Free Pint ®

**Helping 61,000 people use
the Web for their work**

CONTENTS

HTML Version
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/100703.htm>

Fully Formatted Acrobat Version
<http://www.freepint.com/issues/100703.pdf>

ABOUT FREE PINT

FreePint is an online community 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

Every time I attend a conference, I always find myself questioning the value of sitting listening to someone reading bullet points from a PowerPoint presentation or verbatim from a published paper. I can read those myself from the relative comfort of the FreePint offices. It's certainly cheaper.

The value comes in being able to quiz the presenters, or have a coffee with a colleague from across the globe who you rarely see. These brief encounters are nearly always the things which produce the most valuable leads or prompt the best ideas when you return.

When my colleague Annabel and I were recently in New York at the SLA conference, we tried to talk to as many people as possible. Annabel took the opportunity to line up interviews with a number of key people in the information industry and the first of those interviews is now available.

We asked Clare Hart, CEO and President of Factiva, about her views on a number of key developments in the information world: Factiva's integration with Microsoft Office; changes in the way Factiva provides customer service; future challenges for information professionals; and much more.

We put forward a number of the many questions and concerns which had been suggested by FreePinters. So, I invite you to read Annabel's in-depth interview with Clare Hart, as it makes for very interesting reading: <http://www.freepint.com/portal/events/sla-2003>.

In today's newsletter we dispel some of the myths about copyright law. The article is a selection of the key issues covered in a brand new report "Copyright & the Internet: Myth and Reality", published by FreePint and written by Paul Pedley. You can find out more, see a sample and purchase the report online at:

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

Also, don't forget that the "FreePint Freedom of Information Exchange" takes place on July 22nd so you've still time to book if you wish to attend.

We hope you enjoy today's issue of FreePint and will visit the Web site soon. We're increasingly publishing articles, interviews and other material (including photos) direct to the site and so make sure you don't miss out.

All the best
William

William Hann BSc(Hons) MCLIP
Founder and Managing Editor

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

FREE PINT JOBS
<http://www.freepint.com/jobs>

FreePint Jobs -- a great place for information vacancies.

VACANCY SEARCHING -- free search and set up a weekly alert profile.

VACANCY RECRUITING -- Complete the form and advertise a vacancy for just GBP195

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

This week's selected listings are below. All new jobs are posted to the Bar and Bar Digest (circulation 11,000+) and matched against the 1000+ live job seeker profiles. This week's Bar 'new jobs' listing is at <http://www.freepint.com/go/b24581> and last week's at <http://www.freepint.com/go/b24466>.

Here are some of the latest featured jobs:

Project Leader - Records
<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2548>
Records Management contracts available - 3-12 months long, p/t and f/t hours; FoI audit, relocation, etc; salaries neg., in London
Recruiter: Sue Hill Recruitment

Research Analyst
<http://www.freepint.com/go/j2549>
Undertake in-depth research projects for strategic in-house aims, understand a range of methodologies, excellent report writing skills
Recruiter: Glen Recruitment

[The above jobs are paid listings]

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

FreePint Quizzes Factiva CEO Clare Hart

www.freepint.com/portal/events/sla-2003

Free Pint Forthcoming Articles

* Online Discussion Groups * Bad Spelling *
* Children and the Internet * Competition Law *
* Digital Preservation * Commercial Real Estate *
* Multikulti * Registered Design Databases *
* Visual Representation of Information *
* Insurance Resources * Psychology of Corporations * Open University Resources *
* Asylum Information * Leadership Styles *
* U.S. Automotive Industry *

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

Community Hosting Technology by Willco

The FreePint community is managed using Willco's modular hosting technology. Their system is flexible, enabling you to pick and choose the components you require: member management; list hosting; forums; password-protected areas; and more.

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

What is the ResourceShelf?

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.

<http://www.resourceshelf.com>

Subscribe to Factiva's InfoPro Alliance Newsletter

As a member of the InfoPro Alliance, you will receive our monthly e-mail newsletter telling you about the latest enhancements to Factiva.com, product tips, TechTalk and links to our new online sessions for advanced searchers.

<http://www.factiva.com/infopro>

FreePint Freedom of Information Exchange
22nd July 2003, London, UK

This seminar will provide an overview of the Freedom of Information Act. The session will cover: * practical issues to consider when implementing FOI * discrepancies between the Data Protection and Freedom of Information regimes * the role of the publication scheme * records management issues; handling FOI requests * right of appeal, complaints procedures & compliance matters * copyright issues.

http://www.freepint.com/exchange/fi220703.htm

MY FAVOURITE TIPPLES
from Steve Wood

- E-government newsletter from Headstar <http://www.headstar.com/egb> offers a regular & comprehensive overview of key developments in UK e-government.

- E-Biz Search <http://gunther.smeal.psu.edu/index.html> is a niche search engine focused on e-business; search by subject or author.

- Like many people I've become interested in blogging, the Blogger tool <http://www.blogger.com> being the best.

- Webopedia <http://www.webopedia.com/> is great for IT technical jargon-busting.

- Taking a different perspective on World Trade and other global issues <http://www.nologo.org/>.

Steve Wood lectures in Information Management at Liverpool John Moores University, School of Business Information <http://cwis.livjm.ac.uk/bsn/>.

Tell us about your favourite Web sites. Check out the guidelines at <http://www.freepint.com/author.htm>, then email <penny@freepint.com>.

EVENTS
<http://www.freepint.com/events>

United Kingdom

"Patent Searching Clinics" (Free) - for anyone interested in finding more about patent search techniques and finding data on the Web. <http://www.freepint.com/go/e214> London, 9th July - 15th October.

"Libraries on the Web: collections or services?" organised by xrefer Ltd. Ben Schott, author of Schotts Original Miscellany, will be the guest speaker. Aimed at public, academic and corporate library sectors. <http://www.freepint.com/go/e220> London, 18th July.

"FreePint Freedom of Information Exchange" - Covering the role of the publication scheme; records management issues; handling FOI requests; right of appeal, complaints procedures & compliance matters; copyright issues. <http://www.freepint.com/go/e189> London, 22nd July.

"Marketing Workshop" - Looking at projecting your business via PR, marketing your business via your website, and gaining publicity through the press. <http://www.freepint.com/go/e211> Portsmouth, 22nd July.

"STN Free Patent training" - Gain experience in full-text searching, searching Inpadoc and attend the skills practise sessions. <http://www.freepint.com/go/e225> London, 22nd and 23rd July.

"Digital Resources for the Humanities" organised by the University of Gloucestershire. "DRH is the major forum for all those involved in, and affected by, the digitisation of our cultural heritage". <http://www.freepint.com/go/e190> Cheltenham, 31st August to 3rd September.

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

Copyright & the Internet: Myth and Reality
New FreePint report about copyright law in relation to the Web: www.freepint.com/shop/report/copyrightmyths

FREE PINT BAR
In Association with Factiva
a Dow Jones & Reuters Company

There's nothing quite like hanging out in a place with a real 'buzz'. That's been the FreePint Bar lately, with loads of great questions, answers and advice. Here's a few that have been particularly interesting or are in need of a response ...

If you're looking for software to stop those annoying 'pop-up windows' when browsing, then the update to Google's toolbar might be what you're looking for <http://www.freepint.com/go/b23884>. It also seems to work with Windows 2000 and the 'Messenger' service <http://www.freepint.com/go/b24454>.

One FreePinter wants to make a financial donation to an overseas charity without incurring massive fees. Would you know how? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b24491>.

On information-related topics, do you have a view on the information vendor OneSource? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b24223>. What about EBSCO? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b24360>.

If you're in a workplace information centre in London then can you join a focus group about perceptions of CILIP? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b24347> Do you manage an intranet? Have you thought about benchmarking it or having its effectiveness evaluated? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b24429>.

There's been interesting advice for someone wanting a career change and studying for an information qualification whilst still working <http://www.freepint.com/go/b24372>. Or perhaps you've already completed an information-related Masters in the last five years -- if so, then can you help a current student with research for their dissertation? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b24449>.

Finally, if you were asked to nominate a great book on Internet research, search engines or competitive research methodologies, which would you put forward? <http://www.freepint.com/go/b24605>.

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

<http://www.freepint.com/issues/100703.htm#tips>

"Copyright and the Internet: Myth and Reality"
By Paul Pedley

Paul Pedley is Head of Research at the Economist Intelligence Unit, and has previously worked in the information departments of a law firm, property developer, and in a number of government departments.

Paul is a Fellow of CILIP; represents Aslib on the Libraries and Archives Copyright Alliance; and is also on the steering group of the JISC Legal Information service.

Paul is also Editor of KeepingLegal.com. The service covers legal issues affecting the information profession such as data protection, copyright and freedom of information. There is a fortnightly newsletter which can be requested via the site.

He regularly runs training courses on copyright, data protection and freedom of information; as well as on Internet topics such as the invisible Web, and business information on the Internet.

Copyright law has a reputation for being an arcane and marginal discipline. When someone raises a question regarding a specific point of copyright law, the respondent is likely to find that when they try to give an answer the questioner's eyes will glaze over. It is hardly surprising that many copyright myths abound, because people generally have a sense of fair play. They think that what copyright law says must make sense; and if it doesn't then surely that cannot be what the law says. The article below outlines ten copyright myths and briefly explores why each of the statements made is not strictly correct.

MYTH 1

It is alright to copy 5% of a copyright work without breaching copyright.

Untrue. The legislation does not specify a percentage that is acceptable in all circumstances. The courts would look to see whether all or a "substantial part" of the work has been copied. The problem is that "substantial" can relate to quality just as much as quantity. A small but key part of the work could be ruled by a court to be a "substantial part".

MYTH 2

The information is accessible to anyone on the World Wide Web. It is therefore in the public domain and internet users have an implied licence to copy the material.

Untrue. Just because information is accessible on the Web, there is no implied licence to copy it. Under UK law, copyright material sent over the Internet or stored on Web servers will generally be protected in the same way as material in other media.

MYTH 3

My whole site was designed by a professional Website designer. I paid them for the work, and therefore they will have checked that it is alright to use the clip art, pictures, and other material.

Not necessarily. Not all Website designers will check that the material used has been cleared for copyright purposes.

MYTH 4

I have acknowledged the source from which I got the information, therefore copyright has not been breached.

Untrue. Whilst it is true that you sometimes see copyright notices on Websites stating that copying is allowed so long as the source is acknowledged, this does not apply to all content. It does not mean that you can automatically copy big chunks of everything that you want to copy just because you acknowledge the source.

MYTH 5

There is no copyright symbol on the work, so it can't be protected by copyright.

Untrue. Copyright protection is automatic. There isn't a formal registration process that an author has to go through to have the rights to a work; nor do they need to put a (c) on the work in order to claim copyright protection.

MYTH 6

The database is on the Web and it just consists of a list of names and addresses so it can't be protected by copyright, and it must be alright to copy.

Untrue. With the introduction of "database right" through the Copyright and Rights in Databases Regulations 1997, a database could still be protected by database right, even if it isn't protected by copyright.

MYTH 7

The full text of the journal article was posted to a discussion list. The person who posted it to the list will have obtained copyright clearance.

Untrue. It is incredible how often you see people asking if anyone has a copy of an article that they are looking for, and a helpful person then responds by posting the full text of the article to the discussion list on which the enquirer has made the request. They might not have even considered the copyright implications of their actions.

MYTH 8

Anyone can copy material on the Web using fair dealing for research as a defence.

Untrue. The implementation of the Copyright Directive (2001/29/EC) means that fair dealing for research or private study is restricted to fair dealing for a non-commercial purpose or private study.

MYTH 9

I am entitled to make a copy of the work on my Website because I am not charging people for the material.

Untrue. If you publish someone else's work to your own Website without permission, copyright is infringed regardless of whether or not you charge people for the copied material.

Related Free Pint links:

- "Copyright & the Internet: Myth and Reality" full report: http://www.freepint.com/shop/report/copyrightmyths/

- 'Intellectual Property' articles in the FreePint Portal http://www.freepint.com/go/p143

- Post a message to the author, Paul Pedley, 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/100703.htm#feature

- Access the entire archive of FreePint content http://www.freepint.com/portal/content/

MYTH 10

I have only created a link to the document rather than making copies of it. There are no potential legal problems with doing that.

Untrue: If the link is to a pdf, for example, it could be argued that each time the link is clicked, the entire work is being "published". There are plenty of legal hazards from hyperlinking, particularly if you are using frames technology. You could be accused of "passing off" other people's material as your own.

This article has outlined a number of misunderstandings which commonly occur regarding copyright law. These are explored in much greater detail in the report "Copyright & the Internet: Myth and Reality", available from FreePint at <http://www.freepint.com/shop/report/copyrightmyths/>.

Copyright law has become so complex that one almost feels as though it is necessary to have a lawyer on hand to help make sense of the law. If people are expected to abide by copyright law, then surely that law needs to be designed with the needs of the majority borne in mind.

The full report "Copyright & the Internet: Myth and Reality" is published by FreePint and Paul Pedley and is available online at: <http://www.freepint.com/shop/report/copyrightmyths/>

FreePint Index -- Quick-reference format to all topics

The FreePint Index provides handy subject-access to all articles and reviews appearing in the FreePint Newsletter 1997-2003: <http://www.freepint.com/issues/03indexa.htm>

GOLD

In our feature article a year ago Vivienne Sales looked at the debilitating and very common 'repetitive stress injury'.

- FreePint No.115 27th June 2002. "RSI and the Library and Information Science Professional" http://www.freepint.com/issues/270602.htm

In FreePint Issue 90 Richard Eskins talked us through the key features of Google and Crystal Sharp looked at the positive and negative aspects of health information online.

- FreePint No.90, 21st June 2001. "Do you Google?" and "Electronic Health Information : A boon and a curse!" http://www.freepint.com/issues/210601.htm

In 2000, Arthur Weiss and Steve England showed us "some of the processes undertaken in analysing a company's Internet presence". Martin White discussed the Wireless Application Protocol.

- FreePint No.65, 22nd June 2000. "Internet Intelligence - analysing web-sites for competitive intelligence" and "WAP Technology and Services" http://www.freepint.com/issues/220600.htm

The 'netiquette' of email was covered briefly by Nikki Pilkington four years ago and Jonathan Berry looked at archaeology sources on the Web.

- FreePint No.41, 24th June 1999. "Answering back" and "Finding Links to the Past: archaeological resources on the Web" http://www.freepint.com/issues/240699.htm

In 1998 Sheila Webber highlighted "some free specialist directories in the information sector: listing online databases, information consultants and the like". Pita Enriquez Harris looked at Bioscience resources.

- FreePint No.17, 25th June 1998. "Finding information products and services via the Net" and "Bioscience Information on the Internet" http://www.freepint.com/issues/250698.htm

Penny <penny@freepint.com>

Russ Singletary is a consultant with the Cadence Group Inc., an Atlanta, U.S.-based firm, and he is assigned to the Corporate Strategy unit of a Fortune 100 communications corporation. He holds an MLIS from the University of South Carolina at Columbia, a BA from Wofford College, Spartanburg, South Carolina; and has completed additional university coursework in Quebec, Canada, and Paris, France. He is a former journalist.

Related links:

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

- Read customer comments and buy this book at Amazon.co.uk http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/0596004478/freepint0c or Amazon.com http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0596004478/freepint00

- "Google Hacks" ISBN 0596004478, published by O'Reilly & Associates, written by Tara Calishain and Rael Dornfest.

- Search for and purchase any book from Amazon via the FreePint Bookshelf at <http://www.freepint.com/bookshelf>

FREE PINT BOOKSHELF
<http://www.freepint.com/bookshelf>

"Google Hacks"
Reviewed by Russ Singletary

Who isn't already familiar with the name Google? You may be less familiar with the names of Google Hack's authors. Tara Calishain is responsible for <http://www.researchbuzz.com>, and Rael Dornfest is a researcher at publisher O'Reilly & Associates. Their new book on what is arguably the best search engine is timely for those of us with clients grown adept at self-service Internet research.

Calishain and Dornfest present "100 industrial-strength tips and tools" to unearth the gems hidden within the Google mine. The book is neatly organized into eight chapters with about a dozen or so tips in each chapter.

The Google Toolbar comes as an interesting tip listed in the first chapter. I've had trouble with various "helper" toolbars I've downloaded onto my PC - including the Google Toolbar. Computer technicians have told me they discourage users from souping up their machines with these add-ons. As I've found out several times, they can compromise the integrity of your Internet browser, and furthermore, I've had little luck figuring out a work-around.

Another chapter focuses on Google's so-called special services and collections. These include Google News, Froogle (as in frugal Google, for us Blue Light shoppers), and Google Labs. As the authors point out, "each data collection has its own unique special syntaxes". You could easily debate the advantages and disadvantages of this scenario, but I would have assumed (before reading this book) that Google applied a one-size-fits-all approach to its syntax application across all its services.

Chapter five centers on the Google Web API (application programming interface). "If you've always wanted to learn Perl, but never knew what to 'do with it', this is your section," according to the authors. I list this chapter as a highlight, because I imagine many of us try to maintain at least a minimal level of awareness of library-related technologies.

Another noteworthy chapter focuses on Google pranks and games, which makes for lighter reading after the API sections.

Google Hacks follows in the O'Reilly tradition of being a compact book with reader-friendly design. Thermometer icons, for example, are used to indicate the relative complexity of the 100 hacks detailed in the book.

Calishain and Dornfest have done a good job, in the words of a library school professor of mine, at looking under the hood and noodling around inside the engine called Google. This book would be well worth the list price of US$24.95, but as with most publications in this field, you need to buy it soon after it's released, or you're better off looking for a revised edition to be truly on top of things.

For more information on "Google Hacks," point your browser to <http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/googlehks/>.

FEATURE ARTICLE

"The Product Development Cycle"
By Stephanie Taylor

Stephanie Taylor is a project manager with Fretwell-Downing Informatics, a library solutions technology company. Her previous experience includes working in academic libraries and electronic library management, document delivery and inter-library loans. She can be contacted at <stephanie.taylor@fdisolutions.com>.

The information sector abounds with new technologies and information professionals are highly experienced in selecting, implementing and using them. This fast-paced environment, though, can mean time is short for understanding the other aspects of technology - the development phases. But an appreciation of the mechanics of these phases can help to ensure that projects stay on track and implementations run smoothly.

This is an overview of the process and offers some generally applicable guidelines for understanding the creation of software. It is not a comprehensive analysis of the working practices of any one company, but a starting point for a better understanding of the development process.

Introduction

During my working life, I have been in the position of being a customer of various software companies. More recently, I have found myself working closely with the development of products from within a software company. This has been a fascinating experience, and one that has made me realise the gap between what people think is going on and what is actually happening. When I grew impatient as a customer, thinking little progress was being made, I now know the engineering department of the relevant company was at their busiest, getting the product out! I also know how a customer asking for a 'little change' that will take weeks of work and throw the whole project off course can be extremely frustrating! If they'd mentioned it earlier, something could've been done, but at this stage?!

The Product Development Cycle, outlined below, is, I think, the key. It is the process through which software is created, and understanding it can help fill in some of the gaps for customers. For software companies, realising that customers often don't understand what is happening can be just as important in ensuring good working relationships.

Planning

Overview of Phase

Planning is divided into two distinct parts - ideas and decisions. Ideas are gathered from a variety of sources and weighed against a set of criteria. This includes existing customers' requirements, new customers' requirements, current technological developments and what time and resources are available. Then decisions are made. Each idea is selected for either inclusion in the next release, inclusion in a future release or rejected as unsuitable. At the close of this phase, the next product release has a shape and a purpose.

Customer Input

Suggestions from existing and prospective customers are central to the process. Gathered from support calls, user groups, conference and exhibition feedback, they are a vital source of ideas, as the point of the process is to make something people want!

Common Misunderstandings

Be prepared for a big time lapse from making a suggestion to seeing it in a product. Be aware that suggestions can be rejected, usually because they are not technically feasible right now or not useful to enough customers. Every suggestion is considered, and there will be an explanation for all ideas not included.

Design

Overview of Phase

Now the selected ideas are pinned down in a practical way. Depending on the favoured working practices, this phase can be incredibly detailed or quite brief. The workload varies depending on how the tasks are assigned. Sometimes everything in a product is detailed at the initial stage. Alternatively, this phase can be brief, with the detailed work shifting to the development phase. There are, of course, many variations on this division, and this can change from product to product even within the same company. The process is dictated by what suits the product best. Whatever the method, the design phase results in a plan that can be used to produce a detailed blueprint of the technical specification needed to build the product.

Customer Input

In addition to the input from Phase 1, perspectives on usability issues, such as making the interface easy to use for target users and ensuring the system performs tasks in a logical way for workflow will be sought from customers.

Common Misunderstandings

Customer comments are required in some areas of this phase, but direct suggestions may not be relevant in all areas. Regular updates can help customers see that progress is happening during the times when direct input is not needed.

Development

Overview of Phase

Next, the specifications are coded by developers into the product. Depending on how the work is divided (see Phase 2), the development might start with a detailed design being created. From this, a technical specification of the programming to be done is drawn up. This is a blueprint and is altered as the developer/s work to record how things function. It is used later, to track changes to the code when developing future releases. Work is split up depending on the scale of the product and the specialist skills required. On a large product, a number of teams may work on different functions.

Customer Input

Changes may occur in design and functionality when technical reasons prevent functions working in the way originally envisaged. When changes affect the way the product will be used by customers, they will be consulted.

Common Misunderstandings

Functionality can alter and timescales can be highly variable. When creating something new, despite planning, unexpected things frequently happen. For a happy working relationship, keep talking! Customers should be aware that this process can be a lengthy one, and companies should regularly issue reports on progress.

Build

Overview of Phase

Now the product is built. The complete system is assembled from the disparate parts. Although individual functions will have been tested by developers, the build is the first stage in testing the system as a whole. A number of builds will be done through the closing stages of the process. These last phases of the process are a recurring loop between building, testing and fixes to the system until everything is working smoothly. After any changes, another build is done to incorporate the updates and these are then tested as part of the whole system.

Customer Input

The initial stages are internal to ensure that a reasonably stable system is built before release to customers. In the final stages, during the beta testing phase (see below), test sites will install and use different builds.

Common Misunderstandings

There are a number of ways builds can appear to go 'wrong' from a customer point of view. It is important to understand what happens during the process -- that the parts are assembled as a whole -- and to allow margin for error. What seems a huge problem for a user is usually a small, easily corrected error where the functions interact rather than a major system fault.

Testing

Overview of Phase

Testing is done in two stages: alpha and beta. Alpha testing is done in-house and identifies obvious problems with the way functions interact. These are then fixed, a new system built, and tested again until corrected. Beta testing follows the same pattern but involves customers testing the system in a working environment.

Customer Input

Customers are pivotal to Beta testing. Test sites are chosen in consultation with existing customers, or with the commissioning client if the system is bespoke. Selection is based on the way the system is used, number of staff etc. to give a cross-section of typical environments. Sites keep a detailed log of problems, discuss them if required and re-test to check fixes under the same conditions as the original error.

Common Misunderstandings

Testing is frustrating if not properly understood. It deals with a work in progress, and the software company is fully expecting problems - that is the point. This is very different from a live system going wrong. It's important to remember that thorough testing is like a dress rehearsal, the more things that are picked up, the better the finished product will be!

Release

Overview of Phase

Once the build/test/fix process is complete, the final build commences. This includes a health check to ensure everything is present and correct. All the logos, company details etc., are added, and the product is tagged with the correct version number. The release is then delivered to customers, along with relevant installation instructions and user documentation.

Customer Input

There may be an acceptance testing period for the customer, where internal requirements are checked and the product is officially accepted. Depending on whether the product is new, or new to a customer, training might be needed.

Common Misunderstandings

Despite the extensive testing process, some problems internal to a customer site may still persist. This is due to the variety of operating systems, network setups etc. that are unique to each site. It is important to realise that such problems have to be solved in consultation with customer IT support and the software company. An outsider can only advise -- changes to internal configurations have to be done internally. Being clear who is responsible for each stage of dealing with a problem helps to ensure a swift solution.

Conclusion

As a product is being released, plans for the next release will be in progress, and Phase 1 will be underway again. The Product Development Cycle is the rhythm the whole of a company works to. This can seem inflexible, but it would be possible, without cut-off points, to endlessly add to a release and never get anything out of the door! For customers to understand the cycle and for software companies to understand how customers might perceive the process is an important step in keeping channels of communications open and creating a more productive working relationship.