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ABOUT FREE PINT

FreePint is an online network of information searchers. Members receive this free newsletter twice a month: it is packed with tips on finding quality and reliable business information on the Internet.

Joining is free at <<http://www.freepint.com/>> and provides access to a substantial archive of articles, reviews, jobs & events, with answers to research questions and networking at the FreePint Bar.

Please circulate this newsletter which is best read when printed out. To receive a fully formatted version as an attachment or a brief notification when it's online, visit <<http://web.freepint.com/>>.



I discovered mailing lists and online communities for research around eight years ago. My job was as a news and current affairs information researcher in television. One day I discovered NewsLib <<http://parklibrary.jomc.unc.edu/newsliblyris.html>>, a mailing list for international news researchers, and as a novice I remember being astonished. How could such busy journalists and news researchers possibly find

the time to waste "playing" online? How could they justify not getting on with the "proper business" of gathering facts, calling contacts or writing briefs? A week later I was a convert. I quickly came to realise that busy individuals like me were not continually spending hours within the community. Instead they were tapping into the collective weight of numbers and expertise as and when they needed to. The sheer weight of numbers in communities like NewsLib, or indeed our own FreePint Bar, makes them an increase to productivity rather than a detraction from it. It takes two minutes to post an obscure query, a call for a hard-to-find article, or a request for a frequently requested statistic after a major news event. Answers come back quickly and efficiently and whilst they do you are getting on with many other pressing tasks.

In our article on time management by Jonathan Crowhurst we explore practical tips for managing time and also how best to use technology to manage time effectively. Most people who spend over an hour each morning wading through a full email inbox would agree that email can be both a blessing and a curse. Some companies have even been exploring implementing an "email free" day once a week to try and increase productivity. So often, as with any software, email programs can be used more effectively if all the features are properly used. As Crowhurst comments, "Microsoft Outlook is such a great tool, I kicked myself when I figured out its full potential for managing my calendar, tasks and so on".

Keeping up with developments in search engines is the subject of our other article today. Duncan Parry looks at the impact on searching and web sites owners, of recent acquisitions and developments. Consolidation is the name of the game, with Yahoo, Google and MSN currently leading the field. I noticed with interest that some search engines are diversifying into "Social Networking" - an interesting development covered in Pam Foster's feature in a recent edition of VIP <<http://www.vivavip.com/vip>>, FreePint's sister publication. So what are the hottest search engine developments to watch out for? Well, according to Duncan Parry, it's the serious development of local search, and the continuing emphasis on personalisation to deliver more relevant results.

That's all for this issue.
Annabel Colley
Editor, FreePint <annabel.colley@freepint.com>

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The FreePint Jobs Update is being circulated widely every two weeks. This free newsletter now has 1,100 direct subscribers and is posted at the Bar and in the Bar Digest (circulation 11,000).

To see the Jobs Update No.70 visit <http://www.freepint.com/go/b28226> and to subscribe, modify your account at <http://web.freepint.com>.

Here are some of the latest featured jobs:

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<http://www.freepint.com/go/j3122>

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Recruiter: ACAS

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<http://www.freepint.com/go/j3124>

About to complete your Library/Information qualification? Excellent training opportunity as Information Officer with top Law practice.

Recruiter: Glen Recruitment

Researcher

<http://www.freepint.com/go/j3140>

Corporate researcher role available, located either Birmingham or London; good online skills and business research exp needed.

Recruiter: Sue Hill Recruitment

NB: There are 28 other jobs in the current edition of the Jobs Update

<http://www.freepint.com/go/b28226>.

VIP No.4 :: Review of Dialog's new platform

The latest edition of VIP includes: A review of Dialog's new unified platform; Market Research on the Web; guest comment from OneSource CEO Martin Kahn.

Find out more about VIP at: <http://www.vivavip.com>

NEW: Sharpening Skills; Acquiring Knowledge

ISBN 1-904769-04-7

Published in April 2004 by FreePint, this report looks at the skills and knowledge you need to acquire and the situations in which you could apply them at various stages of your career. There is a particular focus on information and research services, but the advice is relevant to various cross-functional activities.

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

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NEW: Virtual Exchange on the new copyright laws

This package is now available to purchase from FreePint, with audio recording of the presentation in manageable sections, plus supporting documentation and links:

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MY FAVOURITE TIPPLES by Steve Edwards

Steve Edwards is a private consultant with a background of over 25 years in law enforcement. He specialises in the use of open sources for intelligence gathering purposes.

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

- <<http://www.touchgraph.com>> - This tool uses Java to show links to and from the page you have submitted. Not as thorough as 'link:' but graphically useful.
- <<https://snoop.anonymizer.com>> - A way of seeing how much information you are transmitting about your presence on the web, including the contents of your clipboard (check your explorer security settings!).
- <<http://www.itsecurity.com/dictionary/dictionary.htm>> - A-Z of everything technological if you want to impress your boss.
- <<http://www.samspace.org/>> - Useful if you are interested in obtaining website background or have any other reasons for digging into site ownership. Use the 'Do Stuff' search box.
- <<http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/>> - Thumbnails of newspaper front pages from around the world. A mouse-click will take you to a larger image and a link to that newspaper website or a PDF version.

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EVENTS

United Kingdom:

- "Gartner Outsourcing & IT Services Summit 2004" 26th - 27th April <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e272>>
- "Targeting, harnessing and extracting the value of Unstructured Information" 26th - 27th April <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e301>>
- "Developing and extracting the value of Unstructured Information" 26th - 27th April <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e295>>
- "Learning Content - is it still king?" 28th April <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e317>>
- "Vol-Info Training Information Meeting" 27th April <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e311>>
- "Unicom Seminars Ltd." 27th April <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e312>>
- "Gartner CRM Summit 2004" 28th - 29th April <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e271>>
- "Re-designing your Intranet" 28th - 29th April <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e306>>
- "3rd European Conference on Research Methodology" 29th - 30th April <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e254>>
- "Developing the Legal E-Library: looking beyond the law" 30th April <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e310>>

Australia:

- "Email Management II: Planning and Controlling your Email Strategy" 28th - 29th April <<http://www.freepint.com/go/e296>>

This is just a selection from the 43 listings in FreePint Events. For a free listing, complete the form at <<http://www.freepint.com/events>>.

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There's a nice partnership developing between the FreePint Bar and the VIP Lounge. VIP is FreePint's sister publication which publishes in-depth reviews of business information products. Therefore it feels right that discussions and comments, like those about Dialog's NewsRoom <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b28330>>, should be made at the Lounge and highlighted at the Bar. We're also posting to the Bar a new twice-monthly digest of the latest information-related press releases posted to the VIP Wire <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b28316>>. We hope you find it a handy free current awareness tool.

Information professionals make up the core of FreePint's membership; hence, it is their concerns which are most commonly reflected at the Bar. Someone has received useful advice about running an information audit to demonstrate the need for a new Electronic Document Management system <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b28228>>. An interesting topic which often arises is that of the renaming/repositioning of a corporate library -- the subject of a current discussion for a library in a financial services company in South Africa <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b28227>>.

Copyright remains a hot topic, with members looking for discussion lists focusing solely on this one important subject <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b28290>>. Of course, Paul Pedley's excellent newsletter KeepingLegal <<http://www.keepinglegal.com>> is a key resource, as is his recent FreePint Virtual Exchange on the new copyright laws <<http://www.freepint.com/exchange/cp110304.htm>>. A forthcoming event on library portals is looking for someone with experience of running a library portal in a commercial environment <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b28323>>.

An interesting thread is developing around customising search engines to search/index only specific sites <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b28293>>. A more general enquiry asks for an introduction to database construction, something which is regularly asked about at the Bar <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b28332>>. Finally, on the software side, can you recommend a good Uninstaller and/or 'Registry Cleaner' to help someone download and subsequently remove trials of programs. The enquirer would also like recommendations for a good 'password manager', something I think a lot of people (myself included) would find useful <<http://www.freepint.com/go/b28287>>.

William Hann <william.hann@freepint.com>
Managing Editor, FreePint

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

TIPS ARTICLE

"Searching for success: an update on search engine developments" By Duncan Parry

Duncan Parry is Creative Director of Position Driver <<http://www.positiondriver.co.uk>>, which helps UK businesses use search engines to gain more clients. He regularly writes about search engines and search marketing - you can find links to articles and his contact details at <<http://www.duncanparry.co.uk>>.

You've probably seen press coverage of recent news in the search engine industry. Yahoo! <<http://www.yahoo.co.uk>> stopped using Google <<http://www.google.co.uk>> to power its 'organic' search results (those labelled "Web Results") and switched to its own technology. Microsoft <<http://www.microsoft.com>> is belatedly entering the search industry too; building search technology for its global network of MSN <<http://www.msn.co.uk>> websites. And Ask Jeeves <<http://www.ask.com>> purchased Interactive Search Holdings <<http://www.interactivesearchholdings.com>> which includes iWon and Excite in March. So what are the main developments at the search engines, and how do they affect you as a searcher or website owner?

Yahoo!

Yahoo! bought Inktomi <<http://www.inktomi.com>> in 2002. Inktomi provides 'organic' or 'natural' search results, which are generated by a 'crawler' (i.e. 'spider') visiting websites and recording information about them in the Inktomi index of web pages. Theoretically website owners had to pay to include their website, although Inktomi sometimes added them for free when its crawler found them via other sites. This product has been superseded by Yahoo! Site Match (see below).

In 2003 Yahoo! bought Overture <<http://www.overture.com>> for USD1.6 billion. Overture pioneered pay per click (PPC) advertising on search results (labelled "Sponsored Links" on Yahoo!). Advertisers choose searches to appear for (e.g. "London hotels") and bid for position.

Overture had already bought veteran search engine AltaVista and the Web search department of FAST <<http://www.fastsearchandtransfer.com>> (including AllTheWeb <<http://www.alltheweb.com>>) in 2003, giving it (and so Yahoo!) search technology on a par with Google.

Yahoo then switched from Espotting to Overture advertising results in Europe late in 2003. It launched its own Yahoo! Search Technology in place of Google in February 2004 as a replacement for Google. Yahoo offers free submission to its index <<http://search.yahoo.com/info/submit.html>> as well as a paid service called SiteMatch, which ensures your site is quickly and regularly crawled.

Like Google and several Yellow Pages websites in the US, Yahoo! is also developing local search technology to make it easier for searchers to find local information and businesses online. This is a big topic in itself and should offer useful new features for the searcher and opportunities for website owners, as explained in this article <<http://www.payperclickanalyst.com/article-duncan-parry-002.htm>>.

Google

Google acquired blogging pioneer Blogger.com early in 2003, apparently helping Google to develop technology to more frequently update its index. They also bought search start-up Kaltix in September 2003. Kaltix was working on technology for proving context sensitive search and personalisation solution; Google now has a demo of this in their lab pages.

In November 2003 Google launched a desktop search bar <<http://toolbar.google.com/desktopbar/>> which can be used to search or enter URLs and open your browser. This followed its browser tool bar. Yahoo! and MSN also have browser bars. These tools all block pop-ups, thankfully.

In 2004 a Google engineer launched Orkut <<http://www.orkut.com>>, a social networking website that connects people through networks of friends early in 2004. One advantage of this may be it allows Google to capture data about users with their permission and then tailor results to them; but right now it is only associated with, not owned by, Google.

Microsoft

Microsoft's <<http://www.microsoft.com>> crawler began trawling the web in April 2003 and MSN posted information on its website in June <<http://www.msnsearch.com/msnbot.htm>>. When the company will switch from current provider Inktomi is unknown; but as MSN is adding to rival Yahoo!'s bottom line by using Inktomi, it will happen. A change in design has been announced for July, but the switch probably won't happen then - the technology isn't ready.

It's not clear what Microsoft will do for advertising results - continue using Yahoo!'s Overture, switch to another PPC company, buy a PPC company or develop its own search advertising product maybe. The company has stated it is happy with Overture for the time being.

Microsoft announced in Autumn 2003 that it would stop using results from LookSmart <<http://www.looksmart.com>>; LookSmart subsequently pulled out of the UK, transferring its directory to UKNetGuide <<http://www.uknetguide.co.uk/looksmart/Default.asp>> and sold its Australian assets. It was then announced in March that MSN will continue to use some LookSmart results after all, in the US.

Ask Jeeves

Ask <<http://www.ask.com>> already owns Teoma <<http://www.teoma.com>>, which has some good search technology already used on Ask's websites.

It announced plans to purchase Interactive Search Holdings, which includes the My Way, My Search, My Web Search, Excite and iWon websites, as well MaxOnline advertising network in March (Note: Excite Europe is a separate company owned by ISP Tiscali).

Ask continues to use Google advertising results and Excite uses Google and Overture. Now it has a website network and advertising company of its own, it's not unimaginable that this may change.

Related FreePint links:

- 'Internet Searching' articles and resources in the FreePint Portal <<http://www.freepint.com/go/p185>>
- Post a message to the author, Duncan Parry, 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/150404.htm#feature>>
- Access the entire archive of FreePint content <http://www.freepint.com/portal/content/>

LookSmart

LookSmart pulled out of the UK in 2003. LookSmart's Australian assets were sold to Sensis, who own yellow and white pages sites as well as the Australian GoEureka <<http://www.GoEureka.com.au>> search engine.

LookSmart still owns WiseNut <<http://www.wisenut.com>>, which has some once-promising search technology, and Grub <<http://www.grub.org>>, an attempt to create a search engine index by using distributed technology similar to that used for file sharing. The company also owns half of FindArticles <<http://www.findarticles.com>>, a search engine for free articles.

Lycos

Terra Lycos <<http://www.lycos.com>> recently announced it will stop competing as a search engine (it has no search technology of its own these days anyway) and will focus instead on 'social networking' by offering services to help people connect online. 'Social networking' may turn out to be little more than existing services (instant messaging, dating, home page building tools etc.) repackaged and hyped. Terra Lycos continues to show ads using its in-house advertising programme, and now uses Inktomi and the LookSmart directory (previously it used FAST's results, now part of Yahoo Search).

Lycos Europe <<http://www.lycos-europe.com>> continues to pursue a search portal and services strategy. Early this year the company bought German domain company United-Domains AG and BuyCentral, which operates shopping platforms in France and Italy. The company uses results from FAST as well as advertising from Overture, Google and Espotting.

Meanwhile Singapore Telecom sold back its stake in Lycos Asia for only USD1 in March to Lycos Asia. Their website was offline when I last tried it, and Lycos Japan merged with Infoseek Japan in June 2003. So maybe the sun has set on Lycos Asia.

Mirago

This little-known search engine could be one to watch in 2004 (I wrote a review of it in March <<http://www.payperclickanalyst.com/article-duncan-parry-008.htm>>). It has established PPC technology and its crawler could compete with the bigger search engines. Currently it is present in the UK, France, Germany and Spain.

FindWhat (pay per click advertising search engine)

FindWhat <<http://www.findwhat.com>> entered a joint venture to start offer PPC advertising in Asia late in 2003. It also acquired Miva <<http://www.miva.com>>, which makes software for building online stores. This will allow it to sell ecommerce and search advertising solutions to SMEs. Early in 2004 it acquired Comet Systems <<http://www.cometsystems.com>>. Comet makes a browser search toolbar (the focus of FindWhat's acquisition). If the name is familiar, it's because they used to make the annoying Comet Cursor that added comet trails to your mouse cursor. FindWhat's merger with European

What is the ResourceShelf?

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

ResourceShelf is a free daily update containing news of interest to information professionals around the world.

Topics include the latest news with web search engines, research tips, new web resources, and much more.

PPC engine Espotting

<<http://www.espotting.com>> (first announced in 2003) was renegotiated early in the year and will complete in Q3.

The impact on searchers

As you can see from the developments listed above, consolidation has been the name of the game for the search engines. Yahoo! and Google are the two current powerhouses; they have their own technology and 1000's of advertisers. Other search engines now rely on them for their own results - which they charge for, of course. Microsoft/MSN is playing catch-up, but with its resources it can catch-up and then give the other two a run for their money. So right now there are really three sets of search results you can use: Google, Yahoo! or Ask's Teoma.

Whilst there are other engines with their own indexes, their technology isn't comparable. The competition between these engines and Microsoft should benefit searchers as the engines seek to improve their own results - improving local search results and the personalisation of results to individual users are two areas they are already focusing on.

The impact on website owners

The concentration of a large percentage of the search advertising market in the hands of three global companies - Google, Yahoo! and (to a lesser scale) FindWhat - could raise fears of them monopolising parts of the web and raising advertising prices. Whilst minimum bid prices have risen in the past, the three companies are still competing hard for advertisers and for contracts to supply results to search engines. Contracts may well change as search engines and ISPs are tempted by better deals or wish to stop using Overture now that it is owned by competitor, Yahoo!. Microsoft's search technology (and whatever advertising it offers) will further stimulate competition, and Internet Yellow Pages websites like SuperPages are competing in local search advertising, with their own advertising programmes. Now, two of the three search indexes accept URL submissions for free (links below); an improvement on last year when Inktomi did not. Ask is now the odd man out.

Conclusion

Local search is coming to a search engine near you (especially in the US, where the engines rollout technologies first). Personalisation and other developments should offer more relevant results, for example allowing the engines to understand the context of ambiguous keywords in web pages (Bill Gates cites the ambiguity of the word of "chips" as an example - computer chips, wood chips, Mr Chips or oven chips?). Expect more consolidation and innovation in the search industry.



Arthur Weiss is a UK based management consultant specializing in competitive intelligence and strategy. He has worked in the information industry for approaching 20 years and has spent time searching for information using a wide variety of online and offline sources. Arthur has written and presented on competitive intelligence, marketing and Internet related topics in the UK, Europe and elsewhere. Arthur is the managing partner of AWARE, a CI consultancy offering clients CI research, analysis and training. He can be contacted through AWARE's web-site at <<http://www.marketing-intelligence.co.uk>>.

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- "Online Business Sourcebook 2003" ISBN 3598115288, published by K. G. Saur.

FREE PINT BOOKSHELF

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

"Online Business Sourcebook 2003"

Edited by Pam Foster

Reviewed by Arthur Weiss

The Online Business Sourcebook 2003 is a much needed update on the previous 1999 edition. This edition was edited and completed in October 2002, and is aimed at professional business users and libraries rather than occasional users. As a single resource for electronic business information sources (i.e. online, CD-Rom, DVD-ROM and web-based) it is invaluable, describing products covering most areas of interest to business information users.

The book focuses on sources relevant to researchers based in the UK, and to a lesser degree Europe. The range of content also makes it valuable to users based elsewhere. Included are service details for 48 hosts and aggregators, along with 1240 products and databases. These are categorized by function, for example: company directories, company financials, investment and shareholder analysis, credit, news, legislation, market data, etc. Within each category, products are generally arranged by geographic coverage with Pan-European sources listed first, followed by UK sources, other European sources and then International, North American and rest-of-World sources. The two largest source categories are company directories with 248 databases listed and business and financial news sources with 252 databases. Combined, these two categories represent 40 percent of the total coverage.

The book is an update rather than a rewrite, and a lot of the text from earlier editions is retained. Although this is justified when there has been no change, there are parts which, I believe, could have been rewritten to take account of major changes since the last edition. For example, the chapter on the Internet implies that Telnet is still as important an access route as the world-wide-web. This may have been the situation a few years ago; however, even though some old-hands may prefer the Telnet interfaces for host-databases such as Dialog, for most users the web is the only access route, and Telnet is obsolete.

The Online Business Sourcebook says that it is the "only single volume evaluation of all the databases and products of value to a business audience". Unfortunately, there are some key sources that have been omitted - with patent

information being one gap I'd like to see filled in future editions. Sources like Derwent Information and Micropatent are not mentioned, and neither is "espacenet" providing free patent information from the European patent offices. Such sources are important for business information professionals in the STM fields, and also for those involved in competitive intelligence research looking at competitor R&D. Other exclusions are less obvious - and may have resulted from editorial judgment on their general use by business information professionals. The Credit chapter, for instance, does not mention credit information suppliers such as Informa from Spain, ORT in France, Creditreform in Germany or Kreditschutzverband (KSV) in Austria (although in fairness, some of these companies are mentioned elsewhere for their company directories, or availability on host databases).

Nevertheless, despite omissions and a few errors, which are perhaps inevitable in a book such as this, the sourcebook provides descriptions of a multitude of databases, information sources, online aggregators and more, allowing the business user to identify quickly online sources for global business information. This includes numerous specialist interest databases aimed at various niche areas such as Janes, for defence related information or SCRIP and IMS data for the pharmaceutical industries. Accordingly, the sourcebook should be an essential addition and reference work for all corporate and business-oriented libraries.

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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>>.

FREE PINT

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FEATURE ARTICLE

"Time Management"

By Jonathan Crowhurst



Jonathan Crowhurst is reading an MA in Library and Information Studies at City University. His research interests include information law, library history and development, legal information, user studies and the impact of the internet on libraries. Contact him at jonathan@crowhurst0277.freeserve.co.uk.

Time is our most valuable resource. We each have a finite amount of it, and often complain we do not have enough of it. Survey after survey says we feel over-worked and over-stressed. The UK works some of the longest hours in Europe. Today we are all faced with conflicting demands of ever-increasing working hours and ever-increasing possibilities for our leisure time.

In this article I hope to provide some tools to consider in helping to find the holy grail of the "work-life balance", which now seems to be more important than "managing time". Many companies are adopting official work-life balance policies, but it is still up to the individual to make the best use of their time for personal and business success. Employers for work-life balance <http://www.employersforwork-lifebalance.org.uk/> are one organisation aiming to improve and help implement work-life strategies.

Time Management Devices - Paper or PDA?

One of the best ways to manage time is clearly to write down our appointments and schedule. These can be short-range business or leisure items, or longer-term goals that you might want to write down. There seems to be a body of evidence to suggest that by writing down goals one is more likely to achieve them. Never before have there been so many options available to us to manage time itself. These can be divided into two forms, traditional paper and electronic.

The former requires little explanation and ranges from large-format desk diaries to pocket books to the personal organiser, the most established provider being filofax <http://www.filofax.co.uk/>. The main advantages with these are their relative simplicity, ease of use (if an appointment changes, cross it out) and low cost. Certainly if you consider one of the ring-binder types of personal organiser there is a large range of expansions ranging from tube maps to to-do lists available.

The latter comprises PDAs of various descriptions, which many FreePint readers may possess. I have tried a few and shall briefly outline several that are available. Pdas operate by using a stylus to tap out contacts, appointments and so on, which are then synchronised with an operating system by the supplied hot synch cradle (it may be called something different depending on manufacturer). Palm <http://www.palm.com/us/> or the Psion <http://www.pSION.com/> are the main systems. Depending on PDA model it will be possible to synchronise information on the PDA with Microsoft Outlook (not Outlook Express), or on the more advanced models with applications such as Word and Excel. I have tried the Palm and Psion models. The latter have the advantage of an integral keyboard, while Palm users must purchase one separately - those who use them will know the limitations of a stylus! A recent issue of PC Plus <http://www.pcplus.co.uk/> contained a review of PDAs. The choice is now substantial and more upmarket ones include features like cameras.

Willco at AIIP Conference, Texas, 29th April

Willco provides the hosting technology behind FreePint, VIP and over 50 other online communities and publications.

Find out more about the system at the AIIP conference: <http://www.willco.com/aiip/>

For the cheaper models one of the issues is limited memory and expansion options. If you want your PDA for simple diary and contact management then the cheaper ones are still viable. One great piece of software I heartily recommend is Avantgo http://www.avantgo.com/frontdoor/index_uk.html. You can use this when you synchronise to load up (often free) applications, magazines and e-books. Check out the web site to see the full range on offer. This was supplied with my palm system on the application CD. Do consider issues like battery life with these products.

Software - OK Computer

There are a number of software options for managing your time, appointments and ultimately productivity. I will refer to three of the main applications, which may be familiar. Firstly, Microsoft Outlook is such a great tool I kicked myself when I figured out its full potential for managing my calendar, tasks and so on. If your office network has this product I would suggest you get up on how to use it to its best advantage because, for a standard package (on Microsoft Office 2003, Office XP, Office 2000 and Office 97) it comes with so many worthwhile features. As referred to above it can also be synchronised with some pdas, so keeping you up to date on the move.

GOLD

- FreePint No.135 17th April 2003. "Radio on the Internet" and "Scenario Planning" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/170403.htm>
- FreePint No.110 18th April 2002. "A World of Resources Awaits You in China" and "Customer Satisfaction - do you know what they think of your information service?" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/180402.htm>
- FreePint No.85 12th April 2001. "Getting Connected in a Rural Area" and "Streaming Media and Broadband Sites" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/120401.htm>
- FreePint No.60, 13th April 2000. "Wedding Sources on the Web" and "Knowledge Management" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/130400.htm>
- FreePint No.36, 15th April 1999. "Cataloging the Internet: The Dublin Core" and "Idiots' guide to chemistry information resources on the Web" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/150499.htm>
- FreePint No.12, 16th April 1998. "The Duffers Guide to 56K Modems!" and "Sources of information on science policy and popular science topics" <http://www.freepint.com/issues/160498.htm>

Related FreePint links:

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The second application worth considering is ACT! The latest version - ACT! 6.0 - looks very versatile indeed. It allows you to, among other things, schedule appointments, send faxes using Winfax pro, and integrate with Outlook contacts and functionality, and store huge amounts of information about contacts. It may be a bit overblown for the casual user but if you do have a hectic schedule and a bulging contacts book it may be the perfect solution to making a step towards the mythical "paperless office". Find out more at the official web site <<http://www.act.com/>>. The product though is fairly expensive and you would have to be fairly busy to be able to take advantage of its full functionality. You must also be connected to the internet when installing in order to register the product and start using it immediately. Lotus organiser, available as part of the venerable Lotus Smartsuite package <<http://www.lotus.com>> is a cheap (version 9.5 can be had for around GBP30.00 on amazon) and fairly user-friendly time/contact management product. The latest versions will let you perform synchronisation with palm type devices.

Finally, the growing merry band of Linux users may find some useful apps at <<http://www.linuxlinks.com/software/productivitytools/timers/>>.

Other Advice

There are some great books and web sites providing advice on time management, if you have time available to read them. First of all in the book category comes 'Time Management for Dummies' <<http://www.dummies.com/wileycda/>> by time management guru Jeffrey Mayer <<http://www.succeedinginbusiness.com/consulting.shtml>>. His book explores some novel ways of managing time, beginning with first principles of a clear desk and the "master list". I purchased this book and it contains some great advice for busy people. Much of it is common sense but some time with it will be well rewarded. Type "time management" into amazon and there are loads of books available - just over 2100 on <<http://www.amazon.co.uk>>. This sounds to me that certain people have realised they can make a fast buck providing advice on a very serious issue. Books aimed specifically at managers - the "one minute manager" or "time management in a week" type guides - might be best if you want sound advice rather than flummery.

Your workplace may offer time management courses as part of general training or specific management training. These are worthwhile and merit taking even half a day out for. One of the main benefits is sharing ideas with colleagues, as well as the possibility of getting a nice booklet with lots of (possibly) worthwhile advice. This saves you personally having to wade through some 800 hits for "time management courses" on Yahoo!.

The DTI web site has some interesting facts, figures and advice on maintaining the elusive "work-life" balance <<http://164.36.164.20/work-lifebalance/>>. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and

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Development has some useful guidance also <<http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/wrklifebal/>>. Management Today magazine also has a large number of links on its resources page <<http://www.clickmt.com/public/home/index.cfm>> that are worth investigating.

An interesting special report on mobile working appeared in a recent issue of computing magazine, reviewing a number of PDAs and giving views on mobile working from a number of perspectives. Read their special report online <<http://www.computing.co.uk/specials/1153663>>.

Pointers

Finally I'd like to give some ideas for managing time that I have found useful. "If you do what you've always done you'll get what you've always got" is an ideal attitude to approach when trying to make changes to your life. The following points may get you thinking:

- Write your goals down. Whether they are long term or short term writing things down focuses the mind. A famous Harvard study showed that those who wrote down their goals were more likely to achieve them. If you have a good set of goals it makes planning your time a lot easier.
- Make goals SMART :- specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed.
- Work-life balance seems largely a balance of priorities. Diaries, PDAs and software are only tools to an end. It is you who must decide which things to do when. Obviously some things are important and urgent, important but not urgent, or not important and not urgent. Be ruthless.
- Use downtime productively. You may wish to catch up on correspondence, sort out your diary, or catch up with the latest bestseller on the train. If you do a lot of driving, audio books are great for those hours stuck on the road.
- Get registered with the telephone preference service <<http://www.tpsonline.org.uk/tps/>> and mailing preference service (residential only) <<http://www.mpsonline.org.uk/mpsr/>> to free you from the tide of unsolicited mail and calls. <<http://www.fpsonline.org.uk/fps/>> lets you do the same with fax numbers. The service is free and it takes about a month for your number to be added. Always check the opt-out/in boxes for circulars when filling in forms.

Above all, remember to take time out for friends, family and you!