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

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Editorial

The buzz is building as we head towards the Online Information 2005 conference and exhibition here in London at the end of this month <<http://www.online-information.co.uk/>>.

This is our eighth year exhibiting, although there may be some disappointment (or relief) that we won't be having a bar or 60s-style lounge as in previous years <<http://www.freepint.com/portal/events/>>.

Visitors to the exhibition will primarily be coming to see the products, but our main purpose in exhibiting is to network. It's such a good chance to catch up with colleagues and friends from around the world, be they visiting or exhibiting. It's also great to work with the organisers of Online Information, who are a first-rate team.

Liaising with the organisers always reminds me of the importance of working with a group of people with complementary skills. We are lucky to have a great team here at FreePint too, and we know of another company with excellent staff: how easy it was to choose the winner of the 'Online Information / FreePint Award for Best Customer Service Team' when they received such excellent citations as:

"Support is always available with a smile in their voices, no query too small or too big."

"They combine a light hearted and friendly approach with knowledge that just seems to be overflowing out of their heads."

The award, a crystal pint glass (of course), is being engraved as we speak, but you'll have to wait to find out who the winner is. It will be announced at the gala awards dinner before being published in December's FreePint. Of course, if you made one of the citations above, then you will know who the winner is and can enjoy a private smile.

Thank you to everyone who made nominations for this year's award. There were a number of worthy contenders, but the winner shone out.

Another winner is also featured in today's FreePint. Steve Borley is interviewed about winning the SLA Europe Information Professional Award. We also look at how Internet telephony is affecting market research, and bring you the usual mix of useful tips and reviews.

We hope you can join us at Online Information, but if you can't, then do join the 15,000 members who receive the FreePint Bar Digest every Tuesday and Friday. It's a great current awareness tool, and makes you feel really 'connected' with the community. You simply need to log in to your account at <<http://web.freepint.com/>> (note 'web' rather than 'www') and click on 'Subscriptions'.

We hope you enjoy FreePint, and will continue to spread the word to your colleagues and friends. In fact, it's easy to do so using the 'Recommend FreePint' page at <<http://www.freepint.com/reco.htm>>.

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My Favourite Tipples

by Lisa Anderson



Lisa Anderson is a Learning Advisor for Law working in Information Services at The University of Birmingham. Lisa is also a committee member of UC&R West Midlands.

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

- BAILII (the British and Irish Legal Information Institute) is one of my favourite sites as it contains freely accessible legal information and is quite easy to search <<http://www.bailii.org/>>.
- The Cardiff Index to Legal Abbreviations is fantastic for finding out the full title for obscure legal references <http://www.legalabbrevs.cardiff.ac.uk/>.
- I could easily spend all day surfing the Internet Movie Database. If you ever want to find out where you have seen an actor previously, this is the site to go to! <<http://www.imdb.com/>>.
- McSweeneys is run by the elite of young San Franciscan writers and includes short stories and many other interesting pieces of modern writing <<http://www.mcsweeneys.net/>>.
- Reuters currency converter is easy to use and always up to date. This site also provides great links to breaking news stories <http://today.reuters.co.uk/investing/Currencies.aspx>.

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Information Officer, London, UK (November 2005)

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Moreover features in VIP

The latest issue of VIP features an in-depth review of CI-Newsdesk, a current awareness product from Moreover that provides access to news sources and weblogs. A further item examines the latest enhancements made to LexisNexis Butterworths.

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NB: There are 49 other jobs in the current edition of the Jinfo Newsletter <<http://www.jinfo.com/newsletter/>> and over 100 in the Jinfo database <<http://www.jinfo.com/>>.

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[The above jobs are paid listings]

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A number of FreePinters have their own blogs, and Phil Bradley <<http://www.philb.com/>> is trying to get a list together of all the British information industry bloggers. If you are a blogger, contact Phil directly or, if you know where to find such a list, view his posting here <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b35377>>.

This FreePinter would love to be a researcher for authors, but doesn't know where to start. Can you help? <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b35380>>.

Robert Gordon University, in Aberdeen, is undertaking a PhD study on finding your family's history on the Internet. Perhaps you would like to fill out their five-minute online survey? <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b35504>>.

Can you help this student who has decided to do their dissertation on the Sarbanes-Oxley Act 2002 but doesn't know how to structure their research <<http://www.freepint.com/go/s4581>>.

Do you know of a "handy book" which lists companies together with the drugs they are testing? <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b35450>>. How about the online advertising rates for healthcare Web sites? <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b35456>>.

Are there any tools/products/services for small businesses to measure the effectiveness of their IT systems? <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b35240>>.

Take a look at this fascinating posting on how to find out the dimensions of Trafalgar Square in London. Measuring it with Google Earth has been one suggestion <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b35454>>.

Finally, if you think your community needs a 'Bar' too, check out the Willco Modules system <<http://www.Willco.com/>>.

Best regards

Penny Hann, FreePint
<penny.hann@freepint.com>

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

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Tips Article

"VoIP: Threat or Opportunity to the Market Research Industry?"

By Gary Giddings

Gary Giddings is a director and co-founder of IRN Research <<http://www.irn-research.com>>, a UK-based market research and consultancy business. As well as offering general research services, IRN focuses on bespoke research projects and commissioned research reports for the information & content, and IT and telecommunications sectors.

Related FreePint links:

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Introduction

For those not familiar with the telecoms industry, VoIP is one of those acronyms much loved in the information and communications technology industries. Unlike many technical acronyms used by IT and telecom professionals, VoIP, or Voice over Internet Protocol, has the potential to radically impact on the operations of the market research industry.

What is VoIP?

VoIP allows broadband Internet users to make and receive voice phone calls over their Internet connection. A caller's analogue voice call is converted into a digital signal, bundled into data packets and sent just like any other information packet over the Internet to its destination. At the receiver's end, the packets are recombined and translated to speech again. VoIP calls largely or completely bypass the public switched telephone network (PSTN). Instead, they are carried wholly (or mainly) over Internet Protocol (IP) networks like the public Internet, an organisation's own IP wide-area network or the network of a telephone service provider that uses the Internet itself to carry calls.

Market researchers will use telephones in much the same way as they do now. However, calls will be made either via an IP Phone (which looks like a conventional phone but converts analogue signals to IP digital signals), or a normal analogue telephone connected to an analogue phone adaptor which converts the analogue signal to a digital one. Telephone numbers can be assigned and calls can be terminated onto the PSTN network. Users can talk to others who are not using VoIP and they retain the traditional voice call experience, i.e. they can use their existing CATI (computer assisted telephone interviewing) headsets to make IP calls.

What does this mean to an agency?

VoIP will affect an agency in three potential ways:

- It will lower the costs of telephone research
- It will lower the cost of running an agency by lowering all telephone bills
- It will improve the functionality and flexibility of an agency's communications, but it may make it harder to organise telephone research and build a representative sample

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The opportunities: cost savings

VoIP essentially removes the cost of using the public switched telephone network (PSTN) to make telephone calls because the traffic is carried wholly or partly off the PSTN. It therefore reduces telephone and administration costs. Calls made between VoIP users are free. When calling others using a VoIP service, there is only a monthly service charge (often around GBP 6.00) but no call charges. Therefore, calls to respondents who are also using VoIP are free and calls between agency locations or to freelancers are free as long as all are using VoIP. Via a VoIP service, staff can also make and receive calls to and from ordinary non-Internet numbers and whilst these calls are not free, they are usually at significant discounts to regular rates.

Business-to-business (B2B) telephone research is increasingly open to the use of VoIP. The UK is amongst the leading countries in terms of the proportion of companies using VoIP. According to the DTI's (UK Department of Trade and Industry) International Benchmarking Study 2004, in 2004 18% of UK businesses were using VoIP. Given that 65% of UK businesses have a broadband connection when accessing the Internet, this implies that 28% of UK business broadband users have VoIP. Within the UK, there is significant variation by sector - 44% of financial services use VoIP compared with only 10% of manufacturing businesses.

The proportion of consumers using VoIP is not clear, but broadband connections now exceed dial-up connections for Internet access and the consumer VoIP market is likely to grow strongly in the future, especially as many VoIP service providers are bundling VoIP services with broadband connections.

The opportunities: increased flexibility and functionality

VoIP is particularly attractive to research agencies. In contrast with other technologies - such as multiplexing, which allow data and voice traffic on the same line - IP telephony is more flexible, and can accommodate new working trends such as 'hot desking'. By using IP technology, companies can digitise communications, meaning emails can be forwarded to workers while they are on the move. It also opens the door for cheap video telephony.

VoIP offers:

- Increased employee mobility * More intelligent call handling * Greater flexibility * New channels of communication.

Most VoIP service providers bundle a range of communications features into their standard packages allowing even small agencies to enjoy the benefits of sophisticated telephony services. Services aimed at businesses offer basic voice services plus a range of business user features, such as:

- Call redirect (to any other designated phone, to anywhere when no answer, immediately when an office is closed)
- Advanced voice messaging features
- Abbreviated dialling between locations
- Real-time billing
- Advanced call restrictions
- Integration of the VoIP services into the PC network, meaning companies can have features like parallel ringing, central web-based feature management, global corporation telephone integration, conferencing and an easy-to-use web interface to manage extension numbers and call groups.

The threats

While VoIP offers many operational benefits to research agencies, there are also dangers. A consumer or a firm using a VoIP service can be allocated either:

- A UK geographic number
- An 0845 number, which is usually slightly cheaper than a UK geographic number.

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On the one hand, this can benefit an agency. Users can specify any UK geographic numbers regardless of where they live so, for example, a freelance teleworker in Spain can have a London telephone number. This might be advantageous to an agency working virtually but who wants to present a professional image to clients.

On the other hand, it decouples telephone numbers from geographic areas. Not only does a UK telephone number no longer point to a geographic locality within the UK, it no longer points to the UK anymore. UK nationals with a home in the UK but living in Spain for most of the year, for example, will have a UK telephone number which rings in Spain. These individuals are unlikely to be appropriate contacts for a survey about living conditions in the UK.

The traditional method of sample selection for a consumer omnibus survey would entail a random sample of telephone numbers being drawn from the entire BT database of domestic telephone numbers within each region. Each number selected will have its last digit randomised so as to provide a sample including both listed and unlisted numbers. In today's non-VoIP world this would ensure a representative sample, but in a VoIP world it may not. A number initially drawn from the South East region could turn out to be one from Scotland when the last digit is randomised - e.g. 0208519XXX1 might be from East London, but 0208519XXX3 might be from Glasgow, if the Glasgow household has chosen a London number.

Similarly, businesses operating from overseas but with a UK mailing address can also have a UK telephone number which rings in the overseas office. Are these appropriate contacts for a survey about business conditions in the UK?

Moreover, advanced call-handling features will complicate research. VoIP allows consumers to establish a separate number for each member of

the family. One address can now have multiple numbers - unless each individual is identifiable by age and sex, which is the best number to call to reach the head of household, for example?

In addition, call-divert options allow calls to be diverted to another number on no answer or re-directed to other family members. During the holiday period, a call to family A could be answered by family B (neighbours or relatives) while family A is away. A telephone survey of London households, as an example, could be answered by a home in Manchester.

VoIP may also ironically add to telephone bills. Options like simultaneous ring mean that calls to the landline will ring simultaneously on a mobile as well - agencies call a landline but pay for a mobile call.

Finally, the curse of a B2B telephone researcher's life - voicemail -- will be commonly available to consumers, including personalised greetings. Households, tired of sales calls, can simply leave the phone on voicemail and only return those calls they want to answer.

Conclusion

VoIP could radically cut the costs of telephone research in the UK and will make an important impact on the operating costs of a research agency. However, like ex-directory numbers and the lack of 100% penetration of telephones into UK homes, it raises some interesting issues about how telephone research needs to be designed and conducted.

Useful Links

<http://www.voip.org.uk> - General site for VoIP information in UK.

<http://www.irn-research.com/Brief7.htm> - Review of VoIP developments including list of service and equipment providers.

<http://www.voip-info.org> - Wiki covering software, hardware, service providers, reviews.

<http://computer.howstuffworks.com/ip-telephony.htm>

http://www.solwise.co.uk/voiceoverip_intro.htm - Good introductions to VoIP

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Review

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

"E-Book Publishing Success " Reviewed by Graham Stewart



Graham Stewart is a freelance writer with a sordid past in IT development. His client list includes Reuters, Vodafone, Microsoft, and Citrix. In his spare time he works as an editor for the technical podcasting site at <<http://www.itconversations.com>>. His personal blog can be found at <<http://wotiwrote.transmega.co.uk>>.

A glance at the Bibliography of Kingsley Oghojafor's recently published text on e-books reveals the author's intended audience. With titles such as "How to Become an Information Millionaire" and "How to Literally Triple Your Online Sales...Overnight!" it's clear that Mr. Oghojafor is keen to appeal to those drawn to the Internet in the misguided belief that merely attending the party can guarantee wealth and success. Literally, indeed.

A number of the other titles listed could have been alternatives for the book under review. ("How to Create, Promote and Sell an E-book on the Internet" anyone?) The author has obviously read widely in the literature of e-book publishing and has published seven of his own. This book is therefore a distillation of his knowledge and practical experience. There is, however, no avoiding the paradox that a text on the subject of writing and publishing an e-book is delivered as a bound paperback, at once quite short and very expensive.

Yet, for all that, the book is a clear enough instruction manual on how to publish an e-book, covering everything you'll need to take you from conception to selling. After a brief and possibly redundant first chapter explaining what e-books are and why the author thinks they're important (which boils down to the fact that "they have now made it possible for anyone to write and self-publish a book within a short time"), the book falls naturally into two parts. The first (chapters 2 to 8) covers choosing the subject of your e-book, how to go about the task of writing it, and the mechanics of actually compiling your treasured prose into one of a number of e-book formats. The second part (chapters 9 to 18) examines the mechanics of marketing and selling the finished product, from getting it onto the Internet to promoting it via both your own web site and those of others.

The book is an easy read. The sections are short, the instructions clear, and the author's simple prose style allows no stylistic flourish ever to stand between the reader and the author's message. Here, for instance, is Mr. Oghojafor introducing the topic of e-book compilers: "With your information well-written and structured, it is now time to compile all of it into an e-book. To be able to do this, however, you will need an e-book compiler. Without e-book compilers you

would not be able to compile all the information you have prepared into a single file that can now be viewed as an e-book". No room for misunderstanding there.

By far the most interesting chapters are those covering the promotion of your completed e-book. This is an education into the ways of Internet marketing, with its autoresponders and affiliate programmes. There is also some very useful information on search engine rankings and article directories. However, this book is a very expensive route to such knowledge.

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Feature Article

Penny Leach is an information services procurement specialist, working for Business Information Services in the European Headquarters of a global investment bank. She deals with non realtime electronic services, as well as the traditional format of books and journals. A qualified librarian, her career started in academic libraries. Penny has been active in various professional groups, including the City Information Group, and is now on the Board of SLA Europe.

"Interview with Steve Borley, winner of the SLA Europe Information Professional Award" By Penny Leach

[Steve Borley, Regional Information Manager, Royal Bank of Scotland, is interviewed about winning the SLA Europe Information Professional Award (SLA EIP) by Penny Leach, Board Member of SLA Europe on behalf of FreePint]

**** What does it feel like to be the winner of the (first) SLA Europe Information Professional Award (SLA EIP)?**

It is a great honour to receive such recognition from my peers. Naturally, I was very surprised to receive the Award and thrilled that some of the things I've achieved in my career were considered worthy of celebrating in this way. Winning this Award in the year it recognised 'information professionals' instead of 'special librarians' was especially satisfying. I think this change in Award title shows SLA Europe recognises the vital broadening and diversifying of the information profession, as a profession that welcomes participation from a wide range of people including those without formal academic qualifications in library and information management, such as myself.

**** You mention in your write-up for SLA Europe of the June 2005 SLA Conference in Toronto that you are a veteran of student politics conferences - tell us a little bit about your past activism.**

I was President of my college at Lancaster University, which led me to sit on the Student Union committee, which in turn led to my attending National Union of Students conferences in Blackpool during my student years. This experience showed me that I enjoyed the work of organising things on others' behalf and made me keen to engage in what I guess you could call 'professional activism' from the earliest part of my career. Back in my student days I did get involved in student politics - though looking back I was generally happier taking responsibility for enabling practical things to get done rather than chaining myself to too many railings!

**** Attendance at the SLA Conference this year was the main part of your prize, which is generously sponsored by Factiva. What were your main take-aways?**

Well despite the myriad differences between SLA and NUS, both conferences involve a degree of stamina and single-minded intensity that I'm sure can come as a shock to the first-time delegate. More

specifically, the SLA Conference was an excellent opportunity to take stock of where the information world is now and where many of the key thinkers believe it is going tomorrow. The keynote speakers spoke at a high level, challenging everyone's notions of what our work looks like and what our roles should be. I liked Bill Buxton, and his exhortation that if we sit around waiting for the next new invention we'll get nowhere, but if we look at what we use today and think how else we can use the knowledge we already have we will make progress. On a micro level, I think that is a key mindset for someone running an information service in any organisation in the world, so it was good to hear.

Though Bill was good, it was Gary Hamel I enjoyed the most. He believes information professionals should be agents for change in their organisations, and that an organisation that is unable to change will be obsolete in a fairly short timeframe. Hamel also made the point that organisational change starts from what we know today. He wants us all to be very clear-eyed about the assumptions our organisations make and to prod and poke them until we find an assumption that we can challenge, thereby altering the way our organisations operate. Hamel is definitely a big-picture guy, but this is a message all information managers need to hear. If we are not challenging how we work then we'll be leaving it to someone else and disenfranchising ourselves from determining our futures. It was powerful stuff and emboldened me to really look closely at how I operate.

**** Gary Hamel's conclusion in his keynote speech at the Conference was that information professionals can help their organisations develop a culture that delivers more original strategies and not just push data from A to B. Can you give us an example from your current role at the Royal Bank of Scotland?**

RBS has given me a role that previously wasn't seen as an opportunity for an information specialist in the bank. My remit has been to increase the strategically valuable knowledge from the raw data we collect about our day-to-day business. The bedrock of this is to make my team as efficient as possible in turning the raw data we receive into information so that we spend as much time as possible turning this information into the knowledge that will inform our strategic decision-

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making. It's taking the 'fetching and carrying' role that information work can easily become and shifting the focus to what we do with the data rather than how we move it around. Every job is a work in progress of course, but I do feel I am in a role where I can begin to see a marriage between the core skills and attitudes of an information professional and the strategic renewal requirements that Hamel identified.

**** Tell us about SIN (Scottish Information Network) and your role in it?**

The Scottish Information Network <<http://www.scotinfo.net/>> is something I take a great deal of satisfaction in. Hazel Hall, from Napier University, and I both work in Edinburgh. When I'd been in Scotland for about two years I was looking to join whatever networking groups there were to help build my professional network of contacts working with business information, and struggling to find one. (For Hazel this was less of an issue because she had been in Edinburgh so much longer than me). Hazel and I recognised that my problem was probably not unique. We decided that if there was no obvious group to join then there was only one solution - to see if we could rustle up sufficient enthusiasm from those people we did know to get a new group off the ground. So, using Hazel's wonderful contacts list and my own somewhat shorter list, we got around thirty people together to see if there was any interest in forming a group. There was, along with the all-important additional swathe of volunteers and willing hands and brains to actually get some momentum going.

Roll forward a couple of years and we've built up a pretty good list of past events and we already have more in the pipeline in the diary through to next March. The ethos behind the group is very much one of 'open access'. We encourage anyone with an interest to come along; we cover the cost of events through sponsorship, so we don't need to charge attendees - and we keep membership free too. This, I think, has helped us get established as there really are no barriers to anyone getting involved. At the events themselves we like to invite high-quality speakers and, where possible, to pair them with a member of the group - offering members the chance to lead a discussion with their peers. We always try to end with a networking session to allow debate to continue and give people in Scotland the chance to meet people who share their professional interests. We have a good mix of private and public sector workers, people from academia - including students - and people from large and small organisations. All in all, the members are an interesting, generous and sociable bunch.

I should emphasise that SIN does not regard itself as a "professional organisation". Rather it is a self-organising community, the main purpose of which is to facilitate networking as a means for participants to increase their information "reach" through access to others active in the group. An early resolution, and one that still stands, is that the group would continue to hold meetings only for as long as there was an appetite for them. We are not concerned with some of the issues that occupy the strong established bodies for information professionals, e.g. CILIP, such as advocacy, professional qualifications, validating academic courses, etc. This is not to say that SIN's work does not have an impact on such other groups. For example, someone who has been mentored to serve on the SIN Committee may later be encouraged to offer their services to another more formal association. In short, it offers a complementary means for individual professional development through networking.

Whilst Hazel and I got the ball rolling in the first place, the continued success of the group has been testament to the active participation of members and a genuine desire to see the group flourish. So the satisfaction for me comes from seeing events happen, web sites updated, and members introduced by people other than Hazel and me - it reaffirms my belief in the power and value of networking. I would recommend it to everyone.

**** What other professional networking activity in the information industry have you been or are you involved in?**

I was on the City Information Group (CiG) Management Committee in 1998 and 1999, chairing the group in 1999. I really enjoyed that, but it was a challenge trying to keep anything up to a 1,000 members happy. Still, just like my experience with SIN, there were always plenty of talented and committed people around to make things happen. Indeed, it was CiG that really switched me on to how useful and rewarding networking can be. I remember CiG providing me with the opportunity to hear from and meet people who had more experience than me, giving me a short cut to insights that would have taken several years of beavering away on my own to find out.

Recently, of course, I've attended events organised by the SLA too, in particular their Summer Soiree in London and their Edinburgh Networking Evening in October. Plus I'll be speaking on an SLA platform at the Online Information conference at Olympia at the end of November.

Useful links**SLA**

The Special Libraries Association is a non-profit global organisation for innovative information professionals and their strategic partners. Headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, USA, the SLA represents over 12000 information professionals in 83 countries, including corporate, academic and government information specialists <<http://www.sla.org>>.

SLA Europe

SLA Europe provides information professionals in Europe with a unique networking and learning opportunity through regular meetings and social events. It also seeks to recognise outstanding achievement in the information profession with the annual award of SLA Europe Information Professional (SLA EIP); the next call for nominations will be made at SLA Europe's Annual Breakfast Meeting at Online Information 2005 <<http://www.sla-europe.org>>.

Scottish Information Network

The Scottish Information Network is an informal networking group for information professionals. Members come from a mix of backgrounds to organise and attend events, and network. Events focus on issues of interest to business information professionals <<http://www.scotinfo.net/>>.

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