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## About FreePint

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 and 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

## Editorial

In the last issue of FreePint we launched Jinfo, a new service listing information-related job vacancies. The launch went very well and there are now over 3,000 subscribers to the twice-monthly Jinfo Newsletter. The newsletter contains career advice and the latest job postings. You can subscribe free at:

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



To see how Jinfo fits into the network of FreePint sites, you might like to check out 'Onopoly'. Onopoly is where we bring together advertiser-related information for all our publications:

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

On the Onopoly homepage we have just added an 'Overview Diagram' which shows you how all the sites in our network link together. You might find it useful to see a one-page summary of how our publications and sites are connected.

There is a lot of great free content and advice available to you as a FreePint Member, but it's not always obvious what or where it is. So we're working hard behind the scenes to provide clearer pointers to resources -- but more on that next time.

For us, the best editions of FreePint are where long-term FreePinters write to offer articles about the Web-related challenges they face in their work. Today's issue is, therefore, a classic, with pieces on competitive intelligence, online research and child rights information, all from a personal perspective.

FreePint is free to you because of the support of authors like this, and of course our generous advertisers and sponsors. If you'd like to consider providing some content, then see the guidelines and sign up for the quarterly 'FreePint Author Update':

<<http://www.freepint.com/author.htm>>

If you're unable to contribute content then \*please\* forward this issue of FreePint to a colleague or friend and invite them to subscribe.

Alternatively, print out and circulate the fully-formatted version of this issue of FreePint, which includes photos of the authors and full-colour adverts: <<http://www.freepint.com/>>.

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**Jinfo** -- the best place for information-related job vacancies.

- **JOB SEARCHING** -- Free search and sign up to the Jinfo Newsletter.
- **RECRUITING** -- Complete the form and advertise a vacancy for only GBP195 <<http://www.jinfo.com/recruit/>>.

50% discount for registered charities.  
10% discount for agencies.

Find out more today at <http://www.jinfo.com/>

## Jinfo :: Jobs in information

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

Jinfo is a database of information-related job vacancies.

The Jinfo Newsletter is published free every two weeks, and contains a list of the latest vacancies along with job seeking advice. The latest editorial is entitled "First impressions do count".

To read the latest Jinfo Newsletter and to subscribe to receive it twice-monthly by email, visit <<http://www.jinfo.com/newsletter/>>.

Here are some of the latest featured jobs:

### Senior Researcher / Analyst

<<http://www.freepint.com/go/j3815>>  
Do you have a good understanding of the Professional Services market? Provide insights on trends and competitive environments.  
Recruiter: Glen Recruitment

### Information Officers

<<http://www.freepint.com/go/j3816>>  
You will be responsible for collecting, collating and analysing information to support the Observatory website.  
Recruiter: London Borough of Enfield

### Senior Research Analyst

<<http://www.freepint.com/go/j3817>>  
Two great roles- 1 in Paris, 1 in London or Germany - senior research analyst roles with focus on IT/tech sector knowledge - top salaries.  
Recruiter: Sue Hill Recruitment

[The above jobs are paid listings]

NB: There are 17 other jobs in the current edition of the Jinfo Newsletter <<http://www.jinfo.com/newsletter/>> and over 70 in the Jinfo database <<http://www.jinfo.com/>>.

## Planning your next career move? CILIP can help

We support you from university right through to your next plum job. How? By being one of the world's biggest membership organisations for information professionals - helping people just like you. But you'll have to hurry to claim your Prompt Payment membership discount - offer closes Mar 1 (or Feb 14 for direct debits). So email 'FreePint' and your contact details to <[findoutmore@cilip.org.uk](mailto:findoutmore@cilip.org.uk)>. Or visit <<http://www.cilip.org.uk/freepintoffer>> for more information.

## SLA Europe Information Professional Award

Each year Factiva sponsors SLA Europe Information Professional Award (SLA EIP). Nominate yourself or a colleague and win this prestigious award and an all expenses paid trip to the conference in Toronto. Entries by 28th February 2005.

For more details about the EIP award visit: <<http://www.sla-europe.org/>>

## "Information Auditing: A guide for information managers" ISBN: 1-904769-08-X

This in-depth report is published by FreePint and offers an overview and practical insight into information auditing, drawing on practical examples and recognised audit methods.

"Well written and concise ... It's up to date, easy to digest and nicely structured."

Find out more at: <<http://www.freepint.com/shop/report/>>



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[www.cilip.org.uk](http://www.cilip.org.uk) - now even more reasons to belong

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Professionals

## My Favourite Tipples

by Stuart Urwin



Stuart Urwin publishes UK Environment News online at <http://www.ukendata.com> and is Marketing Director of ISIM, publishers of the beautiful Renaissance Library Calendar <http://www.renaissancecelibrary.com>.

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

- <http://www.freetranslation.com/> - I use this when I want a "quick and dirty" translation, which is often.
- <http://www.abritel.fr/> is the site I visit when I want to find a holiday property in France which I can rent direct from the owner.
- <http://www.notetab.com> for free download of NoteTab Light, my everyday text editor, a vast improvement on Notepad and a tool I much prefer to Word. It organises all my text files.
- <http://www.bmyers.com/> is a great site for product developers and information publishers, with project ideas, tutorials, discussion forum and invaluable down to earth advice from a real expert.
- <http://www.clickbank.com/> - a terrific resource for finding new electronic products and keeping up to date with the latest online marketing techniques from independent product developers.

### FreePint Financials: Research UK companies and directors

To search a comprehensive database of in-depth information on UK companies and UK company directors, visit FreePint Financials:

<http://www.freepint.com/icc/>

### Jinfo :: Jobs in information

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

Jinfo is a database of information-related job vacancies. The Jinfo Newsletter is published twice-monthly and lists the latest jobs and gives career advice and tips.

Search the database and subscribe to the newsletter at:

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

### Factiva's new products reviewed in VIP

Factiva's new products for sales professionals, Factiva SalesWorks and Factiva Companies & Executives, will be reviewed in the February issue of VIP. This issue will also include the first of three comparative reviews of major M&A products:

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

## FreePint Bar

In Association with Factiva  
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Before we review the latest postings, something has struck me: although quite a few FreePinters already subscribe to the FreePint Bar Digest (14,000+ actually), that does still mean that 80% of our membership miss out on a very useful resource.

If you'd like to receive the twice-weekly Bar Digest by email, containing the latest postings from the FreePint Bar, then sign up today at: <http://www.freepint.com/subs/>.

Information managers are still battling to explain the value they bring to organisations, and the value of paid-for information. For resources to support your fee-versus-free argument, see <http://www.freepint.com/go/b31222>. If you're an independent information professional, then you might like a free listing in a new directory <http://www.freepint.com/go/b31283>.

The European Chapter of the SLA are asking for nominations for this year's 'European Information Professional Award' -- previously 'European Special Librarian of the Year' (ESLY) -- <http://www.sla-europe.org/ESLY/index.htm>. Also, the SLA's News Division invites graduate students interested in a career in news librarianship to apply for the Vormelker-Thomas Student Award <http://www.freepint.com/go/b31278>. The Jinfo Newsletter has an article entitled "First impressions do count" <http://www.freepint.com/go/b31280>.

On the company information side, would you be willing to share your opinion about the value of your subscription to Moodys.com? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b31325>. There have been lots of suggestions for researching the directors of a UK company <http://www.freepint.com/go/b31207>, and someone wants to know about B2B microsegmentation <http://www.freepint.com/go/b31243>.

The discussions about Firefox (browser) and Thunderbird (email client) continue, and have now moved on to concerns about replacing Outlook's calendar if making the move <http://www.freepint.com/go/b31167>.

Finally, relevant to today's translation-related Tittle, there have been a number of links to free Russian-to-English online translators <http://www.freepint.com/go/b31225>.

Don't forget that you can browse the Bar by category, rather than by date, using the Bar Browser <http://www.freepint.com/bar/browser/>.

William Hann [william.hann@freepint.com](mailto:william.hann@freepint.com)  
Managing Editor, FreePint

Twice-weekly email digests of the latest postings can be requested at <http://web.freepint.com/>.

## Tips Article

### "Understanding Consumers through Online Competitive Intelligence"

By Patrice Curtis



Patrice Curtis is Managing Director of Curtis Research Group, which provides business intelligence for businesses and non-profits. Established small and mid-size businesses, global corporations, and national non-profits have all used CRG's business intelligence. Visit <http://www.curtisresearch.com> to contact Patrice for a complimentary, no-stress consultation.

Note: For a useful general background to competitive intelligence, see the excellent articles that previously ran on FreePint:

<<http://www.freepint.com/go/n35>> and <<http://www.freepint.com/go/n65>>.

Competitive intelligence is a proven methodology for effecting positive change in a company's decisions, plans, and operations.

A company's online competitive intelligence (CI) typically emphasizes gaining information within three categories of research: the market, the industry and the company. CI researchers often end up focusing on those with "insider knowledge" such as vendors, partners, and competitors, and external observers through analyst reports, expert interviews and the like.

Business-to-consumer companies have long used focus groups, intercept interviews, videography, and other techniques to understand the interaction of consumers with their products. In a way, consumers become insiders as well. Yet any social scientist understands that the mere act of observation can change the way a person acts. This has been part of the challenge of understanding consumers.

The growing ease of posting one's thoughts online, however, is providing a new, rich vein of consumer information. In particular, these are consumers who add content to opinion sites, post on listservs, who have active blogs, and/or use other online methods to communicate - albeit indirectly - with a company's prospects.

It is not just the ease with which vocal consumers can now express their opinions online. It is also about the reach they now exert over vast numbers of a company's existing clients or prospects. The confluence of these two metrics clearly places consumers within any comprehensive competitive intelligence effort.

CI researchers can gain so much more from sustained attention to consumer activity. In fact, beyond simple defensive postures, CI professionals can proactively assist decision-makers in driving company growth by identifying trends that might drive future product innovation.

#### Growth

Innovation in today's marketplace is a proven driver of top-line growth. A company can therefore gain a tremendous opportunity if it spots a consumer trend before its competitors. The Internet provides a number of resources to help companies spot these movements.

Some sources for customer commentary are well-known. Listservs, for example, provide an excellent source of honest customer thought. Other resources include consumer opinion sites and blogs. In addition to direct consumer thought, it is also possible to glean consumer interest by tracking keyword popularity. The following sections provide listings for each of these areas.

#### Resources

##### Consumer Opinions

- Epinions <<http://www.epinions.com>>: Consumers can join this online rating site for free, and provide their opinion on hundreds of thousands of products.
- CNET <<http://www.cnet.com>>: CNET combines consumer opinions with reviews of CNET staff members. This source is particularly useful for consumer opinions on electronic consumer gadgets, and software.
- Yahoo! Shopping <<http://search.store.yahoo.com/OT?>>: Finally, you can check out a sampling of items purchased in the past hour on Yahoo!

##### Blogs

- Feedster.com <<http://blogs.feedster.com>>: This is a news search engine that tracks both RSS and blogs, indexing over one million syndicated sources.
- Waypath <<http://www.waypath.com>>: This site tracks over four million blogs. You can search, or browse the many categories. In addition, the home page tracks the Most Active Topics and News Stories, and the Most Popular News Stories and Topics.

##### Listservs

- Google Groups <<http://groups-beta.google.com>>: Formerly DejaNews, thousands of lists are available for searching.
- Yahoo! Groups <<http://groups.yahoo.com>>: This is another excellent source for all sorts of consumer groups.
- Topica <<http://lists.topica.com>>: The company states that over 100,000 individuals and businesses use Topica's discussion groups.

##### Internet Search Sources

- AOL <<http://hot.aol.com/hot/index.jsp>>: AOL's hot searches is laid about a bit differently than the other search engines. Firstly, AOL has a list of 17 categories the researcher can choose from, including "Among AOL Members." Secondly, each of those categories can be examined based on time increments of "Right Now," "Last Hour" and "Last 24 Hours." The search engine's hot 2004 searches <<http://hot.aol.com/2004/>> are broken into the following categories: Celebrities, Entertainment, Music, News, Sports, Health, Food, Shopping, Destinations, and Miscellaneous.

**Related FreePint links:**

- 'Information and Libraries' articles in the FreePint Portal <<http://www.freepint.com/go/p69>>
- Post a message to the author, Patrice Curtis, 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/100205.htm#tips>>
- Access the entire archive of FreePint content <http://www.freepint.com/portal/content/>
- Ask Jeeves <<http://sp.ask.com/docs/about/jeevesiq.html>> : Ask Jeeves breaks their tracking into four weekly categories: Top Searches, Top Advancing Searches, Top Vacation Searches and Top News Searches. The search engine also provides information on its top searches for 2004 <[http://www.primezone.com/newsroom/news\\_releases.mhtml?d=69802](http://www.primezone.com/newsroom/news_releases.mhtml?d=69802)>
- Google Zeitgeist <<http://www.google.com/press/zeitgeist.html>> Google Zeitgeist provides a listing of the 2004 top five searches in 29 categories listed under Top Search Queries, Image Search Queries, Froogle Queries, and Local Search Queries.
- Lycos 50 <<http://50.lycos.com/>>: The Lycos 50 is a weekly compilation of the top 50 searches. You can find more by visiting the blog of the Lycos 50 editor <<http://lycos50.tripod.com/blog/>>, and find out what's hot in the UK market by tracking the UK Lycos 50 <<http://50.lycos.co.uk/>>.
- Yahoo! Buzz Index <<http://buzz.yahoo.com/>>: Yahoo! breaks its buzz into 15 sub-categories under the category of Today's Top Movers: Overall, Actors, Music, Sports, Television, Video Games. You can find more information under the More Buzz category, like Decliners and Buzz for Kids. You can also view the Yahoo! Best of Search 2004 <<http://tools.search.yahoo.com/top2004/>>.

**Keyword Popularity**

- \* Wordtracker <<http://www.wordtracker.com/>>: Wordtracker can be used two ways. For a quick look at what's hot now, Wordtracker has a 24/7 banner that runs atop its homepage, which displays the ranking of the top 50 keywords on the Internet. Researchers can also use the service by trying a free trial, then purchasing the service.
- Overture <<http://uv.bidtool.overture.com/d/USm/search/tools/bidtool/>>: You can search on a keyword, and find out how much the current bid is and which term is the top bid.

**General**

- Alexa <[http://www.alexa.com/site/ds/movers\\_shakers](http://www.alexa.com/site/ds/movers_shakers)>: Once independent but now part of Amazon.com, Alexa not only provides information on particular sites, but also on the rankings of the Top 500 and Most Popular 10,000 web sites.

**Future Trends**

These resources provide a peek into future trends. Some will wither and never bloom. Others, however, can point to opportunities for growth. By cross-tracking these resources, the CI researchers can spot patterns, and use consumer opinions and interests proactively to help drive their company's business decisions and plans.

**VIP No.14 :: In-depth review of EBSCOhost**

Joining the recent reviews of Factiva, Lexis/Nexis and Dialog, the current VIP provides an in-depth review of EBSCOhost.

VIP Eye also comments on the latest news announcements.

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

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**What is 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.

**FreePint Forthcoming Articles**

[Provisional]

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- Recycling
- Website Usability Testing
- The 9 Ps of Publishing
- User employee abuse of the Internet
- Cross Cultural Management
- Applying Governance to the Management of Information
- Health Sources for Non Health Professionals \*

If you have a suggestion for an article topic or would like to write for Free Pint then please contact <[penny@freepint.com](mailto:penny@freepint.com)> or sign up for the Author Update at <<http://www.freepint.com/author.htm>>.

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*Penny Crossland is a business researcher and information professional with more than 20 years' experience of the search world. In 2000, she started her own business research company, CH Business Research, providing market and company research, as well as translation services to businesses. Prior to that she worked for a strategy consultancy as the manager of its information centre. She can be contacted at <penny.crossland@chbusinesresearch.co.uk>*

#### Related links:

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- "Find It Online: The Complete Guide to Online Research" ISBN 1889150452, published by Facts on Demand Press.

## FreePint Bookshelf

<<http://www.freepint.com/bookshelf>>

### "Find it Online - The Complete Guide to Online Research"

Reviewed by Penny Crossland

The 4th edition of Alan Schlein's award-winning reference book is a comprehensive guide to all aspects of internet searching for both internet novices and expert searchers. The book provides readers with the basics of internet concepts, guides to web sources by subject area, as well as case studies containing search strategies using free and fee-based services.

This latest edition includes advice on how to combat spam, even explaining the origin of the name and how to control pop-up ads. It also deals with how best to verify information found on the Internet.

Each of the 14 chapters ends with a useful list of relevant websites, providing URLs and a brief description of the sites' content. Chapters are interspersed with valuable hot tips for searchers and contain excerpts of articles from well-known information professionals, providing further insight and perspective into search topics.

The book starts off by explaining internet terminology, providing guidance on how to develop a search strategy and explaining the strengths and weaknesses of search engines. Schlein has inserted a useful search engine comparison chart drawn up by Greg Notess for his Search Engine Showdown website which compares primary search features for all the major search engines.

I found chapters 4 and 5 particularly useful. In these, Schlein focuses on the 'invisible web' and how to access data that the search engines cannot find. The author uses further professional expertise in this chapter by reprinting an article by Chris Sherman containing references to invisible web pathfinders and tips to overcome this problem. Schlein's resources on search tools are particularly helpful to the professional web searcher.

Further chapters provide guidance on news and business resources, US and international government resources, as well as advice on how

### How do YOU use DigBig?

DigBig shortens long URLs, making them easier to communicate:

"I use this tool all the time due to my heavy involvement in forums that do not support long URLs without truncation. Without DigBig.com, I'd be helpless. Thanks!" Internet Political Blogger, USA

Read how other people use DigBig to shorten long Web addresses:

<<http://www.digbig.com/testimonial.html>>

to manage and filter information and, importantly, how to evaluate a website and establish the author's credibility.

Throughout the book, the author stresses the importance of the 'human element', often forgotten when searching the internet. From a journalistic background, Schlein realises the value of an old-fashioned telephone call to an expert for quick, reliable information.

The author claims that international sources are highlighted, and while there is a chapter on international research, the guide on the whole is very much biased towards the US searcher and US-based sources. A different weakness, from my point of view, is the lack of a clear index. It would have been helpful for it to be divided into subject areas. The editing, too, seems to have been done in a hurry. These points do not, however, detract from the usefulness of this book to anybody engaged in web searching, be they journalists, information professionals, lawyers, academics, business executives or students. Even the most experienced web searcher will find new sources and sound guidance in this book. It remains an essential tool that all internet searchers should keep within arm's reach of their computer.

## FreePint

#### Contributors to this issue:

William Hann (FreePint Managing Editor), Penny (FreePint Administrator), Patrice Curtis, Veronica Yates, Penny Crossland, Stuart Urwin, Plain Text <<http://www.plain-text.co.uk/>> (proofreading).

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## Feature Article



*Veronica Yates is Information and Communications Officer for the Child Rights Information Network <<http://www.crin.org>>, and has previously worked in several information and media-based roles for various NGOs. At CRIN, she is responsible for the operation of a network of over 1500 members worldwide, whose principal mode of communication and campaigning is the internet. She is also in charge of co-ordinating global information concerning civil society's contributions to the current UN Study of Violence against Children <<http://www.childrendviolence.org>>. Veronica has a particular interest in the use of ICTs for human rights monitoring and advocacy purposes.*

### "Child Rights: Is Information really free for all?" By Veronica Yates

In an age of information superhighways and e-everything, you might think the task of distributing information to be an easy one. But when your information network consists of 1970s PCs, your networks speak hundreds of different languages and the members often have to tramp miles to the nearest internet cafe, the task becomes infinitely more complex. Moreover, when children are emailing you daily with horrific details of how they are being abused, the job becomes not only difficult, but also heart-wrenching. These are the issues that we have to deal with at the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) every day.

As a regular reader of FreePint, I wanted to share with other information professionals some of the challenges and opportunities an international network in the voluntary sector faces.

#### What CRIN is and what it does

CRIN is a global network of child rights organisations, which was created following the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). As most countries were ratifying the Convention, more and more non-governmental organisations (NGOs) began working on child rights issues, there was a need for information about child rights to be in one easily accessible place where anyone could share information. CRIN was set up in 1995 to become a central clearing house of information related to children's rights.

Our role is to 'democratise' information - to make it freely available in a variety of formats, both electronically and in hard copy, with the ultimate aim of advancing the realisation of children's rights.

Our membership consists of 1,550 organisations based in over 125 countries. Twenty-six per cent are in Africa, 28.5 per cent are in Asia, 29 per cent in Europe and eight in Northern America. The UK and India have the highest membership, but countries like Ghana and Bangladesh have large memberships too. Members range from large international NGOs to local grassroots organisations that often rely on the charity of their local religious communities.

Membership is free and anyone can benefit from our services. We are funded by four international NGOs and our yearly income is approximately GBP130,000. We have three members of staff and volunteers.

#### Services CRIN offers to the network

CRINMAIL: email newsletter in English, Spanish & French Newsletter: thematic publication <<http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/publication/S/CRINvol17e.pdf>>.

Website: includes databases of publications, events, members: <<http://www.crin.org>>.

Directory of members: hard copy and online - <<http://www.crin.org/organisations>>

Members case studies: experiences from around globe <<http://www.crin.org/membersnews/>>

Information requests: questions from all and sundry

Working papers: research on emerging issues

Coverage of key UN events related to children's issues

Membership surveys to evaluate our services and our members' needs.

Members appreciate our CRINMAIL email

### Gold

- FreePint No.153 5th February 2004. "Disintegrating Digital Fences: Finding Business Information in Ukraine and its Neighbouring Countries" and "10 things you should know about the UK's Freedom of Information regime" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/050204.htm>
- FreePint No.130 6th February 2003. "Online Library Catalogues" and "Patent Searching Without Words - Why Do It, How To Do It?" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/060203.htm>
- Free Pint No.105 7th February 2002. "Business Information in Germany" and "Pay Per Click Search Engines and Promoting your Website" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/070202.htm>
- Free Pint No.80, 1st February 2001. "An adventure in ADSL: the Superhighway finally becomes 'super'?" and "E-Books" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/010201.htm>
- Free Pint No.55, 3rd February 2000. "Classical Music Web Sites" and "Researching the Researchers - Finding Market Research Agencies on the Web" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/030200.htm>
- Free Pint No.31, 4th February 1999. "Researching from home" and "Internet Resources for Seniors" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/040299.htm>
- Free Pint No.7, 5th February 1998. "Fabricating Information" and "Engineering resources: examples and sources" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/050298.htm>

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- Post a message to the author, Veronica Yates, 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/100205.htm#feature>>
- Access the entire archive of FreePint content <http://www.freepint.com/portal/content/>

newsletter because it gives them information they would otherwise lack and provides an insight into issues of which they may not be aware. Every news item also links readers back to the website where more information can be found. <<http://www.crin.org/email>>. It gives the disenfranchised a voice where otherwise there would be a deafening silence. Our members' directory is another popular service as members use it to network with like-minded organisations around the world.

We are also very popular with the UN as we give them the links they need to reach an audience beyond their touch. At the same time, we decipher the often complicated reams of UN information into understandable and practical tools for our members.

However, it is not all a one-way street. While we provide all of this information to our members and give them a space where their opinions can be heard, we are very much dependent on the information that they send us from "the front lines".

While we do many things well, there are also many areas where we can improve. Below are some of the key challenges we face in the coming years.

**More targeted and interactive information**

Sometimes we are caught in the conundrum of trying to be all things to all people. While we do our best to service a wide range of information needs, it can be challenging to meet global, regional and local needs all at the same time. For instance, when it comes to children in armed conflict as we have seen in West Africa and elsewhere, we are torn between the needs of those suffering on the ground and the needs to educate on a global level through the UN and other international bodies.

As we have limited resources, we have to target the information to the areas where we can make the most difference. We have to strike a balance between disseminating the information we have with distributing the information we are receiving from our members on a daily basis. Our goal is to make our services more interactive so that we can focus on what we do best. We want to establish a network based on active participation where members can use their own initiative to become more self-sufficient without relying so much on us to act as an information hub.

**Electronic versus hard-copy**

The internet is an invaluable tool for an organisation like CRIN because it enables us to provide information at a fraction of the cost of hard copy materials. Producing one newsletter a year costs more than the yearly maintenance of our website, with postage often accounting for a disproportionate amount. Nevertheless, our research has shown that even though about 85 per cent of our members have access to the

internet, they still value hard copy information that they can distribute widely, especially when it comes to networking locally.

**Bridging the digital divide**

You might naturally assume that electronic information would be the ideal solution for developing countries as so much information is available for free on the World Wide Web. A tendency many organisations based in the northern hemisphere have is to be drawn into all the new-fangled technology and unnecessarily complicated web tools that are available today at low cost, often to the detriment of southern hemisphere organisations whose web browsers are not able to download websites that have all the latest Flash images and Java script. This was what initially guided the design and functionality of our website, although four years later, it now looks very tired and is badly in need of a makeover.

**Events****United Kingdom:**

- "Conducting a knowledge and information audit" 23rd - 24th February <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e404>>
- "Identifying and Managing Unstructured Information" 28th February - 1st March <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e405>>
- "Legacy Content Migration" 28th February - 1st March <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e408>>
- "Creating lasting cultural change through narrative techniques" 3rd - 4th March <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e413>>
- "Islamic Banking Masterclass" 7th March <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e414>>
- "Knowledge Management - Where and how will companies achieve the big wins?" 9th March <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e410>>
- "AUKML Essential Skills for Information Conference 2005" 11th - 13th March <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e378>>
- "Developing a classification scheme for information and filing Masterclass" 14th - 15th March <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e415>>

**Czech Republic:**

- "INFORUM 2005 : 11th Annual Conference on Professional Information Resources" 24th - 26th May <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e412>>

For your free listing, complete the form at <<http://www.freepint.com/events>>.

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While we like to think about an increasingly globalised world, the divide between the information-rich and the information-poor is growing at an exponential rate as one accelerates away at broadband speed and the other languishes at dial-up speed. On the one hand, there is a lack of infrastructure for the internet, but on the other hand, even if they have access to the internet, many may lack the very basic training to use it. This is one area in which we often feel impotent as information professionals often end up on the lowest rung of many organisations.

### Training & development

Many members in the southern hemisphere, especially in Africa where access to the internet is the lowest, ask us for training in information management, website development, and information dissemination, something we sometimes take for granted. Some members assume that we are a large organisation with many employees and vast resources, but in reality, there are only three of us. In an ideal world, we would love to be able to meet all of their information and training needs.

The challenge with being truly global is that we are trying to serve the needs of a very diverse audience at different stages of development. On the one hand, we serve the needs of the information-rich organisations, generally based in the northern hemisphere, for whom email and internet are a given, and on the other, small grass-roots organisations that have to go to internet cafes in their nearest town for email or to their neighbours to make an international phone call to ask us for information.

One example of the lengths we have to go to disseminate information is shown by the story of Mahmood. Mahmood is a member who writes to us about once every six months when he leaves Somalia to visit relatives in Kuwait and picks up his post. He always apologises for not staying in touch more often, but it is difficult for him as his country has been in a state of civil war for over a decade and there is no postal system where he lives. He therefore picks up his email in Kuwait. We are his only link to the larger world and the information super-highway.

### Reach the largest information community

For details on reaching the largest network of information professionals, visit Onopoly. Download ratecards and sign up for the Onopoly Update for the latest offers:

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

### Jumping the language barrier

Another challenge is the language barrier, even when most of our members have the internet. Most of the information we access on the web is in English, but even when it is not, our software is not able to handle scripts other than Roman or Cyrillic. We often get emails sent to us in variety of languages, especially recently in Russian and Arabic, but our software cannot read it. We are in the process of setting up an Arabic CRINMAIL, but for the moment, the only way for us to send it out is for someone in an Arab country to translate for us, convert it into PDF and for us to send it out as an attachment.

As fewer international organisations seem willing to spend their resources on translation fees, it remains essential for us to avoid alienating our non-English speaking members. Even though translation fees are the most expensive part in the production of the newsletter, members really value receiving information in their own tongue. We know that our newsletter is being translated by our members into over 50 local languages, including Hebrew, Bengali, Lusoga, Luganda, Tamil, and German.

While we like to see ourselves as pioneers in our work, we are faced with a mammoth task and sometimes struggle to keep abreast of the latest developments and technological possibilities. We know that we do some things really well, but we are always interested in sharing ideas about how to do things better. You would be surprised how one simple email can make a difference in the life of a child.

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