

CONTENTS

Editorial	1
Jobs	2
Financial Market Researchers Senior Information Specialist (Maternity Leave) Knowledge Manager	
My Favourite Tipples	3
from Richard Drezen	
Tips Article	4
"Records Management, the Aunt Sally of your business!" By Tony Croft	
Bookshelf	5
"Business Statistics on the Web: Find Them Fast - At Little or No Cost" Reviewed by Penny Leidtke	
Feature Article	6
"Getting UK Immigration Information and Advice" By Anne Ku	
Events and Gold Forthcoming Articles	
Contact Information	5
HTML Version	
< http://www.freepint.com/issues/061103.htm >	
Fully Formatted Acrobat Version	
< http://www.freepint.com/issues/061103.pdf >	

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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://www.freepint.com/member>>.

EDITORIAL

Big picture. Small picture. Which is more important? That's the daily quandary for all people who work for themselves or in a small team. Of course, the debate isn't quite of the importance of the general relativity (very big) versus quantum mechanics (very small) debate, but where to focus your attention can seem very important when the pressure is on.

There are so many big and small things happening here at the moment that at times all we seem to do is fire-fight. Since the last issue of FreePint, we've launched a new look for three of FreePint's sister offerings - hosting provider Willco <<http://www.Willco.com>>, URL shortening service DigBig <<http://www.DigBig.com>> and the monthly publication VIP <<http://www.FreePintVIP.com>>. We also had a big server move two weeks ago <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b26277>> and we're still feeling the aftershock.

Voting has now closed for the two industry awards we're running (CILIP/FreePint Online Communities Award and the Online Information/FreePint Award for Innovative Customer Service). The judging panels are meeting this week, so watch this space for announcement of the winners. Thank you to everyone who took the trouble to cast their votes: we're delighted with the response.

Like many information companies at this time of year, we're working hard on preparations for the Online Information 2003 show at London's Olympia at the beginning of December. It's going to be a smashing show again this year, with loads of exhibitors, free educational workshops and co-location with the new show 'Content Management Europe'.

Wherever you are I would urge you to come along - thousands of people visit from outside the UK too. You can get free tickets at <<http://www.online-information.co.uk/>> and, since it's always a rewarding experience, I'm sure you'll get a lot out of it. By visiting you'll also be able to experience the launch of 'VIP', our new monthly publication with information product news and reviews. Yes, the FreePint team will be dressing up and there will be thousands of the newly commissioned FreePint coasters for you to replenish your stocks.

With everything that's going on, it's important not to forget about today's FreePint, which has the usual cosmopolitan mix of big-issue and small-issue topics. So whatever your focus today, big or small, I hope you find something here to make your day a little easier.

Happy sixth birthday today FreePint!

All the best
William

William Hann BSc(Hons) MCLIP
Founder and Managing Editor

Email: <william@freepint.com>
Tel: +44 (0)1784 420044

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This week's selected listings are below. All new jobs are posted to the Bar and Bar Digest (circulation 12,000+) and matched against the 1000+ live job seeker profiles.

Here are some of the latest featured jobs:

Financial Market Researchers<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2762>

A variety of excellent career opportunities for senior and junior researchers covering financial markets.

Recruiter: City Professionals

Senior Information Specialist (Maternity Leave)<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2771>

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Knowledge Manager<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2772>

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>>NEW - Incorporating co-located event - Content Management Europe<<

Meet over 250 suppliers of content resources, information management & content management solutions.

Attend comprehensive FREE programme of seminars & masterclasses

2-4 December 2003, Olympia Grand Hall, London, UK

Practical Guide to Negotiating Licenses for Electronic Products

ISBN 1904769012

If you negotiate licenses for electronic products then don't miss this valuable report from FreePint. Tips on contract clauses, model license agreements and more.

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

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MY FAVOURITE TIPPLES by Richard Drezen

Richard Drezen is a financial researcher with The Washington Post <<http://www.washingtonpost.com>>, currently based in the New York City office of the paper. He frequently contributes reviews and freelance pieces to Library Journal <<http://digbig.com/3edb>>.

Tell us about your favourite Web sites.

Check out the guidelines at <<http://www.freepint.com/author.htm>>, then email <penny@freepint.com>.

- Ecomponline - Finding executive compensation for executives of U.S. public companies is often a time-consuming process. <<http://www.ecomponline.com>> provides a valuable shortcut in finding corporate pay.
- The Corporate Library - <<http://www.thecorporatelibrary.com>> is an excellent primer on corporate governance issues. Their "Corporate Scandal Quick Sheet" is useful for keeping track on the major scandals.
- Securities Class Action Clearinghouse - is a good starting point in trying to identify class action lawsuits filed against companies in the United States <<http://securities.stanford.edu/>>.
- Energy Information Administration - <<http://www.eia.doe.gov>> provides a wide range of national and international energy statistics compiled by the U.S. Dept. of Energy.
- Center for Responsive Politics - Need to find out who's giving what to whom in U.S. political campaigns? <<http://www.opensecrets.org/>> is the place to start down the money trail.

EVENTS

Netherlands:

- "Knowledge Management Europe: the CILIP Free Programme: Knowledge, information and technology: making the connection". Amsterdam, 10th - 12th November <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e261>>.

United Kingdom:

- "Association of UK Media Librarians Annual Conference" in London on November 14th - 16th 2003 <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e219>>.
- "CiG Christmas Party 2003" - held at BABBLE in Mayfair, London with music, dancing, cocktails and fine wines. 1st December <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e258>>.
- On the 2nd to 4th December is "Online Information 2003" <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e180>> (which is now in its 27th year!). "Content Management Europe 2003" <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e195>> will be taking place in the Olympia Grand Hall "... showcasing the leading providers of web content management and enterprise content management solutions". On the 2nd December is the "AIIP Presidents Breakfast". AIIP's (Assoc. of Independent Information Professionals) President, Cindy Shamel, welcomes all AIIP members, friends, and interested information professionals <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e234>>.

New Zealand:

- "Intranet Site Visits ... visit the offices of Telecom NZ, Department of Internal Affairs etc. Organised by Ark Group on 1st - 2nd December <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e259>>.

United States:

- "Supply Chain & Logistics summit ... brings together the world's most powerful Supply Chain, IT and Logistics professionals" 18th - 20th November <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e204>>.

Submit details of your event today for free promotion. Simply complete the form at <<http://www.freepint.com/events>>.

Penny <penny@freepint.com>

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FREE PINT BAR

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Following our recent server move, we're conscious that there are a number of outstanding issues with the Bar at the moment <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b26277>>. Digests will resume soon but the Bar Browser is already back to full strength <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b26372>>. The good thing with all of this has been the interest, support and concern of members, which has demonstrated to us just how valuable members find the Bar.

The number of postings hasn't diminished with a lack of Digests, and there is plenty of good advice available. Can you help with a service level agreement for an intranet <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b26356>>? What about a *free* source for lists of companies by SIC code, country by country <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b26354>>? Can you help with advice about becoming a children's librarian <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b26354>> or a business model for a charity selling children's books <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b26348>>.

Something that we'd like to get involved with is helping libraries and other organisations co-operate over the disposal or relocation of books <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b26347>>. If anyone knows of a service or would even like to help FreePint set one up, then please get in touch with me <william.hann@freepint.com>.

Finally, we do like people who actively advocate the skills of information professionals. Gary Price, Editor of ResourceShelf.com, regularly calls people to the cause, and it's great for us to have free access to his latest article <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b26381>>.

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

Help with study for information-related courses is available at the FreePint Student Bar <www.freepint.com/student>.

Twice-weekly email digests of the latest postings can be requested at <www.freepint.com/member>.

TIPS ARTICLE

"Records Management, the Aunt Sally of your business!" By Tony Croft



Tony Croft of File & Data Storage, is a member of the UK network of archiving organisations: National Archive Solutions. The network promotes the highest standards of professional management for the provision of archive services and provides a nationwide service 24x7 from one point. Clients benefit from document and electronic data storage off-site to release space, and eliminate administrative time and effort, as well as ensuring they can continue to operate even if they lose their on-site data. Contact details: email <tonyc@fileanddata.com> or Terry Cohen at <tc@londonweb.net> or 020 7703 3915.

Related Free Pint links:

- 'Information and Libraries' articles in the FreePint Portal <<http://www.freepint.com/go/p69>>
- Read this article online, with activated hyperlinks <<http://www.freepint.com/issues/061103.htm#feature>>
- Access the entire archive of FreePint content <<http://www.freepint.com/portal/content/>>

Every business, regardless of size, is involved in the managing and retention of records. This retention is in some cases regulated by a professional body or in law, such as in the Companies Act 1985 and the VAT Act. Accounting records, for instance, in public limited companies, must be retained for 6 years to comply with the Companies Act. Even in the absence of a specific law, it is recommended practice for certain documents to be retained, such as property leases, insurance liability policies or certain health records.

As a business grows, so does its mountain of paperwork necessitating the need for a more professional approach to the whole area of records management. Companies are faced with a plethora of options and the ultimate dilemma of how to keep their records:

- In what format? Hard copy, CD or electronic?
- How long should they be kept for?
- What should be destroyed?
- Is there a carefully defined retention and destruction policy, which meets the requirements of the company and complies with current legislation?
- Where to store hard copy: on-site or off-site?
- Do you scan the paperwork and having done that, do you destroy it?

The decisions should be part of the senior management process, not made ad hoc by each department. To confuse matters even further, new companies are springing up all the time offering the perfect solution to all your information systems! They suggest that electronic document management systems (EDMS) will solve all your data problems overnight. They will tell you that records management is dead because it is all about managing paper and paper is about to disappear. You will no longer need a retention management policy because space problems will be a thing of the past. Computer storage is cheap and optical technology means you can retain everything forever. Yeah, yeah! Trains will henceforth run on time and cars will never get stuck on the M25! Regretfully, real business life is not like that. Paper has not disappeared and its use continues to grow exponentially.

In the end, records management remains about discipline, not pure technology, and the need to introduce record systems best suited to your company and the nature of your business. The problem remains that the maintenance of records is not seen as an earnings-related activity and is relegated to the bottom of the fiscal requirement pile. The truth of the matter is that every company has differing requirements when it comes to its record management.

The need to retrieve your records is a vital consideration. The urgency of retrieving an anaesthetic record immediately prior to an operation is far greater than the retrieval of a financial transaction for insertion into a report. Companies need to sort out retrieval requirements, retention and destruction policies as a matter of course, and take steps to implement these policies either in partnership with a professional records company or formulate and practice an in-house policy.

To scan or not to scan?

Some documents genuinely lend themselves to imaging, whilst others can be a nightmare. Companies rush off to purchase the latest scanner and find that they have forgotten that their files contain differing sizes and shapes, differing colours and weights of paper, staples galore and a miscellany of junk documents which could be destroyed. Scanning is efficient in the right circumstances, and, if indexed correctly and carefully, documents can be easily and efficiently retrieved. You can do this in-house or send them to a scanning bureau; the cost once you have paid staff and purchased a suitable machine is very similar. The downside is that it is an incredibly boring job but requires a skilled an intelligent operator to sort, scan and index correctly: the two are often incompatible. It is possible to keep one archive box at a commercial archive company for up to 25 years for the price of scanning the paper inside! If in doubt, consult a company that offers both services, scanning and archiving, in this way you will not have a biased opinion!

Finally, only the largest of companies should be entertaining the idea of fully functional electronic data management. You cannot move from disorganised paperwork to an electronic system without a great deal of structural re-evaluation. If in doubt, obtain a copy of the new British Standards document BSI ISO 15489 which is essential reading. For most companies it is enough to ensure that the management of records is given as high a priority as other disciplines. Without easily accessed documentation, companies stand to lose not only time and money but leave themselves open to the increasing possibility of litigation for non-production, or loss, of records. Improper retention of records or their incorrect destruction can cost your company dearly. Don't take unnecessary risks with your business. For peace of mind, get a professional records audit now or consult a company who will give you advice free of charge.

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.



Penny Leidtke, principal of On-Target Information Services, has over 18 years experience analyzing, researching, and reporting on companies, industries, economic conditions and financing strategies. On-Target helps the corporate, financial, and legal communities meet their information needs in connection with valuations, product development, competitive analysis, mergers and acquisitions, securities analysis, strategic planning, and market, industry or economic trend analysis. Recent projects relate to various segments of the automotive industry, educational institutions, publishing, organic chemicals, and healthcare. Articles and presentations include starting an information services business, market research methods, and automotive industry resources. Penny can be reached at on-targetinfo@erols.com.

Related links:

- Find out more about this book online at the FreePint Bookshelf <<http://www.freepint.com/bookshelf/busstats.htm>>

FREE PINT BOOKSHELF

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"Business Statistics on the Web: Find Them Fast - At Little or No Cost"

Reviewed by Penny Leidtke

Written by Paula Berinstein

Sooner or later, everyone needs to find statistical data. The issue is how quickly and inexpensively one can locate the information needed at any given time. Paula Berinstein provides readers with a starting point in her recent book 'Business Statistics on the Web: Find Them Fast - at Little or No Cost'. Free or relatively inexpensive sources are the primary focus of the book. Premium or commercial sources are mentioned occasionally, especially those that offer some free content. Sites that have fees associated with them are clearly marked.

The book begins with a Quick Start chapter for those in a hurry. The next two chapters provide background information on the nature and sources of statistics in general. General search tips are covered in depth in chapter four, but tips and tricks are also presented throughout the book where relevant. Subsequent chapters cover U.S. and non-U.S. industry, market research, economic, financial, demographic, and population statistics as well as company information, special tips and tricks, and estimating company-related numbers that cannot be located in publicly-available materials. Sidebars and case studies appear throughout the book to illustrate various points, resources, or the author's approach to locating particular information. All but one was easily followed. The one relating to health club membership contains an error in the wording of the text that causes some momentary confusion. The book finishes up with a glossary of statistical terms and a subject index.

The author's website at <<http://www.berinsteinresearch.com>> includes statistics links, some of which are unique to the site. Berinstein suggests you consult both resources for the most complete coverage.

Free Pint Forthcoming Articles

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The author states that the book is targeted at anyone needing to find business and/or economic statistical data. However, it seems more directed towards the novice or casual researcher. Given that, and the fact that statistics are easily manipulated, as discussed by the author, I would like to have seen certain caveats mentioned more frequently throughout the book, including those relating to: time lags; the potential bias of sources; the need to verify data, etc. In addition, oversimplification and generalizations resulting from presenting complex issues in easy-to-understand language can lead, at times, to erroneous conclusions by some readers. For example, guidelines are given for estimating certain company numbers. In some instances, this may lead readers to conclude that the guidelines are always applicable to every company in every industry at any given time. Readers, especially novice or casual researchers, might benefit from citations for the source of the guidelines or benchmarks used in the examples as well as a reiteration of the relevant caveats.

The issues above aside, the book succeeds in presenting a starting point for finding business statistics on the Web. Even more experienced or professional information researchers could find the book and the related website useful additions to their resource shelf. While many of the sites listed throughout the book will be familiar to experienced researchers, the topics covered are broad enough to allow for the identification of new sites or the rediscovery of previously forgotten ones.

FREE PINT

Contributors to this issue:

William Hann (FreePint Managing Editor), Penny (FreePint Administrator), Annabel Colley (FreePint Relations), Anne Ku, Penny Leidtke, Richard Drezen, Tony Croft, Plain Text <<http://www.plain-text.co.uk/>> (proofreading).

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Managing Editor William Hann BSc(Hons) MCLIP
william@freepint.com

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WEB: www.freepint.com

EMAIL: info@freepint.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS: subs@freepint.com

AUTHORS: www.freepint.com/author.htm

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Free Pint Limited

4-6 Station Approach
Ashford, Middlesex
TW15 2QN, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)1784 420044
Fax: +44 (0)1784 420033

Technology by Willco
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FEATURE ARTICLE

"Getting UK Immigration Information and Advice"

By Anne Ku

Dr Anne Ku first entered the UK as a summer visitor and then returned as a full-time post-graduate student, working holiday maker, work permit holder, permanent resident, and more recently, a naturalised British citizen. She wrote this article to update her previous one on this subject and to respond to numerous enquiries on her website [analyticalQ.com](http://www.analyticalq.com). She thanks Steve Purdy of London-based Value Visas Ltd <http://www.valuevisas.com> for invaluable advice and assistance on all immigration matters over the years. Currently pursuing a portfolio career in Europe, Anne can be contacted via her personal site at <http://www.anneku.com>.

Several important changes have taken place in the area of UK immigration since my first FreePint article on this subject (1 April 1999 - <http://www.freepint.com/issues/010499.htm#ips>). Among them is the introduction of a new kind of work permit that does not require the pre-existence of an employer. Complaints about unscrupulous immigration advisers have led to the establishment of an independent, public body to regulate such advisers and investigate the complaints. Other changes can be found on the FAQ or latest news sections of UK government websites <http://www.analyticalq.com/immigration/>.

In general, UK immigration issues fall into several categories: work permits, non-work permit visas, entry clearance, and asylum. This article attempts to clarify the issues around obtaining immigration advice and service off the Internet.

The new work permit: Highly Skilled Migrant Programme

In January 2002, a new kind of visa was introduced to allow highly qualified professionals to work in the UK without requiring a prior offer of employment. Revised in January 2003, the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP for short) works on a points system similar to that of Australia. The minimum requirement of 75 points is to be met by adding up points based on the last or highest (educational) degree obtained, years of relevant work experience, existing or previous salary level, etc. For details, see <http://www.workpermits.gov.uk/default.asp?paged=3631>.

The initial HSMP visa is valid for 12 months. Towards the end of this period, you may apply for an extension of 3 years. After this, you may apply for permanent residency. After one year of permanent residency, you may apply for naturalisation. So HSMP is definitely the fast track way to work and live in the UK for high achievers and priority applicants such as medical doctors.

[Workpermits.gov.uk](http://www.workpermits.gov.uk) also lists shortage occupations and new rules that allow you to switch from working holidaymaker status to another work permit status. It mentions other rules, such as the rights of work-permit holders and their spouses to work in the country.

Obtaining immigration advice

The Immigration and Nationality Directorate <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk> should be the first point of call for anyone looking for information on UK immigration. In the section "Getting immigration advice", it warns against poor advice, overcharging, and other unscrupulous activity. It states that it is not necessary to get advice to apply for a visa. In my experience, however, I found it absolutely necessary to get advice regarding my immigration status and the options available to me before I even considered applying for a visa. It also states "many good organisations provide their services free of charge" - well yes, their advice may be free but the service of applying

for a visa is usually not free.

The Immigration and Asylum Act of 1999 (November 1999) <http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1999/90033--e.htm#83> set up the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) to license and regulate immigration advisers. But the OISC does not regulate solicitors, law firms, and employers who give immigration advice to their employees (the latter until 31 December 2003). The OISC can however investigate complaints about any person or organisation that provides immigration advice, including solicitors. In fact, since April 2001, it is a criminal offence for advisers to provide immigration advice or services unless their organisation is registered with the OISC, or has been granted a certificate of exemption by the OISC. For more information about the OISC and a directory of licensed immigration advisers, visit <http://www.oisc.gov.uk>.

Dubious immigration advisers can "get around" OISC registration by negotiating a deal with a solicitor and thereby avoiding the requirement to register with the OISC, as solicitors are not regulated by the OISC but by the Law Society. OISC regulated advisers benefit from having clear areas of demarcation. Any issue of providing advice that falls outside of the remit of their registered ability is then referred on to a higher level who specialises in that area.

Up-to-date, accurate, and reliable information

Immigration concerns are often highly personal and confidential. The Internet provides a convenient way to find out about your options without disclosing yourself.

The last five years saw the emergence of new immigration advisers, associated web sites, and the practice of making available immigration information on their websites to encourage self-help and as a source of competitiveness. Often they explain and present the information better than those announced on government sites. But readers should be warned about out-of-date information on non-governmental websites, for the owners are often not accountable for the sites' accuracy.

One way to discern the reliability of immigration information on non-government sites is to look out for the "OISC Regulated" logo. Otherwise, beware of so-called advisers who "hide under the skirts of solicitors" and who camouflage their lack of qualification under the "cover" of the solicitor's membership with the Law Society. Or foreign law firms who are not regulated by the Law Society in this country.

When in doubt, visit official government websites, which have been considerably revamped in the last few years. There, you can find FAQs along with application forms and procedures on official government sites. Although this improves self-help and self-service, it does not necessarily increase the success rate of self-application or reduce the cost.

**Related Free
Pint links:**

- 'Politics and Government' articles in the FreePint Portal <<http://www.freepint.com/go/p113>>
- Post a message to the author, Anne Ku, 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/061103.htm#feature>>
- Access the entire archive of FreePint content <http://www.freepint.com/portal/content/>

Immigration advisers and their services

It is a mistake to assume that immigration services are best provided by solicitors. Solicitors excel in conflict resolution, knowing the law, and representing their clients. Immigration issues are rarely about conflict of interest but about acquiring the necessary documents to stay in a country, to legally work, study, etc.

You might hesitate to ask for immigration advice because you think solicitors are expensive and legal advice is rarely free. You might be skeptical of free advice, thinking that there's a catch. You might even be mistaken to think that approaching such advisers might get you in trouble.

One little understood fact is that you can obtain free advice from advisers who operate on a "No Visa, No Fee" or "No Win, No Fee" basis. It is a common, accepted practice in this business. Usually it starts with a dialogue between a potential client/applicant and the adviser, to determine the kind of case it is. The applicant discloses information and the adviser imparts advice until such a time when both parties are satisfied with the case in question. There is no fee paid during this dialogue. When the case is determined, i.e., type of visa to apply for, the fee is agreed. By then, the adviser is confident that the visa can be successfully applied. Of course, after getting the free advice, you may choose to apply for the visa in question yourself. But don't expect to go back to the adviser if something goes wrong. When you pay the adviser, you are paying for peace of mind. Typically you get your fees refunded if the application isn't successful. Unless, of course you're unlucky enough to run into an unscrupulous adviser!

From 1st August 2003 the UK Home Office started charging visa applicants. It is anticipated that by charging, government administrative costs will be covered and a greater degree of service will be afforded to applicants. However, the Home Office does not provide a free advisory service where applicants visit their offices to discuss their situation in detail, and it is not always easy to get through by telephone or e-mail. Most immigration advisers provide this advisory service for free but charge for representation on top of the Home Office fees.

One final note

Immigration advisers act as intermediaries between the applicant and the Home Office. Because immigration issues are often not straightforward, obvious, clear, or certain, advisers may spend a considerable amount of time giving free advice before "taking the case on". Many enquiries will not result in a paying case.

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There's never been a more affordable time to promote your information-related job vacancy:

<<http://web.freepint.com/jobs/submit/overview.php3>>

Immigration advisers deal with peoples' futures, a task not to be taken lightly. Many enquirers are highly emotional, as they may be faced with the prospect of being separated from loved ones or refused a visa. They may not know their real situation or all the options open to them. For those reasons, immigration advisers are more than just providers of information and processors of visa applications.

If you're looking to solve your own immigration dilemma, I would suggest that you do your research on the Internet as well as consult an OISC regulated adviser. But don't attempt to do it all yourself, for a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing.

GOLD

In October 2002 Veronica Bezar shared her experience of using the Web to change jobs. Susannah Ross author of "A Simple Guide to Writing for Your Website" explained why she thinks some Websites do well and some don't.

- FreePint No.124 31st October 2002. "Job Hunting Resources On The Web" and "What Does Well On The Web - A Personal View" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/311002.htm>

Two years ago our tips article by Anne Ku described the different online mediums you can use when searching for global warming resources. Sheila Webber's feature included library and information marketing sites.

- FreePint No.99, 1st November 2001. "Web Sources for Climate Change and Emissions Trading" and "Marketing Library and Information Services" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/011101.htm>

In 2000, Sam Vaknin explained how to find reliable information on Central and Eastern Europe. Sheila Webber covered business information portals in the UK and further afield.

- FreePint No.74, 2nd November 2000. "Web Sources for Central and Eastern Europe" and "Portals for business information on the Internet" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/021100.htm>

Four years ago Richard Eskins listed some key library and information Websites. Mark Southgate shared his research on affiliate programs.

- FreePint No.49, 4th November 1999. "Key UK Library and Information Science Information Resources" and "Affiliate and Associate Programs" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/041199.htm>

Five years ago Ben Heald described some of the wires that he has used over the last year and Ian Watson (Information Services Manager at The Herald & Evening Times) listed some of the sites he has used in his life and work.

- FreePint No.25, 29th October 1998. "Delivered to your Desktop" and "Making it part of your life" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/291098.htm>

Penny <penny@freepint.com>