






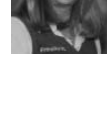

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Editorial

by Monique Cuvelier, Editor, FreePint



Janet holds a station in my parents' house that neither I nor my three siblings ever did. Corine, the eldest and first spoiled, was never treated so royally. Susie, the most mollycoddled, wasn't loved quite as unconditionally. Certainly Lance, the only boy, wasn't fed so lavishly. And I, the youngest, was never given so much undivided attention. Yes, Janet is an orphan and deserves a little tenderness, but then again, she is a cat.

I find accounts of the cat's latest antics mostly boring, but while reading through Ulla de Stricker and Barbie Keiser's feature in this issue of FreePint, I kept thinking about that little feline. Spend any time at my parents' house and you'll hear this phrase at least once: 'Give her what she wants'.

Janet need only twitch her tail to receive a treat (to the detriment of her waistline), but your users won't be as forthcoming about what they want. You have to ask them. De Stricker and Keiser -- who rightly maintain that if you don't give your audience what they want, they'll leave -- tell you how to extract this valuable information in "What They Say and Do: Practical Tips for Harvesting Reliable User Feedback for Planning".

Pam Foster, who is the editor of FreePint's sister publication VIP <<http://www.vivaVip.com/>>, will help you determine how to keep on top of what users might want in the future with her look at the latest business information trends. Her summary of the field uncovers that info products are focused on adding value and creating customised applications.

Certainly one of the most innovative areas to watch in the future is the Semantic Web. The web we use now consists of documents that are primarily designed for humans to read, but the Semantic Web is a way of arranging information so machines can communicate. Our reviewer Mike Jones takes a look at what's to come in "Semantic Web Technologies: Trends and Research in Ontology-based Systems".

We also want to know what you want. A good time to share your kudos and complaints is at Online Information <<http://www.online-information.co.uk/>>, coming up at the end of November in London. Find us at stand #122. Or contact us any time via our online suggestion box <<http://www.freepint.com/suggestionbox.htm>>.

The future is notoriously difficult to predict, but we're doing our best with this issue. We hope this information will let you spoil your customers and build a better business. But just for good measure, be a little extra nice to your kids too or they might get jealous.

Monique Cuvelier
Editor, FreePint
e: monique.cuvelier@freepint.com
w: <<http://www.onopoly.com/support/team/>>

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Janet Moore is currently an area librarian at Southampton City Libraries and has spent much of her career helping readers find the best book to read..

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My Favourite Tipples

by Janet Moore

If you want some help when choosing new books, mainly novels, to read, try the following:

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- Fantastic Fiction <<http://www.fantasticfiction.co.uk/>> has a huge list of authors and their books, with links to Amazon.com and also to author's web sites where available.
- Whichbook <<http://www.whichbook.net/>> offers a different way of searching for something to read. You choose various criteria (e.g. happy/sad, funny/disturbing), and this search engine comes back with a list of novels matching your criteria. It also has links to library catalogues round the country, so you can check and see where the book is available.
- For reading group members, ReadingGroupGuides.com <<http://www.readinggroupguides.com/>>, has a good list of authors, titles and guides for discussing the book you're reading.
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The current issue of VIP concentrates on emerging economies and includes an in-depth review of RUSLANA, a company financial data product covering Russian and Ukrainian companies. A separate review looks at MINT GLOBAL and Bureau van Dijk's new end-user platform. Plus, all the latest news from the sector.

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The Jinfo Newsletter is published free every two weeks, and contains a list of the latest vacancies along with job-seeking advice. The latest article is entitled "Thriving on change: The right stuff for resilience in an information career".
Read it online and subscribe free at <<http://www.jinfo.com/newsletter/>>.

These are just a selection of the jobs in the current edition of the Jinfo Newsletter
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www.jinfo.com**Research Manager -
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An International Investment Bank require a Research Manager to cover maternity leave for a period of up to one year.

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Country: United Kingdom

<<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j5908>>

**Corporate Finance
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Country: United Kingdom

<<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j5910>>

Information Assistant

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Recruiter: Instant Library Recruitment (Tribal Group Plc)

Country: United Kingdom

<<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j5933>>

Research Analysts

Man Cons in Consumer, Energy & Healthcare Practices: varied requests business, technical, management, statistical or legal info.

Recruiter: Sue Hill Recruitment and Services Limited

Country: United Kingdom

<<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j5926>>

**Senior Sector
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Senior Research Analysts required at senior level and we currently have 6 such vacancies at high salaries.

Recruiter: Glen Recruitment

Country: United Kingdom

<<http://www.jinfo.com/go/j5944>>

NB: The above are paid listings, and a selection of jobs from the database

FreePint Bar

By Monique Cuvelier, Editor, FreePint
In Association with Factiva
a Dow Jones & Reuters Company

Monique Cuvelier serves as editor of the FreePint Newsletter. She has contributed many articles to dozens of publications in the UK and US, CFO, CIO Insight, eCommerce Business, and also written about business and technology for The Western Mail, Wales' national newspaper. She has launched and run several online and print publications. She can be reached at <monique.cuvelier@freepint.com>.

The FreePint Bar is where you can get free help with your tricky research questions <<http://www.freepint.com/bar/>>

As university swings back into gear and workers return from holiday, people are researching dissertations and thinking about how they can reshape their clients' email-storage habits. Read on for highlights, or jump into a discussion at <<http://www.freepint.com/bar/>>.

- Frustration is the word for one Bar member who can't afford GBP 3,000+ reports on an as-needed basis. The trouble? An 'ever-increasing list of analysts who are pulling their research from the Thomson Research database'. Short of transferring the hefty costs to clients, she wonders how others are managing the same issue. Contribute your thoughts <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b64742>>. You can also read and add to the discussion about information-product feature wish-lists over at the VIP Lounge <<http://web.vivaVip.com/forum/Lounge/>>.
- Panicked students often come to the Student Bar for help when it comes to writing dissertations. As one student desperately seeks for ideas <<http://www.freepint.com/go/s12197>>, we thought we'd assemble a list of some of the more helpful past discussions on how to hone and research dissertations on: corporate governance <<http://www.freepint.com/go/s4674>>; the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 <<http://www.freepint.com/go/s4688>>; and graphic design <<http://www.freepint.com/go/s4548>>, <<http://www.freepint.com/go/s4771>> and <<http://www.freepint.com/go/s12126>>.

- Two recent discussions revolve around the finer points of email. This poster <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b64469>> learns the intricacies of the BCC field. Another needs some help on changing the email filing (or piling) habits of his users <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b64942>>. Any brilliant ideas to add?

What's your grievance, concern or interest? Ask your friends and colleagues at the Bar <<http://www.freepint.com/bar/>>. Also keep an eye on discussions at the VIP Lounge <<http://web.vivaVip.com/forum/Lounge/>>.

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"What They Say and Do: Practical Tips for Harvesting Reliable User Feedback for Planning"

By Ulla de Stricker and Barbie Keiser



Ulla de Stricker <<http://www.destricker.com/>> is an expert in strategic planning for information services and in designing the underlying information audits and user needs assessments. She has built a strong track record assisting managers of information-centric entities to design, assess and manage their offerings, services and client relationships. Her firm is highly respected in North America among information professionals. Prior to establishing her firm in 1992, Ulla held several senior management positions in the information industry. She is a popular conference speaker and writer on topics of interest to professionals working in information and knowledge management fields, sharing her 30 years of experience. She can be reached at <ulla@destricker.com>.

When a website, an intranet, an information service or a marketing/communications campaign -- you name it -- does not see the traffic it 'should' see (given the size of targeted user groups, the number of association members, the number of individuals in a demographic group and other guideposts), those in charge of that service are understandably concerned. Did we misinterpret what users were telling us? Did we not get the full picture when we asked them? Have users' needs shifted and we missed it? Were we even tracking the evolution of those needs?

Over time, services can, and often do fall out of alignment with user requirements. It is necessary to be vigilant and persistent in monitoring those requirements -- not just through listening to what users say publicly about their needs when asked, but also through observing what they do in practice. Further, it is important not to be tempted to go with unsolicited input (the squeaky wheels) but rather to launch a systematic scrutiny of what users and non-users alike think about the service in question.

User interaction with all things electronic -- websites, intranets, extranets, e-newsletters, web stores, e-marketing -- is a complex affair (unless, of course, that interaction consists of hitting the Delete or Close button). Some of the interaction we observe through traffic and click-path tracing tools; but such tools naturally can't help us understand what went through the mind of the individual who just clicked, much less help us predict what he or she might do in future. Moreover, they do not help us determine how representative the individual is of the total potential user group.

Those in charge of (re)building electronic content delivery and communication vehicles need a deep and crystal clear understanding of user preferences. But that's an oversimplification. We need to understand what they want to get done when they come to our site or service, and

This article reflects key points in a presentation to be given by the authors at the Internet Librarian International conference in London, 16-17 October 2006 <<http://www.internet-librarian.com/>>.

what they would like to have in hand when they leave. Once we understand that, we can work on making the process smooth and enjoyable.

To arrive at such an understanding, we need answers to questions about several facets of the user experience:

Context: What specific goals are users hoping to accomplish when they paste in that URL or click that bookmark? Do they have a concrete task to finish (what is the conversion rate for a currency; what is the latest news on an organisation), or are they conducting broader research (what are the NGOs saying about X issue; what is the medical consensus on Y drug; what is the market outlook for Z products)?

Mood and attitude: Are they under time pressure to solve a problem at work, or are they at home, browsing to see what's new or interesting in an area of personal interest?

Past experience: What are their expectations of the navigation and content options, based on past exposure to similar sites or services?

Subjective impressions: What features in appearance, navigation and content presentation do they find intuitive, easily followed, complicated, ambiguous, confusing, totally baffling or downright annoying? Can they articulate why?

Willingness to share reactions: Which of their many possible reactions ...

- Will they offer voluntarily? ('I really like ...')
- Would they offer if pressed? ('Well, now that you mention it, I suppose ...')

Barbie E. Keiser is an information resources management (IRM) consultant located in the metro-Washington, D.C., area. The objective of her consulting practice is to enable her clients to use information effectively to improve profit and growth. Since 1987, she has worked with libraries, archives, clearinghouses, and information centres to reengineer their operations, revitalise their collections, develop new products/services, and expand usage. Ms. Keiser has undertaken numerous consulting assignments for both on-going concerns and start-up corporations; academic institutions; publishers and other information providers (database producers and vendors); government agencies; and not-for-profit organisations around the world. She is a sought-after speaker at library and information industry events, worldwide, and a featured author in business, information, and library publications. She can be reached at <barbieelene@att.net>.

- Would they keep to themselves? ('Saying I'm confused could make me appear unsophisticated or ...').

Likelihood of and reasons for returning voluntarily: Aside from situations where users are forced to visit a site because there is no alternative, how interested are users in coming back, based on their initial visit?

- 'I accomplished what I needed to do eventually, but it was so frustrating that I'll look for another resource'
- 'No other sites offer this content so I'll return, but not happily'
- 'I didn't accomplish what I needed to do, but it was so much fun I think I'll go back another time'.

Investigational approaches

Having any hope of building and maintaining compelling websites, information services and communications campaigns necessitates a thorough understanding of existing -- and potential -- users' context, goals, attitudes, experience, impressions and desires. This tall order cannot be filled by an annual survey or the odd poll! It requires a systematic approach to assessing and monitoring user needs and then to implementing new tools and technologies geared to meeting those needs.

Below, we offer a set of practical tips on how to obtain credible evidence of user opinion. None are surprising, but that does not lessen the discipline needed in carrying them out regularly.

The practice of assembling input about user opinion goes by any name you care to give it. If 'audit' is too ominous a word in your culture, just choose some other designation (e.g. review, assessment) to indicate that some form of examination is involved. The key is to undertake a systematic investigation that will yield information upon which to act.

Below we address two scenarios: an audit of a communications programme and an audit of a website or intranet design.

In the case of investigating a communications programme, the communications audit is an effort to understand what users seek from the organisation or service in question. You're looking to find out where they go if they can't find the information they need from you and what other organisations or services (i.e. the competition) are succeeding in communicating to the target group so that target users seek them out first. Having such an understanding will help those in charge of communicating with the target market as they plan how to:

- Present the information that needs to reach the target audience in such a way that it is useful to the audience and is reinforced through several means
- Avoid overloading the audience with too much information for them to absorb and use
- Present information in the way users expect or seek to find it
- Minimise staff workload as a result of increased number of communications vehicles, message frequency and message customisation
- Use techniques such as knowledge-sharing, stories, ideas and best practices exchanges, and interactivity to serve the target group.

In the case of a website or intranet audit, the goal is to understand how the users experience their interaction with the site. What parts are intuitive for them, and where do they scratch their heads? What makes them say, 'Cool!' and what makes them say, 'Huh?' What's missing for them? Is there too much irrelevant clutter?

Ask, or watch?

In addition to the 'please tell me' method of investigation, the at-the-elbow observation technique yields valuable insight. There are two variants:

- Silent observation: 'Just let me sit here and watch as you go about typical tasks,

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- Internet Librarian International 2006: 16-17 October at the Copthorne Tara Hotel in London. Register now at <<http://www.internet-librarian.com/registration.shtml>>
- "How to use an Organizational Information Audit to Determine What Services Users Really Need and Want" video <http://www.sirisdynixinstitute.com/seminar_page.php?sid=37>
- Post a message to the authors, Ulla de Stricker and Barbie E. Keiser, or suggest further resources, at the FreePint Bar <<http://www.freepint.com/bar>>
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and allow me to ask why you did this or didn't do that'.

- Easter egg hunt: 'Please find the answers, using this website or using your memory of having received a promotional message, to the following specific questions'. Users' success rate tells a lot about what needs to change. A key advantage of the egg-hunt method is that users participating in the study cannot get by with low-value statements like, 'It seems alright', or, 'Yes, I heard of it'. They actually must dig in and look for something specific. In the process they must explain their search path or memory triggers.

Asking methods range from the highly involved (for example, an in-depth personal interview) to the minimally involved (for example, a survey). Similarly, observation and challenge methods range from the up-close, at-the-elbow, click level to the remote analysis of aggregated click statistics.

The mix of methods chosen depends on several factors including corporate culture, level of detail needed, size of total user population, amount of time available, the skills of staff members engaged in carrying out the assessment, and many more.

Investigational steps

These steps will help you decide what kind of investigation you need to launch and how to carry it out.

Step 1: What type of investigation is needed?

The audit pre-work consists of a determination of the precise kind of insight needed. For example:

- What do we already know? (Users have been complaining they can't find ...; or it seems members of the target group haven't understood ...)
- What statistical evidence is at hand? What does it suggest?
- What do we know we don't know? (Is it a matter of training? Or must the site be redesigned? What was confusing in our message?)
- Who do we need to hear from? (Did the complaints come from a certain group of users or from across the board?)
- Who can undertake the work of getting the input? (Can we do it ourselves, or should we hire in consultants -- who might obtain a more candid picture?)

- What mix of methods is best suited for the situation at hand? (Personal interviews, at-the-elbow observations, Easter egg hunts, focus groups, a survey?).

Key pros and cons for each type of method include:

- Personal interviews: Advantages are that these unearth detail and let you unlock the potential of candour in your subjects. They give you the opportunity to ask, 'Why do you say that?' and help you build a relationship with your subject. The disadvantages are that it may be difficult to reach the 'right' interviewees through personal interviews. They're time-consuming, so you can only reach so many individuals.
- At-the-elbow observations: These are helpful for helping you witness how people use your service. They let you see where users hesitate or if they misinterpret a button, and they can be much more illuminating than interview comments. Again, however, it may be difficult to reach the right subjects through these, and they're also time-consuming, limiting the number of individuals you can reach.
- Egg hunts/communications effectiveness test: A benefit here is that the documented success rate they produce serves as a mirror of how well the site is designed and how well the communications campaign succeeded. They isolate the key specifics that need to be addressed. On the down side, users may not be keen to 'take a test'.
- Focus groups: A focus group is an efficient way to get input from users (count on six to eight participants per 1- to 2-hour session). Participants tend to feed off each other, driving more detail. Scheduling makes this time-consuming, and it does require an able facilitator who knows how to keep the group on track.
- Survey: This will give you the opportunity to quantify how many agree with X opinion and measure change over time by comparing responses with the last

survey's responses. However, respondents may not want to take another survey, making for a low response rate and unreliable results. It's also difficult to devise questions that get at nuances in a site. Another hazard of a survey is that respondents may 'upgrade' their responses, for instance click 'frequently' instead of 'occasionally'.

Step 2: Clipboard -- getting the raw input

Once the audit process has been planned, the detailed work of 'sitting down with the users' and 'collecting the responses' ensues. The note-taking and documenting is quite time-consuming. If the examiners are emotionally attached to the site or activity in question, it requires a willingness to document the less flattering input as clearly as the more flattering input!

Step 3: Rollup -- what are the key themes? What might they mean?

Now comes the editorial phase. What are the key messages and takeaways? What should we do with input that seems to fall outside the key findings? How can the findings be translated into pointers toward directions? Does what we observed in one instance (e.g. with respect to a website) carry over into other areas such as an e-newsletter or the intranet?

Step 4: Translation into specific plans

This is the stage when the difficult analysis takes place. Ask yourself: What does it all mean? How can the key themes be translated into concrete design or process changes? What will it take to implement them?

Step 5: Implementation and measurement

These last two steps may seem daunting, but they are important. First, having acted on user input, it is crucial to demonstrate to the study participants (and all others) that the input caused specific change. In other words: 'Thanks. We heard you. We acted accordingly. It will always be worth your while to participate when we come looking for input'. Second, we must find out

whether the changes had the desired effect: 'Did we change the content or design in the right way? Has your issue been resolved? Is the site easier to use now? Are you better able to understand what we are communicating now?'. Naturally, traffic- and usage-indicators will tell their own story about the degree to which the entire exercise was successful.

Words of advice from veterans

As seasoned consultants in the business of helping our clients get the most out of their investments in services and content, we offer in conclusion a handful of tried-and-true tips for anyone about to launch a user input project:

1. Distance the owners from the input gathering. The team members in charge of building and maintaining a website or operating a service programme know too much and will have difficulty maintaining neutrality and objectivity as they receive user comments. They will tend to unconsciously suppress vital details.
2. Inflict no pain. Users are busy; make the input process smooth -- fun is even better. Easter egg hunt contests, with prizes to be won for (1) the highest success rate and -- this is key -- (2) the most illuminating commentary pointing to navigation issues, works wonders!
3. Reward participants. First, show appreciation for the participation through simple gestures -- coffee and cookies, thank-you notes to the manager, public acknowledgement. Later on, tell them what the result was (see item seven below).
4. Prime the input pump by making it safe for participants to be candid. Clearly signal they are in good company and that they will not be seen as untrained or incompetent if they admit they are confused: 'You are not the first to say that. We are intrigued. Can you elaborate?' Or, 'Your colleagues have indicated they find X ambiguous. Do you, too, find it confusing?'. Reaffirming that responses will be kept anonymous may help individuals feel more comfortable speaking frankly than might otherwise have been the case.
5. Secure future cooperation without narrowing user input to a pool of regulars. 'May we count on you again as we test the revised website? Could you suggest colleagues whose input may be useful in future?'.

6. At the end of the audit, it is vital not to just fade away. Having asked for input obliges us to show participants that the input resulted in change, or will do so. We recommend a summary to participants indicating not only gratitude for the input, but specifically a rundown: (a) we are able to do X immediately; (b) we can achieve Y in such-and-such a time frame; and (c) options for certain of the more ambitious changes are being investigated. Where a desired change cannot be implemented just yet, or at all, explain the reason specifically: 'We recognise that your suggestion is a desirable feature and regret that at this time, resources limit our ability to implement it' not only clarifies that the user input was valid and has been heard, but could be a means of generating some grassroots pressure for more resources! The key is to signal that you heard the input the participants offered up, and to keep everyone in the loop as to what is coming up.

Comment

"As a freelance researcher, I miss picking up intelligence about new sources etc. from colleagues in an office setting. FreePint provides me with a wonderful online community of peers all over the world, who share their collective wisdom."

Freelance Researcher, UK
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Comment

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"Semantic Web Technologies: Trends and Research in Ontology-based Systems"

Written by John Davies, Rudi Studer, Paul Warren

Reviewed by Mike Jones



Mike Jones is a Senior Technical Researcher working at the Institute for Learning and Research Technology (ILRT) at the University of Bristol. He is currently part of a team working on a Semantic Web project called IUGO <<http://iugo.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/>>. Prior to March 2006 he was employed as senior web developer in the Web and Portal Team at Cardiff University working with portal and web content management systems..

In May 2001, an article entitled "The Semantic Web" was published in Scientific American magazine. It described a future where the Semantic Web, which would evolve from the current web, would enable machines to manipulate data and complete tasks, for example to schedule appointments on behalf of their owners.

The web we use now consists of documents that are primarily designed for humans to read. The Semantic Web -- envisioned by Tim Berners-Lee, the man behind the World Wide Web and HTML -- is a way of arranging information so machines can easily read it. Once data is in this format, it becomes possible to create a global system for publishing information that can be easily accessed by everything, human or machine.

In an article titled "The Semantic Web Revisited", Berners-Lee notes that the full vision of the Semantic Web has yet to be fully realised, but there has been great progress in the development of standards, languages and technologies. Gartner's recent "Emerging Technologies Hype Cycle" indicates there has been an adoption of Semantic Web technologies in certain areas like enterprise information integration, content management and life sciences but believes that main stream adoption is still five to 10 years away.

Semantically Enabled Knowledge Technologies (SEKT) is a European Union project that encompasses research and the development of tools and demonstrators of Semantic Web technology. "Semantic Web Technologies: Trends and Research in Ontology-based Systems", edited by John Davies, Rudi Studer and Paul Warren, documents some of the results of this project and provides a survey and analysis of the current state of Semantic Web research, especially in the area of creating, managing and mediating ontologies.

The book states from the outset that it is intended as a guide to the technologies of the Semantic Web for 'graduate and advanced undergraduate students, academics and industrial researchers in the field'.

"Semantic Web Technologies" 14 chapters are structured around the 'lifecycle of an ontology' and are written by different researchers in the field. Some chapters focus on the construction and management of ontologies, such as semi-automatic ontology creation through knowledge discovery and the evolution of existing ontologies to reflect changes in data and the changing interests of the people who use them. Other chapters examine the way ontologies are used in such areas as Knowledge Management and specific applications of Semantic Web technology.

It is not necessary to read the book from cover to cover, because certain chapters might be of more interest to some readers than others. Those interested in web services and service-orientated architecture might read 'Semantic Web Services -- Approaches and Perspectives' (chapter 10) and 'A Semantic Service-Orientated Architecture for the Telecommunications Industry' (chapter 13). This cross-referencing structure works well.

Even though the individual chapters of 'Semantic Web Technologies' are interesting as stand-alone works, the book as a whole provides a useful survey of the current state of Semantic Web research. At a retail price of GBP 65, this book is priced slightly outside the realm of the common reference book, but remains a useful addition to a Semantic Web library.

Related FreePint links:

- "Semantic Web Technologies: Trends and Research in Ontology-based Systems" ISBN 1843341786, published by John Wiley & Sons
- "The Semantic Web is Your Friend", By Libby Miller and Simon Price
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/270504.htm#feature>>
- Find out more about this book online at the FreePint Bookshelf
<<http://www.freepint.com/bookshelf/semant.htm>>

Related links:

- * "The Semantic Web", By Tim Berners-Lee, James Hendler and Ora Lassila. Scientific American, May 2001 <<http://digbig.com/4bfbf>>.
- "The Semantic Web Revisited", Shadbolt, N., Berners-Lee, T. and Hall, W. IEEE Intelligent Systems, May 2006 <<http://eprints.ecs.soton.ac.uk/12614/>>.
- Gartner's 2006 Emerging Technologies Hype Cycle Highlights Key Technology Themes
<<http://www.gartner.com/it/page.jsp?id=495475>>
- SEKT <<http://www.sekt-project.com/>>
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Current Issue

- **Focus On:** In-depth reviews of RUSLANA, Bureau van Dijk's newest product with information on Russian and Ukrainian companies, and MINT GLOBAL, BvDEP's overlay of the savvy MINT interface to its ORBIS data.
- **In Scope:** Is print passe? New online news publications and the launch of Google News Alerts raises the question, yet again.
- **Insight:** An interview with LexisNexis Butterworths' MD Josh Bottomley reveals where the organisation is headed and how customer needs helped steer it in that direction
- Industry news, new products and product updates

Published Reviews

- RUSLANA
- MINT Global
- Company Insights from OneSource
- HighBeam
- Alacra, Thomson, FT
- Silobreaker
- Verdict Retail Knowledge Centre:
- Business Insights
- Snapdata
- Global Market Information Database
- MarketResearch.com
- Market Research (Profound) on Thomson Business Intelligence
- Web Alerts
- Thomson Business Intelligence
- Pay-as-you-go (Factiva, LexisNexis, Dialog, Alacra)
- Country Insight
- CI-newsdesk
- GMID (Euromonitor) and Market Indicators and Forecasts (EIU) (comparative reviews) Extra
- Perfect Debt and Europrospectus (comparative reviews)
- CoreReference and CoreCompensation (Hemscott) Extra
- Global Business Browser
- OneSource Express UK
- OneSource Express
- ISI Emerging Markets
- Mergent Online
- Hoover's
- CorpfinWorldwide v. ZEPHYR v. Thomson ONE
- Factiva SalesWorks and Factiva Companies & Executives
- EBSCO Bus. Source Corporate
- Business Monitor Online
- Corpfin's CompanyQuery
- BvD's Mint
- Dialog Newsroom v. Factiva v. LexisNexis
- D&B's Global Reference Solution and MarketDirect

Forthcoming Reviews

- SkyMinder; Executive Daily Brief (EBSCO); Risk Management Reference Center (EBSCO)
- Overview of the industry
- FactSet; Capital IQ

Testimonial

"VIP gives me an objective analysis of business information products and vendors as well as practical and informative advice on industry issues."

*Kerryn Dillon,
European Marketing Manager,
OneSource Information Services*

"Business Information Trends: Adding Value and Creating Customised Applications"

By Pam Foster, Editor, VIP



Pam Foster is the editor of VIP

<<http://www.vivaVip.com/>>, published by FreePint Ltd. An information professional, she has been writing about the business information sector for more than 20 years. Before joining FreePint she was editor of the Headland Business Information newsletters and the Online Business Sourcebook. In a freelance capacity she has written extensively for many publications and acted as consultant to large information companies, including LexisNexis, Thomson Gale and ICC, as well as many smaller organisations. She still writes for Business Information Review and is co-author of the Annual Business Information Resources Survey, both published by Sage Publications.

The latest annual European Online Information Market survey from IRN Research <<http://www.irn-research.com/>> values the European online market at EUR 3,513 million for 2005, which represents an increase of 14 per cent compared to last year's results. While the trend is upwards, it wouldn't be wise to get too carried away with optimism. In the main, the 2005 growth came from subscribers switching from print to electronic services, rather than revenue created from new sales.

In order to attract new clients and increase profitability, online- information companies need to be adding value to existing products, as well as creating more customised solutions. An overview of activity within the business information sector, over the last three months or so, suggests that this is just what many companies are doing. The summer months have seen a number of publishers and vendors busily creating new alliances and enhancing their products to meet the changing demands of their customers.

Vendors increasingly moving away from core online business

Large vendors are increasingly moving away from the role of general online research business towards one that develops products and services for specific groups of customers. LexisNexis <<http://www.lexisnexis.com/>>, for example, has just upgraded MarketImpact, a product that is based on its traditional news and business platform but which also uses software for tracking a company's reputation. The premise is all about helping companies objectively measure how they're doing among their key opinion formers by measuring not just the amount of content in the press, but the tone of that content. Its aim is to help clients to measure their return on investment and to monitor corporate and brand reputation, competitive threats and potential merger opportunities. As well as core news and business sources, it also tracks influential blogs.

Other recent developments at LexisNexis include the development of eDisclosure, a product which is aimed at both corporations and law firms. In order to find one piece of incriminating evidence, large litigation cases often require sifting through hundreds of thousands of documents. EDisclosure does this automatically by prioritising where this evidence is likely to be.

For more information on how LexisNexis is increasingly developing products to meet the needs of customers in their day-to-day work, please see an interview with Josh Bottomley, MD, LexisNexis Butterworths, in the September 2006 (34) issue of VIP <<http://web.vivaVip.com/go/vip/>>.

Making it easier to locate hard-to-find company information

Both OneSource and ProQuest have enhanced their products to help users locate hard-to-find company information.

By taking advantage of its content-mining technology, which employs pattern recognition and linguistic technologies to distil valuable but hard-to-find information from unstructured reports, OneSource <<http://www.onesource.com/>> has made it easier for its clients to locate strategic intelligence. Valuable strategic data is locked inside analysts' reports, but it can take ages to search and locate such material and, in some cases, it can be easily missed.

Users of OneSource's Global, European and UK Business Browser products can now access Company Insights, a module that provides evaluations of a company's strengths and weaknesses, plus important information on strategic initiatives and corporate relationships. By developing Company Insights, OneSource has added a new layer of value to its company information at no extra costs to subscribers.

Related FreePint links:

- "Marketing for the Info-Entrepreneur," by Mary Ellen Bates
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/060504.htm#feature>>
- "Trends in business information, provision and use" By Pam Foster
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/040506.htm#feature>>
- What's your product wish-list?
<<http://www.vivaVip.com/go/l6382>>
- European Online Information Market survey from IRN Research
<<http://www.irn-research.com/>>

For an in-depth review of Company Insights please see the July 2006 (32) issue of VIP
<<http://web.vivaVip.com/go/vip/>>.

As well as requiring the latest company financials and filings, corporate, legal and other researchers also have a need for historical company information. ProQuest <<http://www.proquest.com/>> has responded to this need by launching an archive of American historical annual reports. The new database, Historical Annual Reports, provides an archive comprising 160 years of continuous coverage for more than 700 of America's top companies. Traditionally, such reports have been difficult to locate as they are scattered around the country on film, fiche and paper.

The Historical Annual Reports database contains the records for a wide range of industries, including manufacturing, insurance, transportation, oil and gas, food and beverage, and retail. The new application meets the needs of legal and corporate researchers, enabling them to trace a company's family tree, including name changes and acquisitions, product lifecycles, developments, financial data, statistics and corporate self-image over time.

Compliance is big business

New and more stringent anti-money laundering regulations have been introduced in an attempt to combat international terrorism, drug trafficking and organised crime. Financial institutions, legal, tax and accountancy firms are now faced with new levels of risk management, and greater demands for compliance than ever before. Meeting these new requirements has created extra demands on information professionals and vendors alike.

Most of the major information companies have customised -- or are in the process of

adapting -- their business information products to include the necessary data to support Know Your Customer (KYC) enquiries; others have developed special KYC products. Complanet <<http://www.complanet.com/>>, a specialist provider of compliance and software applications for the financial services industry, has just enhanced its client screening products with the addition of a new Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) module. Factiva <<http://www.factiva.com/>> has also made a number of enhancements to its Factiva Public Figures & Associates, including what it claims to be the 'market-first PEP Risk Score tool'.

The term Politically Exposed Persons, or PEPs as they are more commonly known, is difficult to define, as definitions of what constitutes a PEP remain opaque and can vary according to local legislation. Generally, the term is used to describe senior individuals who may be in the military, officials in a foreign political party, senior executives of foreign government owned commercial enterprises, etc. and their immediate family members and other close associates.

The Complanet module includes new content to cover former PEPs. This new database of 165,000 PEPs covers 10 vocational categories for more than 200 countries and territories globally. Complanet says that the improvements increase and enhance its content within three important categories: ex-PEPs and their close family members; international organisations; and high-risk countries and jurisdictions.

Factiva's Public Figures & Associates global database contains profiles of more than 500,000 PEPs, their relatives and close associates, as well as coverage of international sanctions and law enforcement lists. Factiva's new PEP Risk Score tool enables a central administrator

to set and maintain PEP risk guidance via a combination of criteria. The risk information is automatically generated in the PEP record and provides guidance to compliance staff as to how the account should be treated in accordance with the organisation's risk management strategy.

The whole issue of compliance - regulatory climate, Know Your Client, PEPs, and compliance products - is covered in the August 2006 (33) issue of VIP
<<http://web.vivaVip.com/go/vip/>>.

Meeting the increasing demand for data on emerging markets

Information companies are continually adapting and enhancing their products to keep pace with an increased demand for data on emerging economies. ISI Emerging Markets, Bureau van Dijk Electronic Publishing, Interfax-CEA, Bonnier Business Press and Silobreaker have all been active in the area.

ISI Emerging Markets
<<http://www.securities.com/>> has beefed up its deal data in Russia and CIS countries by acquiring Moscow-based RussiaDeal's
<<http://www.russiadeal.ru/>> financial deal information. Founded in 2003, RussiaDeal provides English-language information on financial transactions throughout Russia, the CIS and Eastern European markets. Coverage includes mergers and acquisitions, equity capital markets, private equity and venture capital activities. The company also publishes a weekly newsletter that reports on major mergers, acquisitions and other deals in the region.

ISI's Emerging Market Information Service (EMIS) provides information on more than 70 emerging markets. Available through 15 language interfaces, it aggregates and makes available full-text news articles, financial statements, company information, industry analyses, equity quotes, macroeconomic statistics and market-



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specific information, from more than 11,500 local and global publications.

Bureau van Dijk Electronic Publishing
<<http://www.bvdep.com/>> is acting upon feedback from usability tests to upgrade RUSLANA, its Russian and Ukrainian company financial database. Usability tests ensure that the product is being developed according to what users say they need in order to assist with their work.

RUSLANA is aimed at financial services/banks, corporations, consultancies and accountants, as well as the public sector. It can typically be used for financial research, credit analysis and business-to-business marketing. In order to support and promote the new product, BvDEP has established a new office in Moscow.

RUSLANA, together with MINT GLOBAL which combines BvDEP's ORBIS database with a new, intuitive and easy-to-use interface, are both reviewed in the September 2006 (34) issue of VIP
<<http://web.vivaVip.com/go/vip/>>.

The rapid development of the asset-management market and the fast growth of the number of managing companies have generated investor demand for independent assessments of the quality of asset management. However, in Russia products of this kind tend to be below Western standards and their methodology is usually based on quantitative criteria alone. In order to fill the gap, the Interfax-Center for Economic Analysis (Interfax-CEA) <<http://www.interfax.ru/index.html?lang=en>>, a division of Interfax Information Services Group, has launched Asset Management in Russia, a new program that assesses asset managing companies on the basis of their quantitative and qualitative performance.

Investors and market participants can access detailed information about the methodology of the Asset Management in Russia project from the website <<http://www.amrussia.ru/>>, a new Interfax-CEA facility. This site offers information on all segments of the asset-management market, such as management of personal, institutional and corporate assets and management of pension funds. The site also carries reports on management assessments of managing companies and mutual funds, analytical studies of the asset management market, detailed information on market participants, news, and comparisons of companies and funds based on financial and other criteria.

Bonnier Business Press <<http://www.bonnier.com/>> clearly believes in the growth potential of the Eastern Europe market. The company is expanding operations in Moscow as it attempts to become a market leader in business journalism on the Internet in Russia. Bonnier's dp.ru website <<http://dp.ru/msk/english/>>, which has been operated by the Delovoj Peterburg business daily in St. Petersburg, is to be expanded to cover the entire Russian market. As well as increasing the number of editorial and sales staff in Moscow, employee numbers in St. Petersburg will also be increased.

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Earlier this year, Bonnier Business Press established a business website in Ukraine's capital Kiev. The Russian and Ukrainian Internet services will co-operate closely, in a similar way to the business websites established in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Bonnier Business Press publishes financial dailies in 11 different countries: Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Poland, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria and Ukraine.

Silobreaker <<http://www.silobreaker.com/>> is continuing to enhance its current-awareness product that helps researchers to monitor and act on potential global instabilities. Currently, all content is available in English language only but the company is planning to add Spanish, German and French content during the rest of the year, a feature that will increase the international appeal of the service.

The focus of Silobreaker is fairly unique as it's based on global instabilities, whether political, economic or related to crime, security, the environment, health, military or industry. It integrates real-time news and content from approximately 10,000 qualified news sources and structured

biography databases from other third-party vendors, such as Moreover. It also offers an impressive array of tools for understanding the background of a situation, and the relationship between the countries, individuals involved. An in-depth review of Silobreaker is published in the June 2006 (31) issue of VIP.

<<http://web.vivaVip.com/go/vip/>>.

What I do and what I need

According to Outsell
<<http://www.outsellinc.com/>>, the time users spend on information tasks has risen from eight to 11 hours per work week in last four years or so. Users are now spending more time looking for information than applying it. This amounts to an aggregate productivity drain on knowledge workers of 54 billion hours in the US alone.

In order to halt this drain, there's a need to deliver information products based on who I am, what I do and the relevant information I need to do my job. As we've seen in this brief overview, some information companies are acting on the demand for more targeted products and for more content to be integrated into work tasks. Other companies need to follow if they are to survive.



Researching Emerging Markets

The current issue of VIP concentrates on emerging economies and includes an in-depth review of RUSLANA, a company financial data product covering Russian and Ukrainian companies. A separate review looks at MINT GLOBAL and Bureau van Dijk's new end-user platform. Plus, all the latest news from the sector.

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Events

Australia and Territories:

- "Global Summit: Technology Connected Futures" 17 - 19 October Australia and Territories
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e686>>
- "Improving Data Quality for Enhanced Business Performance" 18 - 20 October
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e716>>

France and Territories:

- "ICIC meeting" 22 - 25 October
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e625>>

United Kingdom:

- "Internet Librarian International" 16 - 17 October <http://www.freepint.com/go/e661>
- "Assessing the quality of information" 31 October
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e759>>
- "Untangling Your Web: Effective Web Site Management" 11 October
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e641>>
- "Email Management in the Public Sector" 12 October
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e726>>
- "Strategic Diversity - Consistent at the Core, Flexible in Practice" 17 October
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e738>>
- "Strategic Information Management" 18 - 19 October
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e755>>
- "Knowledge Architecture" 20 - 21 October
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e754>>
- "Blogging for Business" 25 October
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e730>>
- "Project Management" 26 October
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e670>>
- "Re-energising Information Services: Strategies for Success" 26 October
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e751>>
- "JISC RSC South East ILT Fair" 27 October
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e737>>
- "Mind of an Entrepreneur" 28 - 29 October
<<http://www.freepint.com/go/e756>>

Gold

A look back at what FreePint covered at this time in previous years:

- FreePint No.192 13th October 2005. "Pulse on Germany - German sources of business information on the World Wide Web" and "Trends in business information, provision and use"
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/131005.htm>>
- FreePint No.169 14th October 2004. "Web Accessibility: Ensuring Access for All" and "Trends in business information, provision and use"
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/141004.htm>>
- FreePint No.146 2nd October 2003. "Problems with Good Credit Information on Chinese Companies" and "Digital Preservation - Barbarians at the Gate"
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/021003.htm>>
- FreePint No.122, 3rd October 2002. "Effective Writing: How Good Copy Can Make Your Information Work Harder" and "From Knowledge Economy to Knowledge Ecology? - IBM's David Snowden Maps a 'Third Way' for KM at Open University Seminar"
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/031002.htm>>
- FreePint No.97, 4th October 2001. "Tax Links" and "Taxonomies are what?"
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/041001.htm>>
- FreePint No.72, 5th October 2000. "Influence of the Internet on the Patent Process" and "All change for search technology?"
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/051000.htm>>
- FreePint No.47, 7th October 1999. "Sources of UK Financial Information on the Internet" and "Getting Good References"
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/071099.htm>>
- FreePint No.23, 1st October 1998. "The Good Times are not about to end, unfortunately" and "There's an awful lot of coffee in Brazil: Coffee information on the Web"
<<http://www.freepint.com/issues/011098.htm>>

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Free Pint Limited
4-6 Station Approach
Ashford, Middlesex
TW15 2QN, United Kingdom
Tel (UK): 0870 141 7474
Tel (Int): +44 870 141 7474

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Contributors to this issue

Monique Cuvelier (Editor, FreePint), Janet Moore, Ulla de Stricker, Barbie Keise, Mike Jones, Pam Foster (Editor, VIP), Robin Neidorf (General Manager, FreePint), William Hann (Managing Editor, FreePint), Penny Hann (Production Editor, FreePint), Plain Text <<http://www.plain-text.co.uk/>> (proofreading).

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