltd. It also includes contributions from individuals working in government departments and leading commercial organisations. The contributors bring a wealth of real-life experience to the book and both successes and failures of projects are described.

The book begins with an introduction and also a helpful reading guide. The guide suggests that you can dip into the appropriate section without having to read the book from start to finish and I can testify (having tried it) that this is certainly the case -- though I did first read the introduction and the majority of part 1 before venturing further.

The book is divided into four sections: the design environment; software environments; managing metadata; and the user interface. Each part is preceded by a preface, which introduces the theme and main concepts of the following chapters. Quite a few chapters provide references and there is a fairly comprehensive index allowing you to quickly hone in on your area of interest. Theory and practice are covered, from the use of XML and taxonomies through to how you should/could specify and procure software.

One of the highlights of this book for me was the inclusion of case studies. These down-to-earth accounts of projects and their objectives highlight how constraints such as time-scales or budgets can affect the success or failure of the projects and how they can determine the need for a practical rather than ideal solution. The book also includes useful checklists, examples of the steps that need to be followed, lessons learnt and dos or don'ts.

The text throughout was easy to read and although dense and technical in places (without

FreePint

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William Hann (FreePint Managing Editor), Annabel Colley (FreePint Editor), Penny (FreePint Administrator), Chris Kutler, Susan Bradley, David Renfree, Pam Foster, Plain Text <<http://www.plain-text.co.uk/>> (proofreading).

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<<http://www.freepint.com/shop/report/>>

the relief of a figure or list) generally written in a jargon-free language. A couple of small criticisms on a printing note: for some reason in a number of figures, the number 4 was always below the line and some screen dumps were rather pale and consequently more difficult to read.

I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to gain a greater understanding of how to design an information environment so that it is fit for purpose and I will certainly find it a useful guide for the various projects in which I can foresee my involvement.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

"GIS Enabling the Internet"

By Chris Kutler



Chris Kutler's time is spent between maintaining and developing the Archaeology UK website <<http://www.archaeology-uk.com>> and working as a Perl/XML developer at the National Archives, Kew, UK. He has an honours degree in Applied Biological Sciences and a Masters degree in Applied Computing Technology. He has also studied Field Archaeology at Birkbeck College, London.

Imagine you are researching a family history and are looking for web pages relating to the surname 'Martin' and the placename 'Kingston' in 'Devon' (UK). A Google search with this common English surname and relatively common English placename with a wide geographic distribution, will currently generate a list of 58,900 links. However, many of these results will be irrelevant partly because the "Kingston" keyword isn't interpreted in a geographic context - you find you have lots of links to other Kingstons, including people with the name 'Kingston', many, many kilometres away from Devon. Even if you refine the search with something like "martin family kingston devon - hull -surrey", things don't get much better - you still have more than 9,000 sites to sift through and again many of these won't actually relate to Kingston, Devon. Further, in order to build up the family tree, you are likely to want to look for the surname in places near to Kingston, Devon. This would require a knowledge of the names of these places and then repeating the original search with these different placenames. This is going to make the research more laborious because you will need to find out the names of these nearby places and then have to sift through even more irrelevant results lists.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

But what if you were able to tell the search engine to perform a query in a geographic context? What if you could tell the search engine to limit your 'Martin' search to this keyword but only report back if the result is relevant to say within 10 or so KM of Kingston, Devon? Surely, this would make things easier?

This is the basis of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), which use positional information such as geographic co-ordinates as search criteria in addition to keywords. We are seeing more of them on the internet, but they have weaknesses because information within them is usually selected by the GIS providers who often make value judgements about what constitutes the best or most relevant information. This could mean that the web pages created by, say, amateur historians about Kingston, Devon, may be under-represented, or not make it into the system at all. This may be because the editor collecting the content for the GIS system hasn't come across these pages in the course of their collation exercise; or the amateur's pages haven't been deemed the best in local community information; yet these may be the most relevant pages to our original search. This situation seems even more frustrating if you consider the huge amount of relevant and well-researched "Community Information" published on the web by individuals and smaller interest groups which is often overlooked when the person doing the research is swamped with irrelevant hits.

Geographically Indexed Community Web Pages

So how can web pages created with a geographic context be made more visible to

Free Virtual Tour of Online Information Online

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<<http://www.vivavip.com/oio/>>

internet users? How can these usually unpaid but enthusiastic and highly motivated internet "content generators" mentioned above increase the profile of their work?

First, one has to assume that the major web search engines such as Google will develop their search software to account for geographic information and that the web page indexing programs, called spiders or robots, are able to index web sites in a geographic context. The web page creator then has two main options: They may be able to register the site with the search engine and when they do, also include a "geographic stamp" for the web site such as a co-ordinate; Alternatively, they could embed this stamp within the pages' HTML in a standard place where the search engine spiders/robots have been programmed to look for co-ordinates.

Web Page Registration with GIS-Enabled Search Engine

To illustrate the principle of the first option, a basic working model search engine submission form has been created, and readers are encouraged to submit their own sites or sites they find useful. The search engine's "Go Geo" form can be at <<http://www.gogeo.net>>. Any

GOLD

A nostalgic look back at FreePint, from this time last year to six years ago:

- FreePint No.139 26th June 2003. "Taxation Law Resources Online - Tax Doesn't Have to be Taxing" and "Searching Free Trade Mark Databases on the Web"
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/260603.htm>
- FreePint No.115 27th June 2002. "RSI and the Library and Information Science Professional"
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/270602.htm>
- FreePint No.90 21st June 2001. "Do you Google?" and "Electronic Health Information : A boon and a curse!"
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/210601.htm>
- FreePint No.65, 22nd June 2000. "Internet Intelligence - analysing web-sites for competitive intelligence" and "WAP Technology and Services"
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/220600.htm>
- FreePint No.41, 24th June 1999. "Answering back" and "Finding Links to the Past: archaeological resources on the Web"
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/240699.htm>
- FreePint No.16, 25th June 1998. "Finding information products and services via the Net" and "Bioscience Information on the Internet"
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/250698.htm>

Related FreePint links:

- 'Geography and Mapping' articles in the FreePint Portal <<http://www.freepint.com/go/p189>>
- Post a message to the author, Chris Kutler, or suggest further resources at the FreePint Bar <<http://www.freepint.com/bar>>
- Read this article online, with activated hyperlinks <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/010704.htm#feature>>
- Access the entire archive of FreePint content <http://www.freepint.com/portal/content/>

website address added to the "Archaeology" subject form will also be included in the hit list output from a search of Archaeology UK's ARCHI (Archaeological Sites Index) database at <<http://www.digital-documents.co.uk/archi/archi.htm>>.

Here's how the model works. When you go to the site, you simply enter the address (URL) of the website you want to add to the search engine, together with a placename or a co-ordinate in the British Ordnance Survey Grid Reference format (OS). The placename or co-ordinate is the georeference for the webpage and stamps the web page with a geographic identity. Note that the system can convert a placename into a co-ordinate, so you don't always have to know a place's grid reference in order to submit a web page.

When a web user searches the internet they would simply enter the keywords plus a geographic reference such as a placename or OS co-ordinate together with a distance value, say 10 km. This distance value tells the search engine to only return results from web sites which have a geographic stamp within that distance from the placename of interest (e.g. Kingston, Devon). This is going to have the obvious benefit of excluding all Kingston places outside of Devon and all sites relating to Devon which have the word Kingston in them but not within 10km of the place Kingston.

However, in addition, websites within the 10km radius which don't contain the Kingston placename will also be included as long as the web site has been submitted to the search engine in a geographically enabled way. This overcomes one of the problems mentioned at the start of this article - the need to know the names of nearby places in order to find possibly relevant web pages.

GIS-Enabled Web Pages

A problem with the need to register web pages with the various search engines is that it takes time and there might be hundreds of different search engines to which you want to submit your site. It might be easier to type the geographic locational information (i.e. co-ordinate) directly into web pages' HTML. This sounds difficult, but the technicalities may be much easier than one might think. Again, we have to assume that the major search engines' spiders have been programmed to look for a page's georeference when they index the web page. They already look for keyword information in a page's <meta> tags anyway, so this might make an appropriate starting point, e.g. <meta name="Keywords" Content="martin,family,history, kingston,devon, SX 63 47">.

There are problems with the above in that there isn't anything to tell the spider/robot that the co-ordinate (SX 63 47) is associated with the Ordnance Survey British National Grid Referencing System, but the format of the "keyword", i.e. two upper case characters followed by two sets of 2 to 6 digits which may or may not be separated by a space, makes it likely. How can we find out if a search engine spider looks for these coordinates?

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XHTML encoding of Dublin Core metadata

When talking about web pages, the Dublin Core Metadata tags provide a simple and standard framework which allow web page creators to insert general information about the information on the page directly into the HTML of the page. For example, there are tags for 'publisher', 'language', 'subject', and for our purposes 'coverage', which can be used to specify the geographic location to which the information on the web pages relates. If standards like this are used, it is going to be much simpler to program the robots mentioned earlier to find their way to the geographic stamp in a web page. Basically, this just means adding a couple of extra tags to the HTML from the Dublin Core set of tags. Adding the particular Dublin Core tag, called "coverage", is very straightforward and the process shouldn't be allowed to frighten or intimidate anyone. For an example of how one might encode a web page in this way, click the "geocodes" link at <<http://www.gogeo.net>>.

Conclusions

With the number of internet sites ever expanding, adding geographical relevance to a search provides an obvious benefit to many researchers. It provides speed and accuracy to what is often a long-winded and frustrating experience for those interested in genealogy, local history, archaeology and potentially many other fields.

Links

Understanding the British National Grid Referencing System <<http://digbig.com/4bhps>>

Dublin Core

<http://dublincore.org/>
<http://digbig.com/4bhpt>

GIS-Enabled Search Engines

<http://local.google.com/lochp>
http://local.google.com/help/faq_local.html

GIS-Enabled Web Sites

<http://www.gogeo.ac.uk/>
<http://www.digital-documents.co.uk>
<http://www.ahds.ac.uk/archaeology/index.htm>

GIS Discussions
<http://www.vivavip.com/go/w165>